

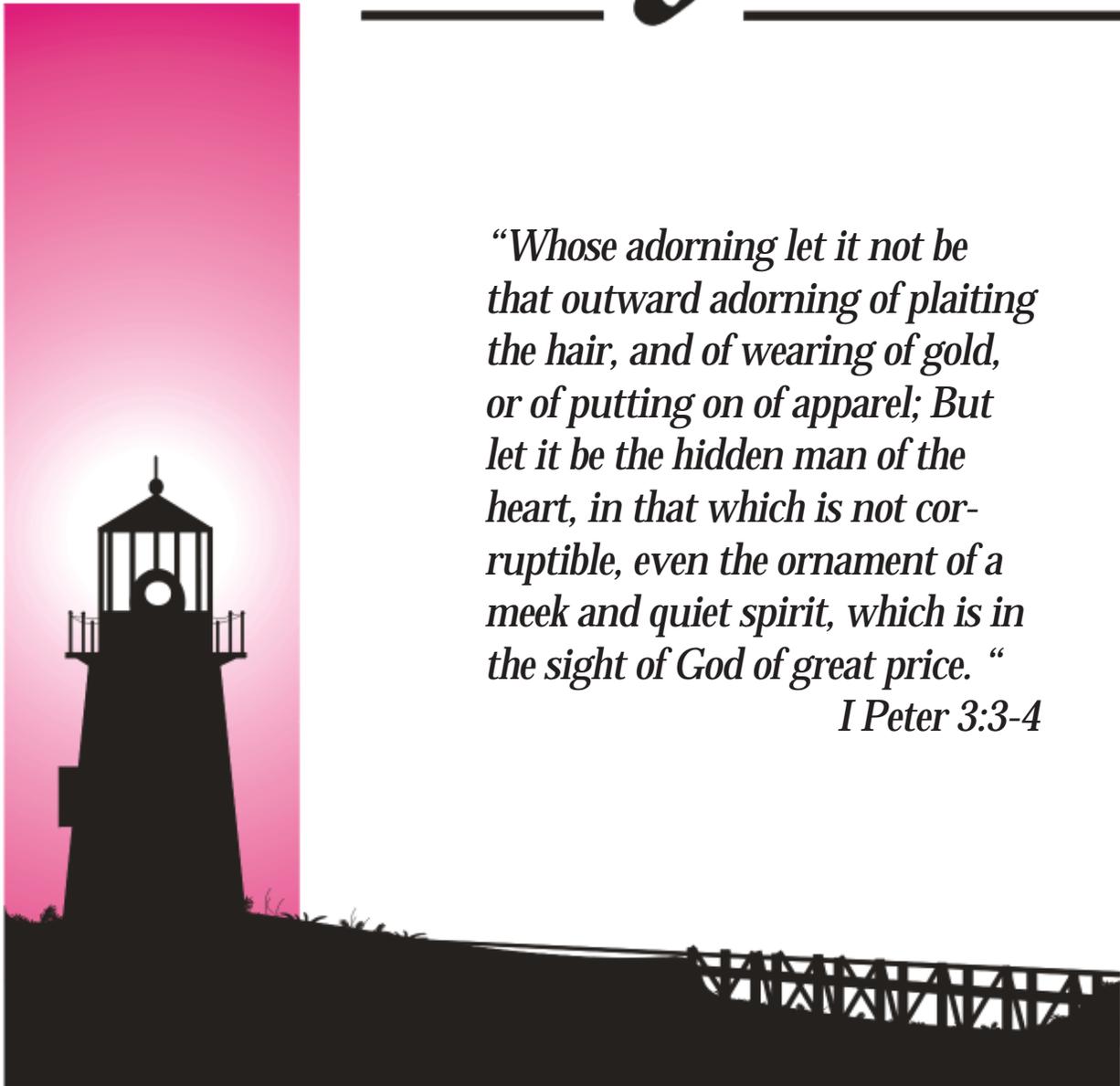
# Beacon Lights

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*“Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. “*

*I Peter 3:3-4*



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# Affliction For Our Profit (3)

by Aaron J. Cleveland



In the previous article we looked at the various reasons children of God are afflicted. We also noticed how we should view God's affliction of others. Now we hope to see how God deals mercifully with His children in affliction and how we benefit spiritually from God's chastening.

