

Beacon Lights

October
2003

Volume LXII
Number 9

*“For there is nothing that more
turneth us away from God,
than when we desire to have
some virtue worthy of praise.”*

John Calvin

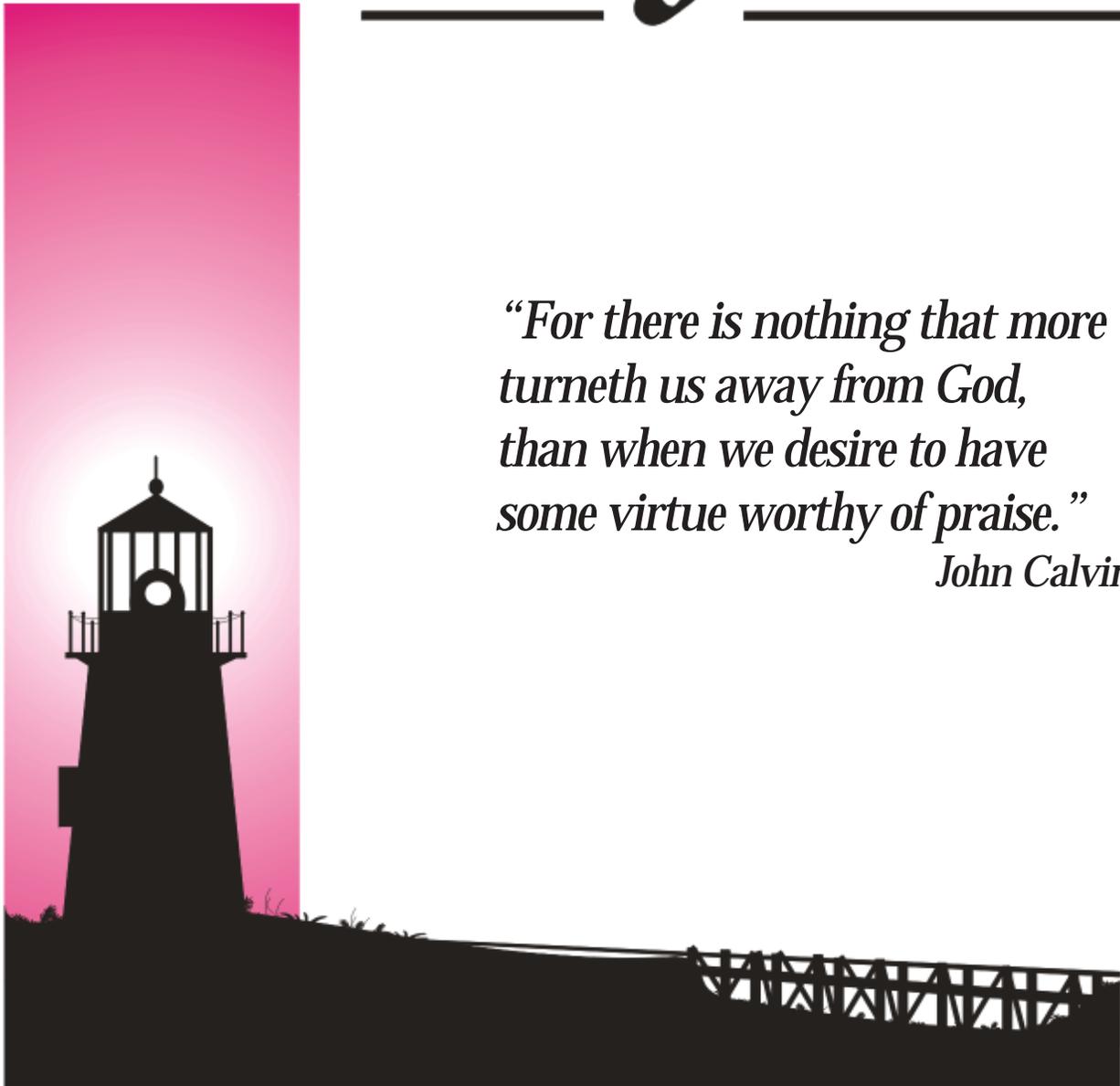


Table of Contents

- FRUITFUL BRANCHES
3 Dim Lights in a Dark World
- STORY TIME
4 The Gift
- CONSIDER THE CREATION
6 Autumn's Color
- THE READER ASKS
7 Christian Fiction: Is There Such a Thing, and Is There a Need for It
- CHURCH FAMILY
9 Christian College: The Preferred Choice
- WHERE WE STAND
10 Arminianism (8): Limited Atonement
- DEVOTIONAL
13 Watching Daily At My Gates
- PASTOR PROFILE
19 Rev. Steven Key
- OUR YOUNG PEOPLE'S FEDERATION
22 Study Proverbs This Society Season
- CHURCH HISTORY
24 George M. Ophoff (11): The Kind of Man He Was (2)
- LITTLE LIGHTS
27 Treasures
- CHURCH NEWS
Back Cover

BEACON LIGHTS

EDITOR

John Huizenga

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Aaron Cleveland

Randy Vaalburg

SECRETARY

EDITORIAL STAFF

Jeff Kalsbeek

David Langerak

Kris Moelker

EXECUTIVE FEDERATION BOARD

Trevor Kalsbeek (President)

Kevin Gritters (Vice-President)

Audra Bol (Secretary)

Brad Pastoor (Treasurer)

Jeanine Boeve (Librarian)

Rachel Kuiper (Vice-Secretary)

Brad VanderVeen (Vice-Treasurer)

Jim Holstege (Youth Coordinator)

Rev. Barry Gritters (Spiritual Advisor)

BUSINESS OFFICE

Beacon Lights

P.O. Box 144

Randolph, WI 53956

Phone: (920) 326-6186

Email: huizenga@powercom.net

BEACON LIGHTS ON TAPE

A free service to the legally blind. Contact

Sam Copple

659 Lincoln Ave. NW

Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Phone: (616) 774-4132

Email: SamCopple@email.msn.com

CHURCH NEWS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Melinda Bleyenbergh

Email: darylme1@altelco.net

BOOK SALES

Becky Kalsbeek

TYPESETTER

Robert Vermeer

PRINTER

James Huizinga

MAILER

Staff

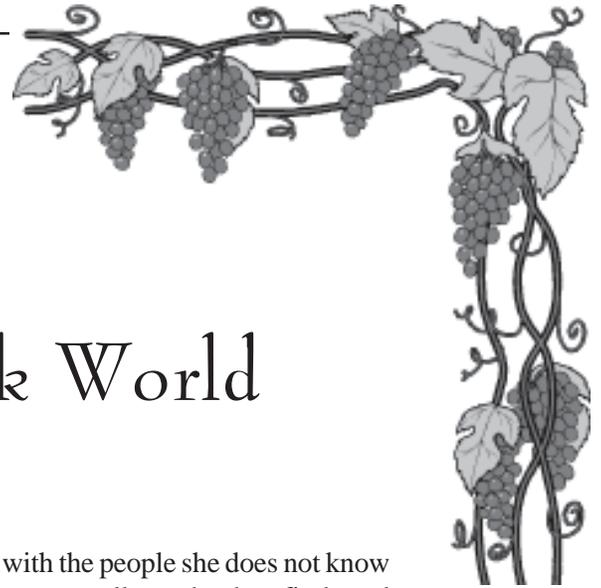
Beacon Lights is published monthly by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies. Subscription price is \$10.00. Please send all correspondence, address changes, subscriptions, and article submissions to the business office.

EDITORIAL POLICY

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

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

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



Dim Lights in a Dark World

by Amy Dykstra

Waking up in the morning, a rosy-cheeked young girl opens her eyes to a bright, sunny day. Coby begins her day with morning devotions at breakfast; her Christianity is glowing, and the Spirit is shining through her. Coby has a new day ahead of her, and how she determines to use it will affect her luminance. If Coby lives righteously, she will be bright, but if she chooses to live as the world, her light will become dim. Every day is a new opportunity to glow more brightly for the Lord.

Today is warm, and the spring sun heightens Coby's enthusiasm as she approaches the new day. Coby cheerfully picks out her favorite spring shirt and dresses for school. Cramming down her Cheerios and Pop-Tart, she completes the aggravating assignment from the night before. Renewed by the night's rest, she is ready for whatever God puts in her path. Her morning devotional is settled firmly in her mind... "For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light" (Psalm 36:9). Coby is determined to look to God today for help and strength.

Coby kisses her mother good-bye, and the world greets her on the other side of the front door. Searching for her keys, the crisp, morning air nips her cheeks. Silently she loads her car and heads off to school. Once on her way, her tunes are switched on, and they begin to blare through her speakers. Coby's first choice of music was clearly not Christian. As the lyrics begin to blaspheme, her glow begins to fade. Driving 80 miles per hour does not help her brightness either; her spiritual light fades like a colored balloon stretched with air.

Looking ahead, Coby barely taps the brakes as she charges over the speed bump at her school. She arrives at school with a few minutes to spare and decides to spend them with her friends. School greets her with a hub-bub of students rushing to class. She picks up her pace as she heads to her locker. Trying not to make eye

contact with the people she does not know or even care to talk to, she then finds and greets her friends.

All of Coby's friends have something to say, and she impatiently waits for them to be finished so that she can tell them her big news. Did they hear the latest gossip? Coby couldn't wait to tell them her big news. Spilling it was such a delight, but as she did so, her spiritual brightness faded out almost beyond recognition. At the same time, her face got warm with excitement over the news. Coby's friends soaked up every exaggerated word as she told them just how awful Bill and Sara's break-up was. The loud clanging of the bell was the conclusion to her dramatic story, and she headed to class. Coby thought little of her breakfast devotional as she went through the rest of her school day, but her spiritual light had continued to fade.

Flying over the speed bump once again, Coby is relieved that this time she is going in the opposite direction. Driving to work is Coby's idea of time to relax, but this time is short lived. Some of her friends from school work here too, and the topic is once again Bill and Sara's break-up. This is not the only topic though; swearing and dirty jokes pollute the ears of everyone in the greenhouse. Planting flowers like maniacs, they joke around all afternoon. Heading home for dinner, Coby's light is barely visible.

Does she even remember what her devotion was that morning? "For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light" (Psalm 36:9). What kind of light did Coby display that day? She faded into the darkness of the world by participating in the wickedness that the devil put in front of her. Talking with her friends had seemed innocent, but she used God's gift of friendship as an opportunity to gossip. Opting to listen to the world's sinful tunes, she tuned out God's praises on the radio. Coby readily befriended those who had little, if no light,

but would not even greet the brightest people at her school. She became dim in the dark world, and put the bushel over her light.

Ask any young child to sing “This Little Light of Mine,” and they will answer to ‘hide it under a bushel’ with a vehement “NO!” This all sounds easy, but it is easier to fall into the devil’s trap and live like Coby did. She became the devil’s tool instead of Christ’s shining

light. It is difficult to live as a Christian from day to day. It takes constant effort, but this effort is generated by thankfulness to Christ. Each day we have a new opportunity to shine our light. Christians, remember who we are shining our lights for: Christ is the reason! ❖

Amy is a member of Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

Story Time

The Gift

by Tom Cammenga

Over the years it has become somewhat of a custom for me to take a leisurely walk on Sunday afternoons following lunch. Often I will stroll down to the cemetery a block or so away from my home in order to wander through the grounds. Not because I have any certain fascination with cemeteries mind you. There is simply a quiet solitude and beauty found there that is not possible to find anywhere else. From the lush green grass and the mighty trees that cover the landscape to the beautifully ornate tombstones great and small with the history recorded on each of them. How often I have lost track of time while I pondered the lives of those at rest beneath my feet and rushed home only to find my wife waiting for me at the door with my Sunday clothes in hand.

This particular day was no exception. It was a gloriously sunny afternoon in mid October. The leaves of each tree vividly proclaimed the beauty of the Maker in their majestic color and the slight chill in the air an ever so subtle prelude to the inevitable coming of winter. Having reached the cemetery I began in the northwest corner and slowly made my way up the line of tombstones, reading the inscriptions, stopping occasionally to watch the squirrels and birds that seemed to be everywhere that day.