That God sovereignly controls our afflictions is the foundation for understanding how God deals mercifully with us and how we grow spiritually from afflictions. If we do not acknowledge the Lord in all of our ways, then in our trials we will have no comfort, we will not experience God's mercy, and we will not experience God directing our paths (Proverbs 3:6). That is why it is important for us to know and believe sound doctrine. Only those who confess God's sovereignty, especially over every aspect of their salvation, have comfort in affliction. We confess this in the first Q & A of the Heidelberg Catechism when we say, "that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation." Just as God works all of our salvation, from beginning to end, so does He cause every event which takes place in our lives to serve the purpose of our salvation.

That God always deals with His children in mercy, even in the way of affliction, is found in many places in God's Word. In Psalm 103:8, 10, we read "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." Apart from Christ, we would rightfully be the objects of God's fierce anger because of our sinfulness. There is nothing that we have of ourselves that merits any favor with God. We have no right to any spiritual, much less physical gifts from God. Of ourselves, we are the deserving objects of His wrath only.

Yet, in Christ, God deals with us in mercy. The price of our sins has been paid. No longer are we the objects of God's anger. Rather, we are the objects of His love and mercy. Because of this, God mercifully uses even the evils of this life to further our salvation. The prayer of David in Psalm 25 illustrates this. God had put David in great affliction. Said David, "The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses. Look upon mine affliction and my pain" (vs. 17, 18a). His enemies were many and they hated him. David's way was very dark. Yet, the chief concern of David in all of his trials was not the difficulty of his way, but his sins. It was not the pain that he suffered or the hatred that he endured, but his sins which disturbed him the most.

"Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions" (vs. 7). "Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins" (vs. 18). To David, his sins were more unbearable than his pain. To know that his sins were forgiven was more important to him than any physical relief he may receive from his afflictions. Recognizing our sins, repenting of them, and experiencing God's forgiveness ought to be our chief concern when we are afflicted also.

Our Catechism teaches us that in order for us to "live and die happily", we first must know how great our sins and miseries are (Q & A 2). Secondly, we must know how we are delivered from our sins. God mercifully teaches us how great our sins and miseries are through the way of affliction. As we discussed earlier, our afflictions are a result of our sinfulness. Because of our sins, we experience pain, sorrow,

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distress, and difficulty. When we are afflicted, God shows us clearly the fruit of our sins. However, our consideration does not stop with only knowing our sins. We desire to turn from our sins and to experience God's forgiving of them.

That God uses affliction to bring us to repentance is clear from Psalm 119:67, where we read, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word."

And as David in affliction prayed "forgive all my sins," so do we (Psalm 25:18). That our chief concern in affliction is our sins does not mean that we may not desire to be delivered from the physical circumstances of our affliction. The believer is not one who desires to live in a state of misery in order only to dwell upon his sins. Rather, we are to use the occasion of God's affliction to examine our lives while we pray "Thy will be done" concerning the physical circumstances of that affliction. God, in His time, when His will is accomplished, delivers us out of our affliction.

Because God uses affliction to teach and correct us, we spiritually benefit from the Lord's chastening. This is the idea found in Hebrews 12:1-11. In a previous article we noticed from this passage how the believer experiences God's chastening as a child from a loving Father. We know that we are the children of God because of the fact that we are disciplined and corrected. We profit spiritually from that chastening by being made "partakers of His holiness" (vs. 10). While chastening is never a pleasant experience for our flesh, yet God's Word tells us that "nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (vs. 11). Calvin calls that *fruit of righteousness* "the fear of the Lord and a godly and holy life" (Vol. XXII, p. 320).

The godly and holy life that God produces through chastening is the positive fruit of affliction. Not only does God work a sorrow for sin and a mortification of our old man of sin, but He also works the quickening of the new man in Christ. We produce the fruit of an obedient life. Sinful thoughts and desires are put away and replaced with holy thoughts and desires. Instead of speaking sinful and vain words, our conversation becomes more edifying and builds up the brother. Instead of using our time to carry out our own selfish plans, our time is more willingly used in the service of God.

The figure found in John 15 of a vine and branches also illustrates how God uses affliction to purge us, or prune us. Just as a husbandman must cut away the parts of the branches that are dead and the parts which are fruitless, so must our Father deal with us as branches in the vine of Christ. Often our Father uses the pruning hook of affliction to cut away the dead and unfruitful areas of our spiritual life. If we are ignoring or misusing a spiritual gift He has given us, God may bring about a particular affliction in our life that causes us to use that gift for the good of His people and to the glory of His name. Perhaps God brings an affliction upon our family or upon others in the church which gives us the opportunity to use our time and resources in the service of others rather than ourselves. Always our Father is pruning us so that we produce more fruit.

When enduring afflictions, we must remember that they are "light" and "but for a moment" when compared to the glory which awaits us (II Cor. 4:17). By them our heavenly Father prepares us for the enjoyment of heaven. They are His means to conform us to the image of His Son. This is part of our comfort in affliction. Not only do we know that God sovereignly sends us various afflictions, but He also causes those afflictions to serve our salvation.

God is praised when we endure, by His grace, the afflictions He sends upon us. The faith which He gives is proved to be a genuine faith. Only that faith which is from God enables the believer to endure affliction. And that faith is strengthened by God in affliction. On the last day, our proved faith will be "found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (I Peter 1:7). It is all God's work. Let us thank our Father for His sovereign use of affliction for our profit. ❖

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



# A Biblical Perspective on Modesty

by John Marcus

**T**he lack of modesty in dress is an issue that has faced the human race since the fall of Adam and Eve into sin. Nor will the issue disappear until we go to be with God in glory. One is often amazed what young ladies (and older ones too) are wearing these days. Not only on the street and in school but also in church it seems that the standard of dress is less and less modest. How short may a skirt be before it is considered immodest? Is it wrong to wear form-fitting clothing? Is it appropriate for Christian ladies to wear bikini bathing suits (or even regular bathing suits) in public? May our men wear Speedo bathing suits in public? These and many more questions are faced by believers in today's society. Does the Bible provide guidelines that we can follow in this area? If the Bible speaks to these issues we are obliged to listen and obey. Where the Bible is silent and provides no relevant principles, then we must remain silent.

Modesty is defined by Webster's Dictionary as "freedom from conceit or vanity; propriety in dress, speech, or conduct." This definition brings out two aspects of modesty; the inward and the outward. Both aspects are related; inward modesty leads to outward modesty and outward modesty is a sign of the inward quality. Christians need both. We are told in I Peter 3:3-4, "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." From this Scripture, it is clear that inward and outward modesty are related. Those who are adorned with a meek and quiet spirit will be the same ones whose adorning is not outward. Both inward and outward modesty ought to be cultivated among us. This is not an option, this is what God's will is for us as His people.

There are two biblical principles that guide us in the issue of modesty in dress. The first principle is that we

must not seek to draw attention to ourselves by the way that we dress. Secondly, we must very careful not to cause others to stumble into sin on account of how we are dressing.

The first principle concerns pride and vanity that is in our heart. Pride and vanity leads many to dress the way they do. Many dress they way they do in order to get noticed by their peers. There are many ways that one might dress in order to get noticed. Depending on who one wants to notice them, they might take many different strategies. They might choose to wear the absolute latest fashions, deck themselves with all kinds of jewelry, pierce their body in unseemly places such as one's nose, or tongue, or eyelid etc., color their hair, and the list goes on. God is terribly displeased with such haughtiness and promises judgment upon those who practice it. "Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet. Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts" (Isaiah 3:16-17). Nor are young men immune from this pride and vanity. In order to draw attention to themselves, they might buy the most expensive Nike Air shoes on the market, they might decide to pierce their ears, or wear the latest sports clothing.

At other times, one might seek to be noticed by those of the opposite sex. Young men might specifically dress to impress the young ladies. Perhaps he will choose a tight T-shirt, or one with the arms cut out that shows off the muscles that he has worked on all summer. Young ladies can also fall into this trap by dressing to show off their body. Clothing that has a low neckline, a high slit, or that otherwise exposes one's skin is inviting the attention of young men. Not only clothing that shows a young lady's skin is a problem, but also tight clothing

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that highlights the shape of her body can be used to draw attention to herself.