Nearing the center of the cemetery I took notice of a lone casket some distance away as it stood over an open grave. I found it peculiar that the line of cars on the road with the tell-tale orange flags on them was missing, along

with the canopy that so often covered the burial site and the chairs set up for family and friends. My curiosity was piqued and so I began to make my way over to this unusual arrangement.

It wasn’t until I was just a short distance away that I noticed a frail old man seated in a lone chair on the other side of what I could now see was a beautiful casket made from Cherry wood. He sat perfectly still appearing to stare forlornly towards the casket though I think his gaze rested on nothing in particular. Before I could turn around he heard my approach and slowly raised his eyes until his gaze met mine. I couldn’t help but feel that I should turn around and leave this man to his grief; indeed how awful it seemed to intrude on such a personal moment in one’s life. But there was something in his eyes that drew me towards him. Never before had I seen such incredible sorrow, pain, and despair. He spoke no words with his mouth yet his eyes seemed to cry out in loneliness and need and before I knew it I was standing beside him. The world around us seemed to stop; all the sights and sounds that had been so clear now no longer seemed to exist. It was just he and I.

Without thinking I placed my hand on his shoulder.

“My sympathy to you in your loss,” I said in a barely audible whisper. “I apologize for interrupting you. I probably shouldn’t have come over here but for some reason I felt I must.”

He just stared at me. No words escaped his lips; no tears fell from his eyes, no movement at all.

“Please forgive me,” I said as I slowly backed away. What a fool I was. How could I have done such a thing as to intrude on this man in his quiet grief? I turned and began to walk quickly in the opposite direction.

His surprisingly strong voice stopped me in my tracks.

“I am not sure who you are young man but I sure wouldn’t mind some company right now.”

I stopped, turned, and walked slowly back to his side and knelt beside him. For a few minutes neither one of us spoke.

“You see,” he said as he turned to me, “she was all I had. For 53 years she was all I needed. We had no children, no family. It was just her and I. And now she’s gone.” His voice seemed to fail and he just looked at me with those eyes.

After some quiet moments he began a discourse spanning some five centuries, beginning with the first time they had met continuing through the many years of their marriage, story upon story upon story. At times his deep laugh would echo off the surrounding trees sending birds into startled flight, and at others he would weep quietly, almost uncontrollably. With each word it seemed a veil was lifted from his burdened soul, with each sentence the load lightened just a bit. And so began the slow and gentle healing of the wound in his heart. Minutes became hours, and before I realized it, the afternoon had ever so gently given way to evening. Yet I couldn’t leave. I couldn’t walk away from this man who so desperately needed someone to talk to, who needed someone there by his side for comfort and support.

As the light began to fade and the birds bid farewell to the day in song, there were no more words to be found. Slowly he bowed his head and was quiet.

“I would like to pray with you if that’s alright,” I said, taking his weak and withered hand in mine.

He looked at me for a moment then glanced toward the casket in front of us.

“To tell you the truth, I have never been much for religion,” he said as he gestured in the direction of the casket, “but she was. Always going to church. You know, she asked me to go with her every time...but I just couldn’t see the sense of it.” He slowly shook his head from side to side and looked down at the ground. “I wish now that I had gone.”

“Yes,” he said after a few moments of quiet pondering, “I think I would like to pray.”

So we prayed. We prayed for comfort, for healing, for guidance. We prayed for forgiveness of sin and for a

renewed love for the Father. And we gave thanks for all that the Lord had done in our lives. When I had finished and the last amen was spoken, he thanked me and asked me my name. Then slowly he stood, shook my hand, and made his way to his car without so much as a backward glance.

I stood there for a minute attempting to take it all in before I as well began the walk home. I was surprised to find that my wife had been standing a little way off watching and waiting. When I had failed to return home she came to look for me and had observed the old man and me as we talked. Even in the fading light I could see that her face was stained with tears. We embraced for a long time and then walked home, arm in arm.

In the coming months I often thought of the old man and though I visited the cemetery often I never saw him again.

About six months later I arrived home from work one day to find a package on the kitchen counter. Not recognizing the handwriting I examined it more closely and noticed that it had actually been mailed some two months previous. Undoubtedly it had been lost in the mail. With my wife at my side I gingerly un-wrapped the paper from around the box and removed the cover. There, nestled inside was a new leather-bound Bible. With much confusion I took it out of the box and opened it. On the first page were these words:

“On a sunny day in October I who was lost was found. Through the kindness of a stranger I saw the love of Christ and by His grace was received again. Thank you for that gift.”

Tears quickly filled my eyes as emotion swept over me. How amazing and humbling it was and still is to me that God would choose to use a sinner such as I to bring one of his own back to him. What an amazing and wonderful God!

Over the next couple of days I tried in vain to find the old man but was unable to locate him. Finally I decided to visit the grave of his wife that next Sunday afternoon and read some passages from this Bible as I had not walked there for quite some time due to the weather. Who knew, maybe I would even meet him there. And I did.

As I approached the grave I noticed the mound of earth just to the left and in front of the tombstone. With my heart in my throat I approached, already knowing what I would find. My eyes went to the words recently etched into the smooth surface of the stone.

Born—August 16, 1924

Died—April 12, 2002

Lost—August 16, 1924

Found—October 14, 2001

“Thank you friend.”

Kneeling on the ground on that cool spring afternoon I wept, realizing this message was for me. I wept for a man I had not known but with whom I had shared a

lifetime one sunny October afternoon. I wept because I was not able to say good-bye. But most of all I wept tears of joy and gratitude for the great work of God in this man’s life. Glory be to God! Truly you never know how or when the Lord will use you as a witness to Him.



First place winner of the Beacon Lights writing contest (post high category). Tom is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan.

Consider the Creation

Autumn’s Color

by Deane Wassink

I am awestruck every fall with the beautiful colors of the leaves as the shortened daylight brings a steady march of change into winter. There is a wonderful mixture of colors in the variety of the plants along the shore. There are the brilliant reds, oranges and yellows of the maples, The sumacs form mounds of brilliant red to orange splashes of color. The blueberry bushes and black gum have a deep red to burgundy color that is often highlighted by the yellows and golds of the birches, poplars and sassafras that surround them in the sandy, acidic soils of the shoreline. It is no wonder that many admirers take time to go on “color tours” when the trees are at their peak colors. In fact, the tourist industry gets a huge boost at this time with many out-of-state travelers coming to the Great Lakes region to view the display.

The biology and chemistry behind the changing of the leaves into so many different colors is very interesting. During the growing season water and nutrients flow into the leaves from the roots. There they are combined with carbon dioxide to produce sugars through the process of photosynthesis, where the energy of the sun is harnessed to accomplish that change. The green pigment in leaves, called chlorophyll, is used to absorb the energy of the sunlight and drive this process. When the temperature is warm and daylight hours are long, chlo-

rophyll is in such high production that its green color overwhelms the other pigments that are in the leaf. When the shorter days and cool temperatures of fall arrive, changes in the plant reduce the production of chlorophyll so that the other pigments like carotene (responsible for the yellows) and anthocyanins (responsible for the reds) are revealed in the leaves. They were there all the time, but, were hidden by the bright green of the chlorophyll.

The variety and brightness of the colors is greatly influenced by the weather. Low temperatures above freezing destroy the green chlorophyll and increase the other pigments. Bright sunshine does the same thing in the fall season. Also, dry weather increases sugar production in the sap which also intensifies the other pigments. To combine it all, the brightest and most intense colors are when dry weather is combined with sunny days and cool nights. The result is the fantastic display of color we enjoy in the fall. Our senses can hardly drink it all in. Just to picture it in my mind’s eye, I smell the musty scent of the dry leaves and hear them rustle in the wind and under my feet as I walk. The beauty intensifies until, suddenly, it is done. A rain the night before can strip the trees bare before morning.

Have you ever considered that the colors of the trees of the forest are a wonderful sermon about salvation spo-

ken by the Great Creator? The gold of the maples, sassafras, beeches, and birch tell of His holiness before which no sinner can stand. The orange of the maples and sumacs speak of the fire of hell to which man is condemned in his sin. The blackness of the wet trunks of the trees after a fall rain tells of the darkness of sin apart from God. The red of the maples and black gums speak of the blood of the Savior which He poured out on the cross to pay the price of sin before God. The white blanket of the first wet snow that covers the trees before they have lost their leaves proclaims the cleanliness of a soul that has been redeemed. The beautiful silver bark of the beech tree teaches us that the child of God must be purified through trials like silver is tried by the fire. And, finally, the green reminds us of the outpouring of blessings on us as we rest in the pastures of His love.

Indeed, all things sing the praises of our great God for all the wonders He has wrought!

Forest Message

*God with such beauty His forest doth dress,
The colors His greatness and goodness confess.
Gold covered birches His holiness declare.
The white bark His purity the saints do share.*

*The crimson blueberry and black gum do remind,
In His blood alone true forgiveness we find.
The orange of the sumac and maple do show,
Sinners the fire of God's wrath surely know.*

*The purple of the plum His royalty displays,
As King of His people He sovereignly saves.
The rolling hills with verdure are clad,
As blessings continually make our hearts glad.*

*The silver beech speaks of the saint who is tried,
As by fire from the dross the silver is purified.
Each breath inhaled in amazement a praise,
As forest color a song of wonder displays.*

*The forest in manifold color cries out,
The seasons continue till He comes with a shout.
His own, redeemed, with their hope fixed above,
In the fall see His handiwork expressing His love.*

*Lord, open my eyes to the beauty all around,
To the colors as pictures of salvation are found. ❖*

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

The Reader Asks

Christian Fiction: Is There Such a Thing, and Is There a Need for It

by Rev. James Laning

Dear Rev. Laning

Is there such a thing as Christian fiction? If there is, what is it? I know there are authors who claim to write Christian fiction. Our Protestant Reformed Christian School libraries have titles from many of these authors. Also, is there a need for such fiction?

Thank you for your time and consideration of my question.

Sincerely,
Jay Kalsbeek

Dear Jay

You ask a very interesting question, to which there are undoubtedly many aspects. I will attempt to set forth just a few.

The fact that Jesus taught in parables, some of which even included dialogue, indicates that one can make up a story to get across a certain point. One could, therefore, write a fictional story in an effort to set forth clearly a biblical truth. Such a story could, I suppose, be referred to as "Christian fiction," because it would be a

fictional story written in an effort to illustrate truths of the Christian faith.

That, of course, does not mean that all that comes under the heading of “Christian fiction” truly is Christian. Most of the books that claim to be Christian fiction are really books that aim, in a subtle way, to deny the truth of the Christian faith. Many of the authors of such books deny the truth that God’s elect are saved solely by His particular grace. This almost always comes across in their writings, and will be noticed by the discerning and cautious reader. In addition, these books often, in an indirect way, try to get across the idea that maintaining sound doctrine is really not all that important. They will invent a “Christian hero” and make him or her to be an outwardly moral person, but a person who is never found studying and defending sound doctrine, and who does not separate from those who refuse to repent of holding to heresies. In this way they try to get across the idea that it does not make that much difference what doctrine you maintain, as long as you live a good, moral life.

But can we make use of books of fiction which claim to be Christian, but which are written by those who are not sound in the faith? In my judgment one can, on occasion, make profitable use of such a book. But to do it, he or she would have to read it in an effort to contrast the faith and life of the genuine Christian with that of one who is merely outwardly a Christian. It is true that very few read these books with this as their purpose; but it can be profitably done. A person could, for example, read such a work to his children, or perhaps to his younger brothers and sisters, and stop from time to time to ask them, “What false doctrine is this author teaching here?” or “Many of those who claim to be Christian will say the same thing that this character in the story just said. Do you see anything wrong in what he said?” Reading in this way can certainly be beneficial.

Of course, there are works of fiction written by believers who are sound in the faith. But these are rather few in number in comparison with the vast multitude of books written by those who are not sound. There are many who are reading the latter, while claiming they are reading the former. This is something of which we must beware.

There is also another kind of writing that is sometimes referred to as “Christian fiction.” There are those who like to take the true stories recorded in Scripture and make them into fictional stories. Perhaps they make one of the people in the story speak and describe what is happening from his point of view. Or maybe they invent a character, and then place that character into the story

to describe it from within. Many details are often added to the story, to make it more appealing to the author and his readers. They take some of the facts recorded in Scripture, add some ideas of their own, and weave them together into a story of their own making.