All such show in the way we dress is wrong for the simple reason that it is born out of sinful pride. None of the items on this list are necessities. All of them are worn for the wrong reason of bringing glory to ourselves when we should be seeking the glory of our Creator and Redeemer.

The second principle has to do with causing others to stumble. Out of love for our neighbor, we may not grant ourselves the freedom to dress in any way that we want. Especially the seventh commandment speaks to this issue. In its treatment of the seventh commandment, the Heidelberg Catechism says the following in Question 109.

Doth God forbid in this commandment, only adultery, and such like gross sins? Answer. Since both our body and soul are temples of the Holy Ghost, he commands us to preserve them pure and holy: therefore he forbids all unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desires, and whatever can entice men thereto.

Especially the last phrase shows that the seventh commandment forbids all things that would entice another to commit adultery either with their bodies or in their thoughts. Clearly, immodest dress entices some to commit adultery in their minds; therefore such dress is forbidden by the seventh commandment. By dressing extravagantly, it is also possible that others would begin

to covet what we have and desire the same standard of clothing for themselves. Again, the principle of abstaining from whatever unnecessary things that cause a brother or sister to stumble is the biblical policy that we are obliged to follow out of love for our neighbor.

Do bikini bathing suits and Speedos cause our brothers and sisters to stumble? Then we may not wear them. Is there a modest alternative? Then we should choose it. If there is no suitable alternative, then better not to go to the beach at all. Better that than to cause another to stumble. And if we know that there will likely be those at the beach dressed immodestly, then better to stay home than to put ourselves in temptation's way.

Modesty will always be an issue in the lives of God's people because the old man of sin will not be done away with until we reach glory. From time to time we need to remind ourselves and our fellow believers what the Lord requires of us as regards modesty. When we inform ourselves on this issue, it must not be from the perspective of the world and what standards it deems acceptable. Rather, we must seek to know the will of God in the matter. God's people will earnestly seek the way of modesty, both inward and outward. They will do this for His glory. ❖

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*John is a member of Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church in Byron Center, Michigan. He wrote this essay for the 2003 Protestant Reformed Young Peoples' Scholarship.*

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## Book Review

# Thoughts for Young Men

reviewed by Jason Kuiper

*Thoughts for Young Men*, John Charles Ryle (Moscow, 2002: Charles Nolan Publishers).

Occasionally, while browsing through one of Grand Rapids' fine Christian bookstores, I'll come across a title I wish everyone would read. I don't mean a thick volume—maybe less than a hundred pages—but one saturated with timeless truths and invaluable wisdom. *Thoughts for Young Men* is one such

book. Though first written in 1886, its admonitions are equally relevant to young men in our churches in 2004, and certainly no less urgent.

Ryle begins by giving five "general reasons why young men need peculiar exhortation." One of these reasons is that "death and judgment are before young men, even as others, and they nearly all seem to forget it." He cites the words of the Preacher in Ecclesiastes 11:9.

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He proceeds to treat five “special dangers against which young men need to be warned.” These dangers include pride, love of pleasure, and thoughtlessness and inconsideration. He makes reference to Job’s burnt offerings on behalf of the thoughtless sins of his sons.

Ryle then gives six “general counsels to young men.” One of these is “never make an intimate friend of anyone who is not a friend of God.” He notes how Amnon’s “subtil” friend Jonadab was the one who invented the deceptive plan to fulfill his lust for Tamar.

He then fills in any gaps by setting down five “particular rules of conduct” which he strongly advises all young men to follow. One of these is “be diligent in the use of all public means of grace.” He quotes Isaiah on the blessings of delighting in the Sabbath.

Ryle concludes with the following: “Young men, these things are true. Suffer the word of exhortation. Be persuaded. Take up the cross. Follow Christ. Yield yourselves unto God.”

At a time when the Protestant Reformed congregations are seeking preachers and their godly young maidens are seeking husbands, “the supply of godly, faithful, trustworthy men, for posts like those I have named, is far below demand.” Even outside our circles, how many of us do not see young men who bear the name Christian

wasting their lives? God could surely use Ryle’s plain words to awaken us and them from spiritual slumber.

If this brief review entices you to purchase and read *Thoughts for Young Men*, you might request it from the Reformed Book Outlet or online at [www.charlesnolanpublishers.com](http://www.charlesnolanpublishers.com).

Who was J. C. Ryle? On May 10, 1816, John Charles Ryle was born to John and Susanna Ryle of Macclesfield, Cheshire County, England. He attended Eton and then went on to Oxford, finishing his Oxford studies in 1837. It was at this time in 1837 that Ryle found salvation and faith in Christ. In 1841 Bishop Charles Sumner of Winchester ordained J. C. Ryle as a minister in the Anglican Church (Church of England). In 1880 Ryle was named the first Bishop of the newly constituted diocese of Liverpool. Throughout his ministry he became known and beloved as a defender of the evangelical reformed faith as expressed in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England. In February, 1900, the 83-year-old Bishop Ryle retired after many years of faithful ministry. He went home to be with his Lord on June 10, 1900. [Reproduced from [www.iserv.net/~mrbill/](http://www.iserv.net/~mrbill/)]



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*Jason is a member of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Standale, Michigan.*

Gem of the Month

## Purify Your Hearts

*The Lord commands us in His word  
Our hearts to purify.  
This task seems insurmountable;  
I pray: O how can I  
Fulfill this admonition, Lord?  
I am so weak, yea, dead,  
Unable to accomplish aught,  
But violate instead.  
Yet since He has commanded it  
(I know His faithfulness)  
He also will supply the means;  
In mercy He will bless.*

*The feeble efforts that I make  
He'll transform wondrously;  
The pow'r, the willing, come from Him,  
Not one bit comes from me.  
I thank Him that He works within  
To turn me to His ways,  
That I may joy in seeking right  
And render endless praise.  
Lord, keep me and encourage me  
Until the day I die,  
To use my heart, my hands, my all,  
Thy name to glorify!*

*by Thelma Westra*

# The Organization of Our Bible Societies

by Rev. James Laning

## Dear Rev. Laning

I am glad for this question and answer column in the *Beacon Lights*, and I hope that you can answer the question of someone older than a “young person.” Although I am of retirement age, I believe your answer might affect all of us—old and young.

I want to know whether a church organization, such as a Bible society, will be negatively impacted if it starts letting go of things like officers, the keeping of minutes, and constitutions with rules governing how the organization does its business. There seems to be a great trend these days toward “no formal organization” of groups. To me this seems a dangerous way to go. Would you comment on this?

Thank you,  
Natalie Jefferson  
Southwest PR Church

## Dear Natalie

I very much appreciate your letter.

Let me begin by saying that a group of believers obviously can profit from gathering together informally and discussing the Scriptures. But there are reasons why, historically, our Bible societies were set up the way they were. Let us just take the constitution, for example. Some, if not all, of these constitutions state that at least the first portion of the society meeting will be spent studying, not a topic, but a specific portion of Scripture. There is a reason for this. In this way the group is led to dig more into the Scriptures themselves; whereas a study of a practical topic, although profitable when done well, can easily degenerate into a rather surface discussion of one’s own ideas on this or that.

A meeting that is somewhat structured can also serve to impress upon us the fact that we are engaged in important work, when we are gathering together for our Bible society meetings. When we search the Scriptures together, we are performing the duties of our office as believers. This is important work, and is to be taken very

seriously. Therefore, it is good when our meeting reflects this.

Doing away with organization and formality in society life may lead, although not necessarily, to doing away with it in other areas as well. We are surrounded by churches and denominations in which even the official worship service and the official meetings of the Council and Consistory are conducted in a rather unorganized and informal way. We must be alert to the fact that this is a very real danger.

It is, of course, true, that there is also the danger of cold, empty formality. But the fact that we must beware of this danger as well should not discourage us from continuing the formal Bible societies that we do have.

I thank you again for your thoughtful question, and for your concern for our Bible societies.

In His service,  
Rev. Laning ❖

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

Please send your question to:  
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E-mail: [jlanning@msn.com](mailto:jlanning@msn.com)

# Daffodils

## A Fictional Story

by Tom Cammenga

The gravel crunched loudly underneath the tires of the truck as it came to a stop on the edge of the road. Unhurried, the driver shifted into park and turned off the key. He had been here before, a number of times in fact, although none so memorable as the first. Each year on this day he came here to remind himself and to remember. Taking one last sip of coffee from his travel mug he set it down and got out. As he walked around the front of the truck a slight spring breeze sent a chill down his neck and back. Or was it simply the memory of what had taken place here? Probably it was some of both. As if time had been reversed it all came back in a torrent of memories. It always did when he came back to this spot.