Although it may appear on the surface that this would help to make these stories “come alive” for young readers, there is actually a great danger in doing this. The history recorded in Scripture is not like history recorded anywhere else. It is the infallibly inspired Word of God. Our calling is to expound this Word of God, but not to add anything to it, or subtract anything from it (Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18, 19).

There is a big difference between expounding the Scriptures and adding to the Scriptures. If one expounds a passage of Scripture, using Scripture to interpret Scripture and trusting God to explain what a story means, then what he speaks or writes is the truth of the Word of God, and can nourish our souls. But if someone takes details recorded in Scripture and adds his own ideas, then the story that results is not the Word of God, but the word of man. And if it is the word of man, rather than the Word of God, then it cannot benefit our souls. Such stories become a distraction that would tempt us to find rest not in the promised land of heaven, but in a world of our own imagination.

As I said at the beginning, there is a lot more that could be said on this subject, since there are many aspects to it. If you have anything more specific that you would like to have addressed, please write again. ❖

The Reader Asks

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:

Rev. James Laning
1550 Ferndale S.W.
Walker, MI 49544
E-mail: jlanning@msn.com

Christian College: The Preferred Choice

by Alicia J. Spriensma

As my high school career began, I started receiving tons of information about different colleges. I weighed the pros and cons of attending a Christian college as opposed to a public university. One of the advantages of a Christian college would be meeting many new people in the Christian faith and making new friends in both peers and advisors. The biggest disadvantage of the Christian college is the cost. Thus many in my class chose to go to Grand Valley State University, choosing a cheaper way to attain a career. I concluded that, despite the cost, I needed to attend a Christian college because of my desire to major in education.

Many parents have sacrificed for years and years, sometimes even needing to ask the deacons to help financially so they could send their children to Christian schools. Why then now at eighteen should Christian education all of a sudden stop? We are still called to live an antithetical life. The confessions support this idea in the Heidelberg Catechism in Lords Day 52 with Question and Answer 127. We are told that “we are so weak in ourselves, that we cannot stand a moment; and besides this, since our mortal enemies, the devil, the world, and our own flesh, cease not to assault us.” We read in Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom and whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do *all* in the name of the Lord Jesus.” Titus 2:12 states, “...denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” If one is considering the field of teaching or training as a pastor, she/he should seriously consider the impact of training in a Christian or a secular college.

I’ve been told that there is a major difference in professors in Christian and public colleges. At a public institution, such as Grand Valley, the professors have been known to talk of the immoral lives they live and use profanity which should offend the Christian student. Lord’s Day 36, Question 100, addresses “those who do not endeavor, as much as in them lies, to prevent and

forbid such cursing and swearing.” Professors at a secular university also tend to teach from a worldly perspective. While some argue that a Christian college is more important in the preparation of teachers or preachers, I also argue that all of our young people must be defensive of the love of the truths of God’s Word in which they have been brought up. Doctrinal concerns and Christian living are not a concern in the teaching at a public college. At the secular college, it can be difficult to ask a question or ever dare to speak up during the class to state what one believes. Therefore the Christian student often attends class silently, absorbing information rather than contributing to the discussion or voicing concerns.

The student’s relationship with the professor can also be different at a secular college. Large classes, typical of many secular universities, do not allow professors and students to get to know each other well. Also at a Christian college the relationship with the professor often lasts. Once the student is out of college, the professors remain a source of valuable information. This is important for those preparing for teaching and the ministry because college is only the beginning of training. Once a young adult is in the school or church, there will be questions and issues in which she/he needs advice.

The friends that are formed at college can turn into lifetime friends. At a secular college few friendships form because of differences in beliefs. At a Christian college, study groups evolve and discussions enhance relationships. As young adults leave to pursue their calling in various areas, it is great to stay in touch, compare how what has been learned is now applied in the church or school, and keep comparing notes.

Teachers at a Christian school must teach everything from a Christian perspective. This is something that is taken for granted within our own Protestant Reformed circles. At a Christian college, one is more ready to ask the professor or a classmate how one could apply what

was just taught to the truths of God's words. This is not true of a secular college.

Christian colleges also allow one to experience student teaching at private schools rather than the public schools. Public institutions, though, rarely allow a student teaching experience in a private school. Student teaching experiences are an important part of preparation for life's career. In a student teaching setting one often develops patterns for and approaches to teaching which will be used in the years to come.

Academically, private colleges prove more difficult. Students are challenged at a private liberal arts institutions, like Calvin. One is not only equipped with better study habits, but also really challenged in thinking. Therefore the education serves not just to work towards a goal, but also to create an individual who is analytical and thorough. This affects the teaching profession in how a teacher instructs. Is the teacher going to just do the work to get it done or put his intense effort into the work?

Many public institutions do not offer training in the classical languages or Dutch anymore. For ministers, this is a part of their required study program. If the college they attend does not offer these courses, the pre-seminary student is forced to look for outside tutoring or for another institution offering those classes. This must often be done in addition to the course load they are carrying during the regular semester.

Another major issue for teachers to be concerned about is how school boards look at the issue. Many school boards have been known to say they would rather hire someone from a private Christian college than a public one if they have the choice. School board members in the church should encourage young people, either their own or those in the church, to seriously look into options at a Christian college *before* the higher education is begun.

I hope to teach at our Christian schools. At a Christian college I will become better equipped as a teacher to be able to apply God's word in every subject I teach. We must count the costs: money spent, friendships formed, study habits developed, relationships and subsequent learning from professors, and how the training will affect our teaching others. Is college only a means to an end or must we be striving for higher goals? We are, after all, preparing ourselves for the rest of our lives. Hopefully that preparation will have a positive impact on many others in the church. As Paul states in Acts 28:31, we are to teach "those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence." ❖

Alicia is a member of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan. She wrote this article as a 2002 Protestant Reformed Scholarship Essay.

Where We Stand

Arminianism (8)

Limited Atonement

by Aaron J. Cleveland

In the last article we briefly considered the doctrines of election and reprobation. We noticed that "election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, he hath out of mere grace ..chosen ..a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ" (Canons I, 7). Now we move on to the next link in the "golden chain of our salvation" (I, Par. 2), the "L" of TULIP, limited atonement.

The Arminians attempted to separate the links between our predestination and glorification, and our fathers at Dordt were careful to set forth the truth that our salvation, from beginning to end, is all the work of God. God accomplishes that work and it is in no way conditioned upon the works of man. Neither is that work stopped or hindered by anything outside of God.

The Second Head of the Canons, in Article 1, begins with a sobering reminder of God's justice. Our sins are committed against "his infinite majesty." The just punishment for our sins is both "temporal" and "eternal punishment, both in body and soul." From this punishment "we cannot escape." God's justice must be satisfied. We are left with some questions. How will God's justice be satisfied? And for whom will this satisfaction be made?

The answer to the first question is found in the next article of the Second Head. The "only begotten Son" of God made "satisfaction to divine justice on our behalf." The answer to the second question can especially be found in Article 8. Christ died to atone for the sins of "all the elect" and "them alone." That we answer this question as distinctively as our fathers at Dort is very important. To confess anything less than the truth that Christ died for the elect and them only is to begin down the path of Arminianism.

The truth of limited (particular) atonement relates perfectly to the truth of particular, unconditional election. Christ must die to pay for the sins of those who were given to Him by the Father. This is exactly how it is stated in Article 8 of the Second Head. A portion of Article 8 reads, "that is, it was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby he confirmed the new covenant, *should effectually* redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to him *by the Father.*"

The Arminians denied the truth of the particular nature of the atonement of Christ. This is easily proved by quoting the Second Article of The Remonstrance of 1610. The second of The Five Arminian Articles states,

2. That in agreement with this (the Arminian view concerning election as set forth in Article 1—AJC) Jesus Christ the Savior of the world died for all and for every man, so that he merited reconciliation and forgiveness of sins for all through the death of the cross; yet so that no one actually enjoys this forgiveness of sins except the believer—also according to the word of the gospel of John 3:16, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but have eternal life." And in the first Epistle of John 2:2, "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world" (Essays in Commemoration of the Synod of Dort 1618-'19, p. 208).

Two things glaringly stand out in this Arminian statement concerning the death of Christ. The first is that the Arminians unashamedly state that it was God's eternal purpose that Jesus Christ die for the sins of all and every man. They maintain a universal atonement. Secondly, the Arminians attempt to separate the merits of Christ's death from the application of those merits. In other words, Christ died for all men, yet that death was wasted in many instances because many for whom those benefits were earned did not receive them because of their unbelief. The Arminians make the application of those benefits dependent upon the "free will" of man.

A more detailed look at the Arminian's conception of Christ's death reveals many more problems. One question that begs to be answered concerning the Arminian's view is this: If God's decree was that Christ died for all men, why in the course of history did the preaching of the gospel go to so few and why were so few saved? Most of the people that have lived throughout history were never made aware of the fact that Christ died for their sins, especially in Old Testament times. They were never given an opportunity to "accept" the merits of Christ's death. What a major blunder in God's eternal plan according to the Arminian view of Christ's death. And what a terrible waste of the merits of His death.

Another serious problem with the Arminian heresy is that man, not God, limits the atonement. God wants to save all men, and Christ died for all men, yet most do not take God up on His offer. The atonement becomes conditioned upon man's acceptance of the merits of Christ's death. Man is decisive in the matter.

Closely related to this is the fact that the Arminian atonement is not "effectual." By this we mean that according to the Arminian view, God is unable to accomplish with the atonement what He desires to accomplish. God's intentions in Christ are frustrated by unbelieving man. God wants to save all men and He gives His Son to die for all men, yet most men refuse the offered merits of Christ. The logical results of this view are frightening. If Christ's death is only sometimes effectual and atones only for the sins of some men, even though God desires that this death atone for the sins of all men, then Christ's death is not effectual at all. As our fathers often said, "A Christ for all is a Christ for none."

Another serious consequence of adhering to the Arminian view of the death of Christ is that one must deny that salvation is all of God. As mentioned earlier, whether or not a sinner actually enjoys the application of Christ's merits to cover his sins depends upon the

sinner's "free will." The sinner may either accept or reject those merits. God waits upon the sinner to decide. The sinner's salvation cannot be completed by God until Christ's merits are accepted. The salvation of the sinner becomes a cooperative effort between helpless God and sovereign man.

Finally, the Arminians rob God of any certainty in His purpose. Just as we noticed in the previous article on election, the Arminians maintain that there is no certain election. No definite number of persons are elected to salvation. Who will be elected is ultimately outside of the control of God. It is the same with their view of the atonement. God does not decide who will receive the merits of Christ's death. Man does. All is up in the air as far as God is concerned. Whether or not there will be a church on the earth depends upon the will of sinful man. God cannot be sure of anything.

The Reformed truth in response to the Arminian error is comforting. While the Arminian position maintains that Christ really only died to establish a "general possibility of reconciliation," the Reformed truth is that Christ has fully reconciled all of the elect to God (*The Voice of Our Fathers*, p. 385). The Reformed truth concerning the atonement is clearly set forth in Article 8 of the Second Head of the Canons. It reads,

For this was the sovereign counsel, and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation: that is, it was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby he confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to him by the Father; that he should confer upon them faith, which together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, he purchased for them by his death; should purge them from all sin, both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing; and having faithfully preserved them even to the end, should at last bring them free from every spot and blemish to the enjoyment of glory in his own presence forever.

Notice from this statement how the fact of Christ's death is related to all of our salvation. Christ, by His death, purchased for His people not only the gift of faith, but also "all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit." And it is by the power of that death that His people are

preserved "even to the end" to "the enjoyment of glory." The Reformed are careful to maintain that all of the links in the golden chain of our salvation, from election to glorification, are dependent upon the efficacious death of Christ. Man contributes nothing. God accomplishes all.

Notice also the particular nature of the atonement of Christ. The article states clearly that the "saving efficacy" of Christ's death extends to "all the elect", and to "them alone" is bestowed the gift of "justifying faith." This is what it means to be distinctive. Not only did our fathers use the phrase "all the elect", but they left no doubt by adding the phrase "them alone." Twice they did this, for later in the article we find the words, "*all those, and those only*, who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to him by the Father."