Six years previous to this day he had been traveling this very road although it had not been as light as it was now. Returning home early from work he already dreaded the mountain of homework that awaited him. His senior year was coming swiftly to a close and it seemed the teachers were attempting to cram as much homework in as they could before the end of the year. But it had been a good day, both in school and at work. In fact, that day had been his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Because things were slow at the restaurant where he was a cook, and probably also because it was his birthday, his boss had told him to go home early so that he could celebrate with his family. Mom would have a cake made and certainly there would be a few presents. He and his father had been overtaken by turkey-hunting fever some weeks ago already and with the season fast approaching he was quite sure some of the gifts would be of use in the turkey woods. In fact it had become somewhat of a tradition for his father to give him something related to this shared passion each year for his birthday.

So enthralled in his musings was he that at first he failed to notice the car ahead of him begin to weave back and forth. Only after it veered sharply off the road did he realize that something was wrong. The beams of the headlights first seemed to pierce the darkness as if they were searchlights only to bury themselves in the earth as

the car rolled end over end, finally coming to rest up against a large oak tree on the edge of the woods.

His car skidded to a stop at the edge of the road, the headlights illuminating the shocking scene. Instantly he took in each detail as he had been trained to do in his safety training at school. The air was filled with dust though there didn't seem to be any smoke and although the car was severely damaged, there was no sign of fire. Snatching up his cell phone and grabbing a flashlight out of the glove box he jumped out of the car and scrambled down the slight embankment, catching himself with his hand as he barely retained his footing. Silently he prayed that everyone was all right. The scene before him seemed so surreal. Immediately his nostrils were assaulted with the foul stink of oil, gasoline, and engine coolant and yet it was so quiet; the idling of his car as it sat on the shoulder of the road above and his own ragged breaths as he struggled to remain calm the only sounds to be heard. Carefully he made his way to the car and shined his flashlight into the passenger compartment. He caught his breath as the beam of light fell on only empty seats. There was nobody there. *But how could that be? Of course! They must have been thrown from the car as it flipped.* With increasing anxiety he began to search the surrounding area, having forgotten one of the most important aspects of his first-aid training; to call for help. Not that it would have mattered. After only a few moments he saw what appeared to be a man, actually an elderly man, lying in the grass at the bottom of the embankment, his eyes staring lifelessly into the star-filled sky. He immediately checked for a pulse and found, as he had suspected; the man was no longer alive.

Retrieving his phone from his coat pocket with shaking hands he was just about to dial 9-1-1 when he stopped. What had he heard? There had been something, some kind of noise off to the right. His struggle with calm now completely lost he searched frantically for the source of the sound, waving his flashlight from side to side. Nothing. Then he heard it again. There, just outside of

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the light from the headlights of his car lay a small form. He stumbled across the fifteen or so feet that lie between them and fell to his knees as the beam of his light came to rest on the battered face of a small boy. Gently placing his fingers along the side of the boy's throat he detected a pulse although it was very weak. Moaning softly again the boy opened his eyes and looked at Todd.

"Everything is going to be okay, buddy," Todd said in a soothing voice, all the while knowing that it wouldn't but not having any idea what else to say.

"Grandpa...Mike. He...got...sick...I couldn't... steer," moaned the boy. He winced in pain as he tried to move his hand up to his face.

"You just lay still, buddy. I'll call for help on my cell phone. Someone will be here in no time." Todd began to reach into his pocket once again for his phone but was stopped suddenly as the boy reached out and took his hand and gripped it tightly.

"Its okay now," the boy said softly, still gripping Todd's hand. "Jesus is here for me now so...I...have to go. Tell them...I don't hurt inside anymore." Ever so gently the grip of his hand lessened until it fell to the damp ground at his side. And then there was silence; and yet the silence seemed to roar in Todd's ears, destroying whatever had remained of understanding. That stillness so incongruent with the events that had just taken place. Without really knowing it he began to sob and cry, his whole body rocking slightly back and forth, his heart breaking as he leaned over the little boy. He watched as if in slow motion; first one tear, then another and another fell from his face, landing on the boy's left hand where it lay across his now motionless chest.