Another comforting aspect concerning the Reformed view of the atonement as it is set forth in the Canons is that it is set forth as an accomplished fact for the elect. It is more than a "possibility." Christ actually paid for all of the sins of every elect person. Every elect person stands righteous before God. Every one of them is given the gift of justifying faith. All of the elect are preserved in the way of salvation unto the end. Every elect person will one day live in the presence of God in glory. Christ accomplished all of this by His death.

Finally, the great comfort of this truth is that all of our salvation is accomplished by God. All of it has been purchased by Christ. It is not the case that Christ has made salvation "available" to us and we, by our own faith, must take hold of it. No, Christ has also purchased for us faith. "He (Christ—AJC) guaranteed by that purchase of faith that all for whom He died will also believe and will also lay hold personally and consciously on all the benefits of salvation that are in that death of Christ" (*The Five Points of Calvinism*, p. 55).

This is the comforting Reformed truth concerning the atonement of Christ. ❖

Bibliography

Hanko, Herman and Homer C. Hoeksema and Gise J. Van Baren. 1976. *The Five Points Of Calvinism*. Grandville, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Assoc.

Hoeksema, Homer. 1980. *The Voice of Our Fathers*. Grandville, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Assoc.

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

Watching Daily At My Gates

By Mr. Wilbur Linker,
an elder in Immanuel PRC of Lacombe, Alberta

October 1 Read Isaiah 6:1-3 and Revelation 15:1-4

“Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory” (Isa. 6:3b). “Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou only art Holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest” (Rev. 15:4). The truth of God’s Holiness should create in us the same response as we read in Isaiah 6:5: “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips.” God demands that His people be holy as He is holy. What do we mere creatures of the dust; understand of the Holiness of God? God in His grace, mercy and wisdom has granted us His word, wherein we receive a glimpse of His infinite perfections. Above, and in all the attributes of God is His Holiness. There is no other, that He can be compared to. Who is able to stand before this Holy God? Both earth and heaven join in proclaiming the Holiness of God. May we add our voices in praise and adoration to the Holy One of Israel. As we go through this month we hope to explore the implications of knowing such a Holy God. Sing Psalter #266.

October 2 Read Exodus 28:36-39

Holiness to the Lord. Aaron and his sons were consecrated to the Lord. They stood between God and His people, set apart, to minister to the Lord, on behalf of the people. One of the meanings of holiness is all together “separate,” “undefiled.” Therefore their priestly garments also were holy; for glory and beauty. When you read the entire chapter from which our meditation is taken, you will stand in awe of the detail and purpose of these garments. In Psalm 5:5 we read, “Thou hatest all workers of iniquity,” and in Psalm 7:11, “God is angry with the wicked every day.” We, as well as the Israelites of old need a mediator. Their sacrifices, pointed to the reality, which Christ fulfilled in giving himself, as the one and complete sacrifice for sin on Calvary’s cross. Therefore do we confess Christ and Him crucified, indeed risen, seated at God’s right hand. From heaven He also rules all things, granting us His Holy Spirit, by which we may grow in knowledge, understanding and holiness. Therefore let us resist sin as this comes through the temptations of Satan, the world, and our own flesh. Sing Psalter #265.

October 3 Read II Corinthians 6:14-18

Yesterday we came to see that to be holy, we need to be separate from sin. In today’s meditation we will come to see some of the practical implications. We are told not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? What communion

hath light with darkness? We have been set apart as God’s peculiar treasure, that we might show forth His praises. This cannot be done when we have friends that are not of God’s people. There is no common bond that could hold such a relationship together, for one is alive and the other dead to spiritual things. We who have received such a treasure, how can we but live a holy, sanctified life? For God has said “I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (vss. 16b-18). May we hold fast to such a promise. Sing Psalter #89.

October 4 Read I Peter 2:1-10

What a privilege indeed it is that we may be living members of the body of Christ, the church. May it be our desire to have the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby; having tasted that the Lord is gracious. “He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities” (Ps. 103:10). “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us” (Ps. 103:12). How thankful we are that God imputes the righteousness of Christ unto us, thereby granting unto us that holiness, without which, no one will see God. We are taught in this passage that we, as lively stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ, who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. Dear readers, do we sufficiently think and act upon the spiritual treasures that are ours; or do we seek this world’s so called treasures which will draw us away from the joy and comfort of knowing that we belong to Christ Jesus our Lord? Sing Psalter #277.

October 5 Read Psalm 138:1-8

The Sabbath was made for man; not man for the Sabbath. May that truth be seared in our conscience, that there may be a proper observance of the Lord’s Day. God provided the Sabbath that man might rest, rest from his own evil works and rest in that finished and completed work of Christ, on Calvary’s cross, having once for all removed the offence, thereby having reconciled us to God. Our Sabbaths need to reflect that reconciliation. We are free from the curse of sin, in fact in Christ, we are dead to sin, after the new life within, we long to be holy as He is Holy. Therefore let us mortify the deeds of the flesh and live in the spirit, doing those things that bring

honour and glory to our King and are for the well being of our neighbor. As the Psalmist says in verse 2: "I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving kindness and for thy truth; for thou has magnified thy word above all thy name." Please note with me, that the Word is our Lord and Saviour, of whose body we are living members. God grant that our lives may, by His grace, reveal that relationship. Sing Psalter #381.

October 6 Read Psalm 5:1-8

"Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like Thee, glorious in Holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" (Ex. 15:11). This verse is taken from the song of Moses, when God had led them through the Red Sea on dry ground; destroying the Egyptians, who had desired to overtake them. Throughout Scripture we see this two-fold work of God, on the one hand granting deliverance (salvation) to His people and on the other hand granting judgment and condemnation to the wicked. Psalm 5 is a meditation of king David, requesting that God will hear him. He acknowledges God's holiness (see vs. 4-6). May we also know that we cannot come to God in our own strength and abilities, but confess with David, "I will come into Thy house in the multitude of Thy mercy; and in Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple" (Ps. 5:7). Do we often pray that God would lead us in His righteousness, because of our enemies; that His way be made straight before us? That we may not give opportunity to the wicked who hate God and His word, to bring shame upon His name? Sing Psalter #11.

October 7 Read Romans 11:33-36

Our calling in this life is to do all to the honour and glory of God. Scripture clearly teaches that all that is not done in faith is sin. May our prayer be, "Lord, increase our faith." We acknowledge and confess that the unseen is much more real than the seen. For all that we can see with our physical eyes, will be destroyed, but that which is unseen is eternal. In I Corinthians 13:13 we read "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." Knowing that all that we see with our physical eye shall be destroyed, what manner of people ought we to be? Should it not be our desire to more and more mortify the deeds of the flesh, and live in the Spirit, exercising the fruits of the Spirit in all lowliness of mind? The apostle Paul breaks out in a doxology in verse 33. In verse 36 he acknowledges that all things are *of* God, *through* God, and *unto* God: to whom be glory forever. That is our calling, not only to acknowledge but to live in harmony with that calling. Sing Psalter #76.

October 8 Read Isaiah 63:11-14

God is ever faithful to His covenant. The covenant as it was established in Genesis 3:15 "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." This basic covenant was renewed by God to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the saints throughout history in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. How often do we not read in Scripture, when

God is pleased with his people, saying, "and I will show them my covenant." This covenant is a covenant of friendship, in which God unilaterally acknowledges that he is our God and that He has chosen us, His people to be His own peculiar treasure, that we should show forth His praises. One might ask, what makes one to differ from another that God would place His love upon him? It certainly is not of merit or works that God chooses one over another, but it is His tender mercy in Christ Jesus, according to the election of grace and His eternal good pleasure. For God says, I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy and whom I will I harden. God, who is Holy in all His ways, saves a people in Christ to bring honour to His glorious name. Ever thank Him for such a deliverance, providing evidence of that thankfulness in a life of obedience. Sing Psalter #65.

October 9 Read Psalm 145:15-21

Verse 17 reads, "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and Holy in all his works." Genesis 1:31 reads "And God saw all that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." We must keep in mind that God is the only *good*. His works are pure and perfect as He is. He is wholly devoted to His own goodness and glory. For He alone is holy. Our righteousness and holiness are imputed to us, for Christ's sake, who has purchased us with his precious blood. God alone is the Infinite Holy One, who displays that holiness in His word and law. Even though sinful man may not heed to that word, it will stand firm and endure forever. Man will pass away, like the flower of the field but God's Word stands eternal in the heavens. "The Lord is nigh to all that call upon Him; to all that call upon Him in truth" (vs. 18). "He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him: He will also hear their cry, and will save them" (vs. 19). These are comforting words for all who call upon Him in truth. There is in Scripture that contrast, as we saw yesterday in Genesis 3:15. The Lord preserveth all them that love Him: but all the wicked will He destroy. Sing Psalter #394.

October 10 Read Proverbs 3:31-35

In today's meditation we are going to see that God's holiness cannot tolerate sin. God's holiness is the very antitheses of all moral blemish and defilement (II Chr. 20:21). God Himself singles out holiness as His perfection in Psalm 89:35: "Once have I sworn by my holiness." Note that God swears by His holiness, because, that is a fuller expression of Himself than anything else. The law is holy and the commandment holy, just and good (Rom. 7:12). "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether" (Ps. 19:8, 9). God loves everything that conforms to His laws, but the froward is an abomination to him. Man was created upright, in the image and likeness of God. Through the fall, man lost that image, having become Satan's friend and God's enemy. But God, who has loved us from eternity, sent His only begotten Son to pay the curse due to us on Calvary's cross. God manifested His holiness in not

tolerating sin, when our Saviour cried out “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46). That cry went forth from our Saviour’s lips, that we might never be forsaken of God. Oh, how wondrous is the grace of God to us poor and miserable sinners. Oh, that we would love Him more. Sing Psalter #1.

October 11 Read Hebrews 9:19-28

We have come to see that God demands holiness. “The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times” (Ps. 12:6). “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean enduring forever, the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether” (Ps. 19:7-9). “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Rom. 7:12). “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (I Pet. 1:16). In the Old Testament after Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he would sprinkle the book and all the people with the blood of calves and goats. He was also commanded to sprinkle with blood the tabernacle and the vessels of the ministry. For without the shedding of blood, there could be no remission of sin. This was a picture or shadow of that which would purify, the atoning work of Christ, who is now as our High Priest in the presence of God, having fully and completely fulfilled the Holiness of God. He being our Head, and we His body will also appear in God’s presence, to praise, honour and glorify Him forever. Sing Psalter #38.

October 12 Read Psalm 30:1-12

One day in every seven. A day set aside for spiritual rest. A day to set aside our earthly burdens and cares. A day to rest from all the earthly and lift our hearts up on high, where, as we saw yesterday, our High Priest has gone before us; there to prepare a place for us, in that house of many mansions. May we with the psalmist give thanks at the remembrance of His Holiness. Many trials and temptations may confront us on our sojourn here below. We know that His anger is but for a moment, in His favour is life. May our lives be ever guided by His council, granting us the grace and ability and willingness to follow. Our prayer is that our heavenly Father will have mercy upon us, continuing to be our present help, that we may experience the blessing of His sanctuary, as we worship Him in Spirit and Truth, namely, in Christ Jesus our Lord. God grant us to prosper spiritually, that in the week to come we may reflect His will and way. Sing Psalter #77.

October 13 Read Psalm 107:8, 15, 21, 31, 42 and 43

Dear readers, it would be good if you read the whole Psalm. It speaks of the thanksgiving we owe to the Lord, in the various situations of life. It is Thanksgiving Day in Canada. God’s people are the only ones who are able to give thanks. The unregenerate cannot thank God, for he hates God and his neighbour. He loves himself, therefore to be thankful is not in his nature. As you have noticed the phrase “Oh that men would

praise (or give thanks—WL) the Lord for his goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men” is found four times in this Psalm. And that just prior to each occurrence, having experienced the heavy hand of God in their lives, we read “Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saveth them out of their distresses” (Ps. 107:6, 13, 19 and 21). It is quite evident that thanksgiving is not limited to one day per year, but that our hearts and lives must be in obedience, thank God everyday for all His blessings, especially the blessing of salvation. Sing Psalter #297.

October 14 Read Nahum 1:2-6

The unregenerate do not really believe in the Holiness of God. There are many, in which can only be called nominal Christendom, who have a conception of his character, that is all together one-sided. They fondly hope that His mercy will over-ride everything else. They only think of a “god” patterned after their own evil hearts. Psalm 50:21 reads “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself.” “For our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29), to all that do not serve Him acceptably with reverence and godly fear. Those that wish to speak of the love of God, apart from the justice of God, have an idol as their “god.” They do not know the Holy One of Israel, whose attributes are One. Therefore we read in our Scripture passage, “The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for His enemies” (vs. 2). “Who can stand before His indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of His anger?” (vs. 6). As we saw yesterday, may we ever show thanks to God, who has saved us from eternal death and has granted us eternal life, not of merit, but by grace. Sing Psalter #137.

October 15 Read II Chronicles 20:20-30

Yesterday we saw that God takes vengeance on His adversaries. Today we will see how God fights for His people. The armies of the children of Ammon, Moab and mount Seir have come up against Judah. Judah is no match for such an array of power. Jehoshaphat, in this hour of need goes to the house of God, imploring God, for His great mercy and faithfulness, to help. God’s reply comes through Jahaziel, “Ye need not to fight in this battle: set yourselves (position yourselves—WL), stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord” (vs. 17). In the morning the people rise early, the vanguard are appointed singers, praising the beauty and holiness of the Lord. As they march forward they say, “Praise the Lord, for His mercy endureth forever” (vs. 21). God sends great confusion, in that the enemy fight each other—Ammon and Moab against Seir; the children of Mount Seir being destroyed. Ammon and Moab destroy each other. Judah thereupon was able to take the spoil, in great abundance. A tremendous example that the battle is not ours, but the Lord’s, this being most evident when Christ offered himself on Calvary’s cross for our salvation. Sing Psalter #211.

October 16 Read I Peter 1:13-21

Thus far we have come to see that God in His holiness is altogether separate from sin. He cannot look upon sin, but to

punish it in His just wrath with eternal death. For all His children, that just wrath was poured upon the Lord Jesus, who in humble obedience, bore that eternal wrath on Calvary's cross. Thereby having been highly exalted at God's right hand, Christ receives all power and authority. When all His and our enemies, including death, are destroyed, then shall all things be put under Him. Yet, the Son shall be subject to the Father, who placed all things under Him, that God may be all in all. The gospel has been granted us, that we may be part of the body of Christ, through adoption. How unspeakable is the gift of God to usward. How do we respond to such a salvation, to such a call to be holy? Do we truly have a passion for holiness? Dear reader, if we have tasted that the Lord is good, how can we but have a burning desire to be holy? No, not to be equal, for that would be blasphemous: rather, that in our daily walk, we advance in that direction more and more. We confess that even the holiest of men, have but a small beginning. We should remember that not only are we told what our duty is, but that God also adds, "I am He that sanctifieth you." How wonderful it is when God not only grants us salvation, but also provides every part of the working out of our salvation till we reach our eternal home. Sing Psalter #304.

October 17 Read Philippians 2:9-13

Yesterday we were commanded to be holy as God is holy. Today we are commanded to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. First and foremost it must be said that this working out of our salvation can ever only be accomplished as we are in Christ, for example, Christ is the vine and we are the branches. Then our desire will be to freely give of our talents for the enrichment of the whole. As we read in the first part of the chapter: "to be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind let each esteem the other better than themselves." It will be beneficial to read the complete chapter—space does not allow the depth that is there. How do we understand the phrase "with fear and trembling"? First of all, this is not a dreadful fear, such as the unbeliever has when faced with a just God, in his sin. This fear of which Scripture speaks is a reverence and awe, being afraid to offend God in any way (see Gen. 39:9). It is a wholeheartedness and trust in God, in total humility of heart, desiring to do all things to His honour and glory. Sing Psalter #50.

October 18 Read Psalm 43:1-5

We certainly can identify with the apostle Paul in Romans 7:21-25. Paul delights in the law of God, after the inward man, but finds his sinful nature warring against that law. To the end that the very things he desires to do, he doesn't, and the things that he hates, he does. Which brings out his and our cry "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24). Verse 25 gives the comforting answer. Let us go to Psalm 43; we live in a world that is not a friend to grace. We can easily become discouraged. There are many pressures that would force us to conform. It is not popular to be a Christian, as we live in a post Christian era. God and His word are not tolerated in the public sphere.

As God's people we are called upon to be His witnesses: Therefore our cry is "O, send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy Holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles" (vs. 2). Tomorrow is Sunday, when God is pleased to nourish and strengthen us in His house. Never neglect to gather there as the Body of Christ to partake of the chief means of grace. Sing Psalter #120.

October 19 Read Isaiah 57:15-21

Today, the Lord willing, we shall gather together, in various congregations, as the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us for a moment think upon the privilege that is ours. There are many fellow saints throughout the world, that would give literally anything, to sit under the pure preaching of the Word. With what attitude of mind do we appear before our Maker? Did we refrain from earthly activities sufficiently early on Saturday, so that our minds were able to reflect upon the spiritual, as we busied ourselves in those matters? We certainly cannot come properly prepared for worship, when our heart and mind are on the temporal things of the earth. Read again the Scripture passage. He is the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, and will dwell with such as come in humility, with a broken spirit and a contrite heart. To those He grants healing, restoration, and a peace that passes all understanding. Such worship God in Spirit and in Truth, being fed unto life eternal. Sing Psalter #85.

October 20 Read Romans 6:11-18

To have an appreciation of our salvation in Christ; it is imperative to know and understand the truths of Scripture. Those truths will, no doubt, when received in faith, bring us to a greater passion, for holiness in our lives. In the passage above the apostle Paul directs us in an understanding of sin and grace. In verse 14 he says "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." All men by nature are under the law, for all have sinned. Now we hear the gospel—ye are not under the law, but under grace. Come and see, the first part of Chapter 6 provides the answer. The believer is regarded as having died in Christ, and by that death has the curse of the law removed from him. He is now dead to sin, and alive unto God. Therefore, sin shall not have dominion over him. By His spirit we are made willing and able to walk in the commandments of the Lord. No, we are not perfect, but we are justified, and as such, long to grow in a life of sanctification (holiness); ever mortifying the deeds of the flesh. Sing Psalter #60.

October 21 Read Psalm 119:129-136

The Psalmist here provides a wonderful understanding of the way to holiness. There is a love for God's word, a realization that the Word gives light and understanding. His response is to pant with open mouth, longing for the commandments of the Lord. Recognizing his own unworthiness, he pleads upon the mercy of God, but with confidence. Being assured of God's love, he desires to walk in His ways, praying that no iniquity may have dominion over him. Realizing his weaknesses, he prays to be kept from the oppression of man, thereby being

able to keep God's precepts. His desire is that God's favour rests upon him, and that he be taught God's statutes. He expresses extreme sorrow for the disregard of God's laws. Dear reader, is the above our experience? May it be so! Then truly our steps will be ordered according to God's word, and our prayer will be, let not any iniquity have dominion over me. Sing Psalter #327.

October 22 Read II Corinthians 6:14-18, 7:1

There are many blessings we daily experience. But no greater blessings than that we have in our passage today. Chapter 7 begins with the phrase "Having therefore these promises." Let us together take a moment to look at those promises. The apostle is referring to the indwelling of God, "I will dwell in them" God has been pleased to make the bodies of His people to be temples of the Holy Spirit. The next promise is divine communion, "I will dwell in them and walk in them." God is not to us afar off, but near. We can tell Him all our heart, he will also tell us His: for "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and He will shew them His covenant" (Ps. 25:14). Another promise is that of covenanting, "and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." God has entered into covenant relations with us, binding Himself to us by promise and oath. In addition to all this we have divine adoption, whereby God is a Father to us, and we may be His sons and daughters. Do we prize our salvation sufficiently? Maybe this is where so often our doubts and fears arise from. May we ever rejoice in the blessedness of our life in Christ. Sing Psalter #68.

October 23 Read Galatians 2:16-21

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (vs. 20). Does not this verse motivate us to obedience and holiness? It can hardly be otherwise. Christ on Calvary's cross represented all God's people, therefore the dying of Christ was the dying of all the elect. The life we now live is in Christ, He is the source, we receive grace upon grace, all that we are we owe to Him. Our present existence is a life we live by faith in the Son of God. Every moment of our life is to be of faith. We make a grave mistake when we try to walk by feeling or sight. Recall the precious truth that Christ has loved us eternally (see Ps. 139:15, 16). Our Lord and Saviour not only gave all that He had, but He gave Himself. We are one with Him, He is the head, we are the body. Never shall we be separated. Therefore the world has nothing in us, as it had nothing in Him. Sing Psalter #383.

October 24 Read I John 3:1-7

As we sojourn here below there are many trials and temptations. We are confronted with many problems and cares. There are some concerns that nearly overwhelm us. Our threefold enemy assaults us, ever attempting to lead us on the broad way. But in our passage we read of that wonderful hope that is ours. When Christ shall appear, we shall be like Him. Such treasure in earthen vessels! Having this hope, we purify our-

selves, and live a life of gratitude, which will lead to holiness. As a believer, led of the Spirit, we will also feel that holiness is a part of our expectations, for we expect to be like Christ. Then we will feel the need to put away all sin, purifying ourselves from all evil company. Our desire will be to seek friends of God's people. In all our activities we need to ask, will this offend God? For if it is necessary, it is better to offend man than God. How often to our shame is not the reverse our situation. Sing Psalter #202.

October 25 Read I Peter 2:19-25

Each child of God stands in awe and profound admiration that God, of His own good pleasure, has chosen him unto eternal life. In Adam we had the sentence of death upon us. For God had said, in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. God will have His justice satisfied, in requiring the same human nature which had sinned to make satisfaction for sin. Here is displayed the wonder of God's grace, in that He sent His only begotten Son, born of the virgin Mary, to take on the human nature for His suffering and death. This wonder of God's grace was substitutionary. Jesus, who knew no sin, became sin for us, and upon Him was laid the iniquity of us all. Therefore when He cried, "It is finished," we His own, now being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness. Through his stripes we are healed. How unspeakable the love of God. Sing Psalter #376.

October 26 Read Psalm 65:1-4

"Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple" (vs. 4). Have we truly knowledge and experience of the blessedness of which the psalmist speaks? Is it with eager expectation that we gather this day, to approach unto God? Are we hungering and thirsting for that living water? Do we desire to drink deeply from the wells of salvation? Have we laid aside all sin, that in the beauty of holiness we may appear before Him? Yes, then we may draw near and dwell in His courts, with humility and lowliness of heart. Knowing that God is pleased with a broken spirit and contrite heart. Then it will be our only desire to worship at His footstool, we who are nothing in ourselves. Having not only received the blessings of His salvation, but in addition His word, to be the light upon our pathway. There is no greater joy and satisfaction, but to experience the oneness we have in our Lord and Saviour. When you read the complete Psalm you will see the manifold blessing that God bestows upon His people. May we be reminded that the Lord's Day is set aside for us, that we may seek and have fellowship with God and His people. Dear reader, never, no never use the Lord's day for your own worldly activities; we are to keep it holy, for God has blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it, for it is a foretaste of our eternal Sabbath. Sing Psalter #276.

October 27 Read Galatians 6:7-15

God calls us to a life of holiness. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also

reap" (vs. 7). To sow to one's flesh is to look forward to the desires of this present life, without regard to the future life. To sow to the spirit is to have regard for God, to seek His kingdom, His righteousness. It is to be spiritually minded, knowing that you do not belong to yourself, but, to your faithful saviour Jesus Christ. In our calling to holiness, we confess that Christ has redeemed us, with His precious blood. Therefore, the good works we perform are of His grace and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Through the performing of good works, we receive the assurance of faith, living in gratitude before Him. In addition, we confess that our good works, do not merit any reward with God, for even our best works are stained with sin. Always remember, that our good works are the *fruit* of our adoption in Christ, whose work God rewards, in the blessings of our salvation. Yet, it is our nature to desire merit before God through our good works, but that would require a total obedience to every precept of God's law perfectly. How incapable are we from that perfection, in our sinful flesh! Yes, our calling is to do good works, which, by God's grace we may accomplish, by a true faith, according to God's word, and always to His glory. Then will we sow unto life eternal, proclaiming with the apostle Paul "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (vs. 14). Sing Psalter #123.

October 28 Read Psalm 119:17-24

The test of our character will be most evident in our deepest and dearest longings. Our longings are more inward and more near to our real self than our outward acts; they are more natural in that they are free and beyond compulsion or restraint. As we long in our hearts, so we are. Now the question, do we have holy longings? The Psalmist in verse 20 proclaims "My soul breaketh for the longing it hath unto Thy judgments at all times." David here pours out his soul, saying that he is heart-broken, longing for, and to know God's revealed will. We often call upon God in our distress, but David desires to know that will at all times. In verse 33 we are told that the psalmist longed to obey God's word. When we truly know God, we will have a yearning to walk in the way of His commandments, more and more to conform to the judgments of God. Now judgments here are synonymous with His revealed will. May we also experience that heartfelt longing for the Word, evident in our lives. "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:20). Sing Psalter #322.

October 29 Read Matthew 5:1-12

The Scripture passage of today is known as the beatitudes. We shall not at this time do a study of them, except for verse 8, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Purity of heart is universally acknowledged to be the mother of all virtues. Impurity of heart is the cause of our spiritual blindness. This spiritual blindness becomes evident when we seek to fulfill the desires of the flesh. We live for this present world, all our activities reflect the so called pleasures of this life. Purity of heart, on the other hand, reveals to us a most

glorious sight. We come to see God, not only in His creation, but in His holiness, through the inspired Word. We see Jesus, made a little lower than the angels, for His suffering and death, then gloriously exalted above all, "that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess, that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father." To the pure of heart, God will show His covenant and all the wonders of salvation, and yet even more. For we are told that "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (I Cor. 2:9). Sing Psalter 425.

October 30 Read Psalm 101:1-8

"I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt Thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart" (vs. 2). David, the man after God's own heart, composed this Psalm. He was about to become king in Israel. The Lord had appointed him to be king. He purposes in all things to behave as becometh a monarch. Re-read the entire Psalm, notice how David excludes the proud heart, the high look, the secret slanderer, the deceitful worker, the teller of lies, from dwelling in his house or tarrying in his presence. God has chosen us to salvation, it is His good pleasure to grant us the Kingdom. As prophets, priests and kings may it be our resolve to behave wisely in a perfect way. "O when wilt Thou come unto me?" (vs. 2). Teach us Thy statutes, that we may have wisdom and understanding. Then will we walk uprightly, not only where others can see, but more so within our own homes and families. Such is the holy resolve of His children. Sing Psalter #271.

October 31 Read Isaiah 35:1-10

In verse 8, we read in part that a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness. Our salvation was planned from all eternity. A highway and a way has been provided. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6). God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. Thereby, laying a firm foundation for the highway that would throughout the ages bring His children home. We glory in the fact that we are on our way to God and shall soon behold Him, whom not having seen, we love, and in whom believing we even now rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory (I Pet. 1:8). We need to take heed and realize that there is no way to heaven but by holiness. "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:14). Are we traveling on the Way to Holiness? "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat" (Matt. 7:13). Many battles have been fought to maintain and hold fast the truth of God's Word. As Reformed Christians we commemorate on this day, the great Protestant Reformation. We cling to the truth, Scripture alone, as the basis for faith and life, and that blessed truth, justification by faith alone, apart from works. To God be all the glory, and praise, for His unspeakable gift, in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Sing Psalter #225.

Rev. Steven Key

by Rev. Steven Key
edited by Kris Moelker

I was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan on October 25, 1955, the first-born child of Roger and Florence Key, and was baptized in Wyoming Park Christian Reformed Church.

As a toddler through junior high school I grew up in Jenison, Michigan. I went to Jenison Christian School through the eighth grade. When I was 13 years old my father took a job in Petoskey, Michigan, and we moved to Charlevoix, a beautiful town nestled between Lake Michigan and Lake Charlevoix. I didn't go willingly. I was very unhappy about being uprooted and removed from my rowdy junior high school buddies. Looking back, however, it was a very beneficial move in the providence of God.

Already in junior high there were peer pressures that I was not standing up to very well. God used this move to work a change in direction in my spiritual life—the beginnings of a change that would culminate several years later in my entrance into the Protestant Reformed churches.

Although several years later my parents would join Atwood Christian Reformed Church where Reverend Audred Spriensma was serving his first pastorate, upon first moving to Charlevoix our church home became the Community Reformed Church (RCA). There I immediately established new and in fact healthier friendships. I learned that one of the most important influences in standing up to various peer pressures are the friends you keep. I am reminded of what we read in Ecclesiastes 4:12, "And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken." It is critically important that the friends we have are godly, and show a desire to walk in the way of the Lord even over against the trends. All the more important were those church



friends because I was no longer in the setting of a Christian school either. My high school years were spent in Charlevoix Public School. Certainly my experience both in grade school and high school have contributed to my zealous appreciation and support for our Protestant Reformed schools, and my fervent desire to see also our high school students receive a distinctive Christian education.

Through my high school years and first two years of college, I worked in a lumber yard in Charlevoix, and found much enjoyment in that work. I decided to go to college to pursue a degree in business. After graduating from high school in 1973, I began my college education at North Central Michigan College in Petoskey, a two-year school. To save costs, I continued to live at home and commuted each day to school. In 1975, I transferred to Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, where I continued my studies in the School of Business at WMU. I was also able to get a job with a retail and wholesale Building Supply Center that I had come to know while working in Charlevoix.

Growing up I was a very active in sports, especially baseball and football. I did pick up another hobby that I am able to continue to some degree today, and that is photography.

Those interested in Protestant Reformed Church history may find it interesting that, upon moving to Kalamazoo, I lived in the old parsonage of First Christian Reformed Church, where Reverend Henry Danhof was pastor in 1924. The parsonage had long been vacated, and was rented out by the church. My bedroom was Rev. Danhof's former study. That didn't mean anything to me at the time, but little did I know that I would some day be a member in the churches that found its

origin in the controversy of which Rev. Danhof was a part.

Upon moving to Kalamazoo, I re-established relationships with a couple cousins who lived there at the time. There was a young woman living with my cousin, Mary Key, whom the Lord in His good providence brought into my life. Nancy Bosch and Mary were best friends. After getting to know Nancy, our acquaintance began to blossom. We were able to discuss spiritual things freely and openly. On November 27, 1976 we were united in marriage at the Third Reformed Church in Kalamazoo.

The Lord has blessed our marriage richly, beyond measure, especially by the spiritual growth He has given us. We have been through many trials together, drawn closer by them all. By God's grace we were led to a richer understanding of the truth of God's Word, and came with unity of heart and mind to the Protestant Reformed Churches in 1979. God has also blessed our marriage with four daughters, and now a granddaughter. Stephanie is married to Andy Lanning, a seminarian, and is prepared to follow in her mother's footsteps as a pastor's wife, God willing. They have been blessed with a baby girl, Jessica. Our daughter Michelle just completed her first year of teaching in the Northwest Iowa Protestant Reformed School in Doon. Elisabeth works as a dietary technician at Mary Free Bed Hospital in Grand Rapids, while Mary Anne just graduated from Western Christian High School in Hull. The words of III John 4 ring true: *"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."*

My whole life, in God's wonderful providence, was a preparation for ministry, even when the ministry was the farthest thing from my mind. Although thoughts of the ministry had crossed my mind when I was probably a junior or senior in high school, I was quickly able to wash those thoughts out of my mind. Occasionally, they would come to the fore again, but I was able to find many excuses to suppress those thoughts. Ultimately, however, those thoughts were not able to be suppressed. After being married, moving to Grand Rapids from Kalamazoo for a job, and returning from the RCA to the CRC, I began to think more seriously about the ministry. The major hindrance, however, was what I perceived to be a significant and rapid departure from the historic Reformed faith in the CRC. I was troubled enough by what I saw and by what I heard from several seminarians with whom we associated in our church, that I was not at all inclined to attend Calvin Seminary. At this time my wife and I began visiting other churches, considering whether it was

our spiritual obligation to leave the CRC, and struggling with the question of "Where to go." Bear in mind that at this time we were yet unfamiliar with the Protestant Reformed Churches. I became a member of the Reformed Fellowship, what many considered the ultra-conservative group in the CRC, which was attempting to maintain the old paths. Of concern to me, however, was the fact that I was the youngest member of that organization by about 25 years, and the men who were in their 40's were all ministers. That was not a good sign, either, for the future of the CRC.

There were several significant events that happened in the course of a couple years, which God used to lead us to the PRC. To go into them in detail would require a book, so I will single out only a couple.

In 1978, my wife and I received our first exposure to the PRC, when a friend of ours invited us to a lecture held in Hudsonville church. Professor Hanko spoke on "The Pleasures of Babylon in Jerusalem." I recall very distinctly two things about that event. First, the attendance at that lecture was astounding to us. The church was packed. And it was not just elderly in attendance, but young families and young couples. (I wonder if that is the case in the Grand Rapids area any more among our Protestant Reformed people.) The second thing that stands out in my recollection is that Prof. Hanko, while focusing on the dangers of worldliness in the Protestant Reformed Churches, made a passing reference to the Christian Reformed Church and the loss of the antithesis. He attributed that loss to "common grace." That passing reference struck me and my wife. It was our first acquaintance with the term "common grace." It also put the question in our minds, "Was this just some Protestant Reformed propaganda, or was there truth to the statement that the loss of the antithesis (very evident to us as members of the CRC) was to be attributed to the Christian Reformed adoption of this doctrine called "common grace."

I set out to study the issue. Over the course of the following few weeks, I spent time in the Calvin College library and before Scripture studying the history of the common grace controversy. It was as if the lights came on — and shone brightly. At the same time, in the church where we were members, we began seeing the influence of common grace in the preaching as well as in the Bible studies or adult Sunday School classes. Three different 6 or 8 week classes, each led by different Calvin College or Seminary professors, brought out various aspects of the influence of common grace, and even criticisms

of the Protestant Reformed Churches. God was using all these events to point us in the direction of the PRC—especially when, upon investigating some of the criticisms of the PRC, I found the charges against the PRC to be slanderous caricatures and false representations of what the Protestant Reformed churches teach.

Another event, out of many, that played a part in our change of churches at this time was a brief conversation held with Rev. John Byker, a minister in the CRC at that time. I spoke with Rev. Byker after a speech he had given under the auspices of the Reformed Fellowship. He was forthright about the departure of the CRC, and questioned the future of the denomination. After his speech, I spoke with him, explaining that my wife and I were expecting our first child, and wondering what to do about our church membership. He advised me that, for the sake of our children, we had a calling to look for a church that held more faithfully to the truth of God's Word. He gave me that advice, even though at that time he felt his own office compelled him to stay in the CRC until it was no longer possible for him to serve. Although we were still unsettled as to where we would go, we were convinced that there were more faithful churches where we should be members.

Once we had opportunity to hear the distinctive preaching of the PRC, it was only a brief time before we were able to come to a clear understanding about other teachings of the PRC, and make a decision that this is where we belonged. And while we soon found out that sin abounds also among the Protestant Reformed people, and the devil is always seeking to destroy the church and her unity, we rejoice for the place God has given us in the PRC. Once settled in our church membership, I also was compelled to submit to that subjective calling God had given me to study for the ministry.

There are many memories of seminary, although most of the memories of practice preaching have long ago been suppressed. I have fond memories, though, of receiving instruction under Professors H. C. Hoeksema, H. Hanko and R. Decker, as well as the fellowship of my fellow students. The faithfulness of our seminary in preparing preachers is something for which the churches must be thankful and for which we must continually pray.

Upon graduating from seminary in 1986, I received a call to Southeast Protestant Reformed Church. We were thrilled to take up the labors there, having been members there for a while under the ministry of Rev. Haak and having gotten to know the congregation a bit prior to my call. We had a blessed ministry there, being ex-

traordinarily well-received by God's people, and finding strong support from the elders. It was most difficult for us to say good-bye to the saints there, when in 1991 I accepted the second call that the congregation in Randolph, Wisconsin extended to me. Our family was young enough yet to make the adjustment well, and grew to love the small town life of Randolph, let alone the congregation there. We were in Randolph for nine years, during which time we were blessed with the establishment of Faith Christian School and significant growth in the congregation. In 2000 I accepted Hull's call—also the second one that the congregation extended to me—and have labored here now for three years.

I have always found young children a joy to teach. While I haven't written a book of stories from my catechism classes, children often say or ask things that are not only expressive of a child-like faith, but that will also bring a smile to your face. I also enjoy immensely the opportunity to teach young people who have come to some maturity and see the importance of their own spiritual growth. Because of the proximity of Southeast PRC to Calvin College, and now Hull to Dordt College, I have also had many opportunities to meet with young people from outside our churches, and to open the Bible to them, showing them the consistency and beauty of the Reformed faith.

At this stage in the history of our churches, we who serve in the ministry do little more than build upon the foundation laid by other men. But one of the most rewarding things in my ministry was to see the people of God come together in Randolph and begin a Protestant Reformed school. That work of God, together with the influx of new members that it brought to Randolph's congregation, brought a significant and healthy change to the congregation. We pray that God will bring about the same fruits in a Protestant Reformed high school in Northwest Iowa.

Although our churches have enjoyed 50 years of relative peace since the schism of 1953, the churches repeatedly face controversy. A man doesn't need to be in the ministry long to face controversy—whether disputes over various issues, or opposition to the exercise of discipline, or the verbal rejection of the Word preached because it impinges too much upon a person's walk of life. In recent history we have even grieved over the schism of a minister and congregation. All such controversies are sorrowful for those involved. As churches we must remember how susceptible we are to the attacks of Satan. The devil doesn't need to focus his atten-

tion on churches that have already departed from the truth of Scripture. His attention is focused upon us. We had better live in that awareness, praying always to be kept from the snares of the evil one. We must remember the urgency with which Scripture exhorts us to maintain the unity of the church.

I have seen several comical things happen while leading worship services. I'll relate just one of them. One Sunday, during the sermon, a child who was about three years old, decided he had looked at the walls and ceiling long enough, and certainly had sat long enough. It was time to run. To his parents' horror, he jumped out of the pew on the side aisle where they were sitting, and began his run. He ran down the aisle toward the front, turned and ran across the front, in front of the pulpit—by now with dad after him—up the opposite side aisle all the way to the back of the church, and around the back, circling the church until he reached the pew where his family was sitting, and climbed back onto the pew as if he had just accomplished a major fete. I'm sure he had second thoughts about that "fete" after his dad took him out of the sanctuary for a little "father-son chat."

Another story I can't resist telling involved a family visit. While conducting family visitation, I held a 3-year-old boy on my lap. And as I'm leading the family visit, I felt his little fingers go into my mouth, where he rubbed my teeth. To his parent's everlasting embarrassment he blurted out, "Do your teeth come out? My grandpa's teeth come out!" My elder just about fell off his chair. He was laughing so hard!

The ministry has to be a matter of heart-felt conviction, an unshakable desire to preach the gospel, and a deep love for God's people. There are challenges in the ministry unlike any other vocation, as well as a deep trying of the faith always. A young man who will pursue the ministry must know humility, and must realize that it is God alone Who calls and qualifies according to His will. During the years that I was studying in our seminary there were 16 young men who did not make it through, some of whom have been able to give useful service to the church in other areas. Those who pursue their studies with passion and yet who do not make it through are not to be ashamed. God alone calls. And those whom He does not call can yet occupy a very important place in the church.

Any faithful minister prays for the spiritual growth of our youth and evidence of spiritual maturity. There are always young people that are the focus of many prayers and much concern because they choose to walk a pathway that bring many sorrows. But I am encouraged always to see many seriously-minded young people in our churches, who long to live in gratitude to their Redeemer, and who are not afraid to seek help in the many difficulties and temptations that they face. So long as we give our young people faithful preaching and a godly home life, God will continue to show His faithfulness to His promise to gather His church from believers and their seed. ❖

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

Our Young People's Federation

Study Proverbs This Society Season

Study for Week #5:

Warnings about Drinking

Texts from Proverbs: 20:1, 21:17, 23:29-35 (analyze this passage most carefully), 31:4-7.

Questions to help "the word of Christ dwell in you richly:"

1. Is it a sin for YOU to drink alcohol? Why or why not?
2. Is it a sin for all of God's people to drink alcohol? What does Proverbs 31 mean when it says that kings may not drink? How do you respond to those who say, "We Christians all are now prophets, priests and

kings: therefore *we* Christians may not drink any alcohol?

3. How does a Christian define what is “over-drinking”? How much is too much? Wouldn’t it be easier and better just to forbid all drinking?
4. What are the *effects* of sinful drinking?
5. How does wine “*mock*” a person? What is “raging” about strong drink? Why are so many *deceived* by alcohol?
6. May a Christian be friends with someone they know that drinks too much?
7. If a person becomes a drunkard (don’t say “alcoholic” because the Bible says “drunkard”) what does the New Testament say about him or her? Can they be saved?

Study for Week #6:

The Strange Woman (or: The Sin of Fornication)

Texts from Proverbs: 2:16-19; 5:3-14, 20-23; 6:24-35; 7:1-27; 9:13-18; 23:26-28; 29:3; 30:20.

Questions to help “the word of Christ dwell in you richly:”

1. Proverbs explains how a person falls into the sin of fornication. Describe this in your own words. How is this similar to what happens today? Are there differences?
2. What is it in our day that tempts young people to this sin?
3. Is it sinning against his (her) future spouse when a person commits fornication when they are single?”
4. From these texts, describe some of the *sorry results* of falling into this sin?
5. Why does Proverbs repeatedly talk about the evil *results* of fornication instead of that it is a sin against God?
6. Is the responsibility of girls in this different than that of the boys? Why does Proverbs always address the “son” and not the “daughter”?
7. What can young people do to help each other to avoid this sin?

Study for Week #7:

Greed and Covetousness

Texts from Proverbs: 1:18, 19; 28:6; 15:16; 28:16; 15:27; 22:1; 25:16; 27:20.

Questions to help “the word of Christ dwell in you richly:”

1. Find two other New Testament passages that teach about covetousness and greed and the desire to be rich:
2. Is it a sin to *want* to be rich?
3. Try to give a *definition* of covetousness.
4. Can a person *ruin his life and family* by trying to be rich? Proof? How?
5. Are these dangers greater today than they were in our grandparent’s generation?
6. What’s the solution to greed? How do we fight it and root it out of our hearts?

Study for Week #8:

Hatred

Texts from Proverbs: 10:12, 10:18, 11:12, 14:21, 15:17, 26:24, 26:26.

Questions to help “the word of Christ dwell in you richly:”

1. Define hatred. (Do this by looking up other passages that use the word, especially in reference to God.)
2. Does God hate? May we? (How can you reconcile these warnings against hatred with David’s confession in Psalm 139:21, 22?)
3. What is the root of this sinful hatred in us?
4. Is there often a choice between *hatred with riches* and *love with poverty*? (If not, why would 15:17 give those alternatives?)
5. Can you conclude that where there is fighting, the cause was hatred? If not, how do you explain 10:12?
6. The opposite of hatred is love. How does love *cover* someone’s sin? How are you doing that in your life?



George M. Ophoff (11)

The Kind of Man He Was (2)

by Prof. Herman Hanko

Man's character or personality, if you wish to call it that, is a very complex thing. I am convinced that God is the Creator of each man's person. At the moment of conception God puts each man's person in him, and by this, stamps him once and for all as a unique individual. It is difficult to say what is involved in this. Surely it is true that the person which God forms is in perfect harmony with the man's nature so that the whole nature bears the stamp of that person and so that the person pervades the entire nature in all its parts. This is so true that even a man's fingerprints are uniquely his own and distinguish him from every other person who has ever lived.

The "effect" of the person in man extends to all the extremities of the body and pervades all the inner recesses of the soul. It is also true that, although the person is molded to a considerable extent by his environment, he is also the heir to the complexity of characteristics which have made up his parents and earlier ancestors. He carries his ancestors in himself through heredity.

It is also true that heredity and environment are not the sole determining factors in what makes a person uniquely himself. He is at the very core of his being a person with specific characteristics which make him unique among every person who has ever lived. God stamps him indelibly as a unique individual. In this sense of the word, he is his own man. God has made him the way he is. Whatever may happen to him in later life, this hard central core of personality remains fundamentally unchanged. And not only does it remain unchanged in life, but it remains unchanged through death and into all eternity.



Rev. George Ophoff, 1925

It is also true that some people are far more complex individuals than other. Whatever the reason for this may be, the fact itself is beyond dispute. Rev. Ophoff was a complex man. Whether he was more complex than usual or than many others, I do not know. But there were many sides to his character and these different sides often seemed to be contradictory.

There were times when he left the impression that he was totally unconcerned about his personal appearance. He was in a very natural and unpretentious sort of way an extremely dignified looking man. He stood about five feet, nine inches tall and was rather well proportioned; although in his later years he became somewhat

heavy, he was not what one would call fat. His natural dignity lay in his bearing, in the look on his face, and in his head full of pure white hair.

He was in his own way a handsome man, although he was personally completely oblivious to this. His eyes behind iron-rimmed glasses were sharp and penetrating. His head was massive and his chin had the set of a bulldog so that his whole appearance was one of tenacity and courage. He bore his natural dignity without thought and it was this more than anything else which made his dignity as impressive as it was.

One did not easily fasten his attention upon the outward appearance of Rev. Ophoff, because the whole of his personality was written so clearly on his face and expressed so forcibly through his mannerisms that one was attracted to the man himself and soon forgot his outward appearance. His voice was deep and booming and his manner of conduct easily excitable.

Yet the things over which he became most excited were the things which pertained directly to the truth of the Scriptures. He could laugh easily, yet he laughed seldom. He could be congenial and jovial, but if the discussion that was going on about him was not in some way related to theology, his interest soon waned and he turned in upon himself to ponder what was really his only love in life.

It was this innate dignity which characterized Rev. Ophoff, which made his outward appearance somewhat irrelevant. Nevertheless, his unconcern for his personal appearance was often strikingly evident. I remember vividly that he could come to school looking like he had been up all night (which he probably had). It was not at all uncommon in those days for both Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff to remain at their desks all night long. The pressures of work were so great that there was oftentimes insufficient opportunity to sleep. But the result would be that Rev. Ophoff's work at his desk was only interrupted in the morning when the time came for him to dash off for school. There was no time to change his clothes, no time to wash and shave, no time even to make himself presentable for his classes. The result would be that he would sometimes have holes in his clothing from hot ashes which fell from his cigar or cigarette. His clothing would sometimes be rumpled and disheveled, his tie on askew and his shirt unchanged.

This was not because his wife was not interested in his appearance. As a matter of fact, she assumed sole responsibility for his appearance and saw to it as much as she could that the clothes he put on were clean and ironed,

that clean clothes were lying ready for him, and that he was ready as far as his outward appearance was concerned to take up his tasks in school. But oftentimes there was no time for this, and in spite of the fact that his wife had laid clean clothes ready, he had to rush off to school without changing them.

On the other hand, he could also be astonishingly concerned about his appearance. Sometimes he took great pains to look attractive and neat. He could be very unhappy when he thought his wife did not have a white shirt ready for him when he was ready to go away—although the shirt was lying on his bed ready for his use. He would light up with pride when one would mention how neat his appearance was. If we told him on occasion that a particular tie did not go well with his shirt, he would never wear that combination again.

I cite this as but one indication of the seeming contradictions in his life. There were more. He was a man of great temper, but also one of the meekest men I have known in all my life. It was not as if his temper would flare up unprovoked, for he was an exceptionally long-suffering man and had untold patience with his children and with his sometimes rather stupid students in school. But if for some reason or another he was pushed beyond endurance, or if a question of the truth of the Scriptures was at stake, or if the well-being of the church seemed to be jeopardized by the careless talk of others with whom he associated, his temper would be great and fierce.

On the other hand, his meekness was evident from the fact that when shown he was wrong, he was always more than willing to apologize for what he had done. He was a man who could be so absolutely sure of his position on a question of doctrine that no power on earth could budge him. But he was also a man who needed constant assurance that what he was doing was correct and right. He never arrived home after preaching without asking his wife what she thought of the sermon. She would loyally praise the sermon to the skies and assure him that it was one of the best he had ever preached. He knew she was going to say this, for she had said it hundreds of times; but this did not prevent him from asking her each time again. He was a man of rigorous intellectual honesty who could carry through an argument to its conclusion regardless of what that conclusion might be: and this was coupled with great powers of logic.

In some aspects of his work he was the most disorganized man I have been privileged to know. The copy of his *Standard Bearer* articles often came into the print shop in such a condition that it was beyond the powers

of a mere mortal to decipher them—and for a few years it was my dubious privilege to do the typesetting of his articles. His study was controlled chaos and no one upon pain of a fierce reprimand could venture into his study even to clean. His notes, books, manuscripts, papers, letters, and various paraphernalia for his work were scattered on all the shelves and piled high on the floor. Yet he always seemed to know where everything was and could lay his hands on any sheet of paper which he happened to need at any given time, although it might take him quite a while to find it.

He was in some things naive to a fault so that he was constantly leaving the impression that anyone could pull the wool over his eyes—and many did. But he was also extremely aware of what was going on and sensitive to many things to which others were oblivious. He could not remember the names of his catechumens even after having taught them a couple of years; and he would not recognize them if he met them on the street. But there are few who had the profound understanding of human nature which he had. He understood the subtleties of the human heart and possessed an insight into human nature which was in many respects unique. In school he gave us clues to the understanding of the heart of man which have remained with me to this day. The older I become, the more I recognize not only how true they were, but how incisive and correct.

It is impossible, I think, to bring any kind of harmony to these conflicting aspects of his character. But there is a common thread which runs through them all and which explains much of this problem. I refer to one aspect of his character which was, in a certain sense, predominant. I speak now, however, of something spiritual. Rev. Ophoff was totally committed to the Church of Jesus Christ and to the truth of the Scriptures.

This has several aspects to it. For one thing, Rev. Ophoff was brought up and trained in the Reformed faith. This was true in his home, in his church, in the home of the grandfather for whom he cared, and in school. He steeped himself in the Reformed faith, came to know it and love it, and it became the ruling passion in his life. For another thing, Rev. Ophoff was a man of remarkable tenacity. He sometimes has been pictured as a bulldog and in some respects his facial features faintly resembled those of a bulldog, but this was above all true of his character. He would hang on to a subject with such ferocity that nothing could persuade him to let loose.

This was also true of his intellectual processes. If he was pondering a problem, he set his mind on that prob-

lem and nothing could shake him loose from it. This could go on for hours not only, but sometimes for days. Coupled with this was a remarkable power of concentration. He was capable of concentrating so completely on something that he literally became oblivious to all his surroundings. He did not know what was happening about him.

There was a time in the past when after his stroke I picked him up at his home to attend Rev. Hoeksema's Dogmatics class. We would discuss many different questions in the short ride between his home and school, but even if two days elapsed between our conversations he could pick up the thread of that conversation as if there had been no interruption. If his mind became engrossed in a problem facing classis or synod, he could ask for the floor to discuss that problem even after the matter had been voted on and the assembly had gone to another subject, so that the chairman would have to inform him that no longer was the body discussing the subject which he was still pondering in his soul.

His interest in life was the truth of the Scriptures. It was an all-absorbing interest, a total concern, a deep and passionate love affair which brooked no interference. His whole life was given over to it. This was so completely true that he had no interest in ninety percent of the things people talk about. He was almost totally without humor because his mind was analyzing the joke or the humorous situation while the humor of it escaped him entirely. He was not even the father and husband he should have been in the home, and the whole operation of the home fell upon the shoulders of his wife. But this was because of the fact that his heart and soul was dedicated to the welfare of the church.

Many, many stories have been told about Rev. Ophoff's absent-mindedness. These stories have become something of a legend which has been woven over the years. But his absent-mindedness was essentially his preoccupation with matters which alone were of interest to him.

This was the man who began his ministry in Hope Christian Reformed Church in 1921. This was the man whom God was to use for an important work in the history of the Church of Jesus Christ. ❖

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

Treasures

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

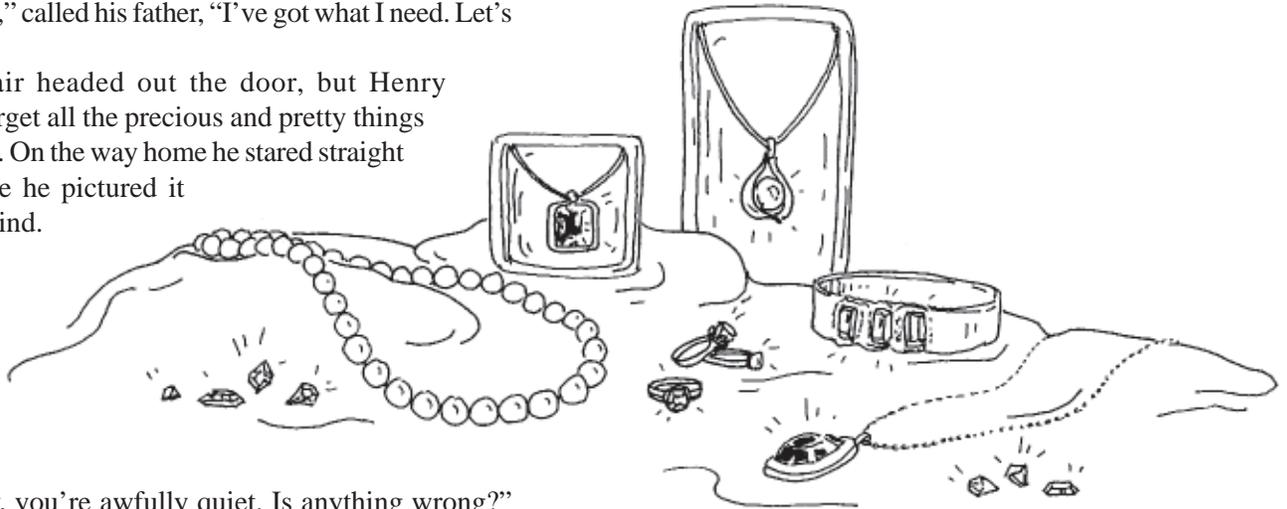
... *let it shine!*

by Connie Meyer

Henry looked over the jewelry display case while his father shopped at another counter. The department store held so many different and interesting things to look at! The gems all set in gleaming gold and silver couldn't help but capture his attention.

"Henry," called his father, "I've got what I need. Let's go home."

The pair headed out the door, but Henry couldn't forget all the precious and pretty things he had seen. On the way home he stared straight ahead while he pictured it all in his mind.



"Henry, you're awfully quiet. Is anything wrong?" asked his father.

"Oh no, I'm just thinking."

"Well, what are you thinking about?"

"Did you see all the jewelry they had in the store?"

His father nodded while he steered the car around a curve. "Yes, I saw it as we walked by."

"All that stuff must be worth a lot of money! Do people really buy it all?"

"Oh yes. Those are some of the riches of this world. It's not wrong to own some—see my ring? And Mom has one too. But that's not our real treasure, is it? The world can't understand our treasure."

Henry shook his head, but the sparkling gems were still before his eyes. "What is your real treasure?" he asked.

"I have many of them—including you. But there is one treasure that matters above all else, and that is belonging 'to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.' Then we know that no matter what, we are safe in Him forever."

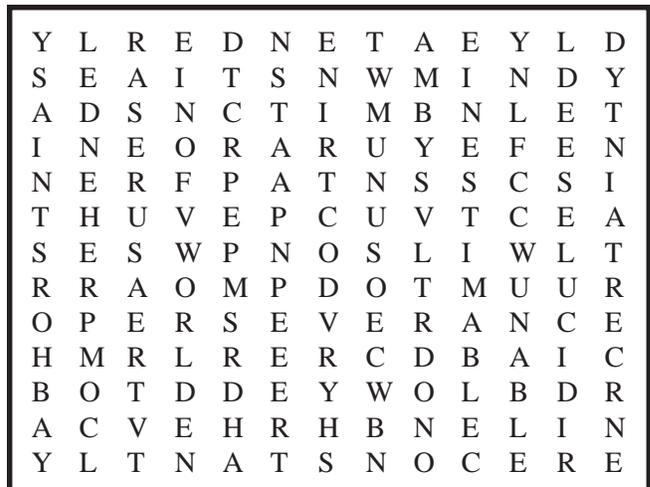
"Forever?"

"Forever. He preserves His sheep forever. The value of that treasure has no end!" ❖

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

Find the underlined words from Art. 15 of the 5th Head of the Canons of Dordt in the puzzle below:

"The carnal mind is unable to comprehend this doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, and the certainly thereof...Satan abhors it; the world ridicules it;...and heretics oppose it; but the spouse of Christ hath always most tenderly loved and constantly defended it, as an inestimable treasure..."



BEACONLIGHTS

P.O. BOX 144
Randolph, WI 53956

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

Church News

BAPTISMS

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

Mark 16:16

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:
Kristin Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. John Marcus—Byron Center, MI
Jessica Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Michael Klaassens—Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
Zachary Ashton, son of Mr. & Mrs. Russell Tolsma—Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
Rachel Madelyn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Rod Korhorn—Georgetown, MI
Jacob Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brad Butgereit—Grandville, MI
Joel David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jon Rutgers—Hope, MI
Darin Scott, son of Mr. & Mrs. David King—Hull, IA
Shawna Ranae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Craig Hoksbergen—Hull, IA
Zoe Adele, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Travis Groeneweg—Hull, IA
Cheyenne Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. John Heys—Loveland, CO
Kayla Dawn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kris Campbell—Loveland, CO
Dylan Emma, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Poortinga—Peace, IL
Jennifer Anne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ed Hoksbergen—Randolph, WI
Meagan Kathleen, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Krosschell—Randolph, WI
Kenton David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dave Regnerus—Randolph, WI
Darren Ray, son of Rev. & Mrs. Allen Brummel—South Holland, IL
Sean Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Chad Dykstra—South Holland, IL
Jed David, son of Mr. & Mrs. James Ophoff—South Holland, IL
Daniel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Arthur Kleyn—Southwest, MI
Reece David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jayson Alsum—Trinity, MI
Zoe Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Holstege—Trinity, MI

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:
From Edmonton, Alberta, Canada—Don Tolsma
From Faith, MI—Nathan Decker, Eric Doezema, Lynnae Dykstra, Steve Griffioen, Kenton Kalsbeek, A. J. Karsemeyer, Jessica Karsemeyer, Troy Karsemeyer, Cassie Kooienga, Laura Pastoor
From Georgetown, MI—Melissa Miedema, Eric Mowery, Lisa Miedema, Megan Slager
From Grandville, MI—Matthew DeBeor, Audra Koole, Jason Kregel
From Peace, IL—Kristin Warner
From Redlands, CA—Mary Tolbert
From Southwest, MI—Amanda Kuiper
From Southwest, MI—Jared Looyenga

MARRIAGES

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

Matthew 19:5

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:
Mr. Tim & Schareane Elzinga—Byron Center, MI
Mr. Ben Bloomendaal and Miss Rochelle Van Den Top—Doon, IA
Mr. Bob Knecht and Miss Alyssa Brands—Edgerton, MN
Mr. Russell De Vries and Miss Kathryn Jefferies—Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
Mr. Ryan Tolsma and Miss Steacy Ovis—Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
Mr. Eric Phelps and Miss Crista Slopsema—First, MI
Mr. Andrew Moss and Miss Amanda Hoksbergen—Hull, IA
Mr. Jon Bult and Miss Michelle Linker—Lacombe, Canada
Mr. Joseph Schimmel and Miss Jen Tolsma—Loveland, CO
Mr. Erin Mowery and Miss Heidi Van Overloop—Holland, MI
Mr. Bryant Van Overloop and Miss Deanna Poortenga—Peace, IL
Mr. Greg Bruinsma and Miss Elizabeth Terpstra—Peace, IL