His father found him sitting under a large maple tree in the backyard and without a word he sat down next to him. For a while the only sound was that of the birds and the occasional car that would pass the house. It was spring and the woods around where they lived were alive again, the cold winter finally gone, at least for a while.

"There wasn't anything you could have done," his father said softly, finally, wanting more than anything to provide some kind of comfort to mend his son's broken spirit.

Todd gradually looked up into the tree under which they sat and for a moment watched a chickadee flip from branch to branch.

"I know," he finally said. "But you know, that isn't what is so tough about the whole thing. It isn't even the fact that a little boy died in my arms..." His voice trailed

off as it began to crack and he had to stop for a moment in order to retain some composure.

"Why, Dad? Why did God put me in that place at that time if there was nothing I could do? It's almost as if He is punishing me." The tears were now rolling down his cheeks but he really didn't care. "I'll never forget what happened. Every time I close my eyes I see it all over again."

His father, through his own tears, wrapped his arm around his son and held him tightly.

"Todd, more than anything I wish I knew the answer to that. I'm your father and I am supposed to have all the answers," he said as he huffed in frustration. "This time... I just don't know."

After a bit he got on his haunches in front of Todd so that he could look him in the eye.

"I do know this though. There is always a reason. We may not know what it is right now; in fact, we may not know what it is until we're in glory. But God always, always has a reason for what he puts in our lives."

Todd nodded his head slowly in agreement. "I know. But even though I know, I still don't understand."

For some time the two of them just sat there and took in the activity around them. Finally his father got slowly to his feet.

"I talked to Uncle Pete. He called a while ago and wondered how you were doing."

Uncle Pete was his mother's youngest brother and a local police officer. He had been the first officer on the scene that night and although there was nothing to be done for the young boy and the elderly man, who they now knew to have been the boy's grandfather, he had tried valiantly to help Todd deal with what had happened. Todd had been in shock and refused to let go of the little boy; his Uncle Pete had been the one to help him work through those first few hours of grief and confusion.

"From what they can tell it looks like the grandfather had a massive heart attack just before the accident," his father said as he brushed leaves and grass from his pants. After a brief pause he went on. "He also let me know that there is visitation at the funeral home tomorrow afternoon and tomorrow evening. I thought you might want to go."

Todd had been thinking about that and struggling, not with whether he should or should not go but rather whether he could handle it emotionally. It was at that moment that he realized he felt guilty for not having been able to do anything to help. How could he face this family?

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“I...I’m just not sure yet dad. I don’t know if I could do it,” he said, wrapping his arms around his knees and resting his chin on them.

“Well, you think about it. I’ll be glad to go with you if you would like.” Slowly his father began to turn to the house but stopped as a thought crossed his mind and looked down at his son.

“Would you like me to pray with you?”

“No,” Todd replied after considering his father’s offer, “I think it would be better for me to pray alone right now.”

Nodding his head in understanding his father turned and began walking back to the house.

“Dad?” Todd called out after he had taken a few steps. “Thanks.”

His father stopped, smiled, and continued on to the house. Todd remained there under the tree for quite some time and finally, with much anguish and many tears, was able to pray.

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He had never liked funeral homes. Although, he supposed, that was probably the way most people felt. As he and his father walked toward the door he had to fight the panic that was rising within him telling him to turn and run. His stomach churned and his hands were shaking. As they walked through the door his father put his arm around him to let him know he was not alone. It didn’t make everything better but it certainly helped calm him down.

They had arrived a bit early and there were only a few people there. On the left there were pictures, both of the boy and of his grandfather. In front of them, against the wall were the two caskets, both of them identical in every detail except for their size. Thankfully, they were closed. Not realizing he had stopped, a gentle nudge from his father brought Todd back to reality and they walked over to a man and woman who stood next to the smaller of the two caskets. Realizing his son was struggling to maintain his composure, Todd’s father took the lead.

“We would like to express our sincere sympathy to you and your husband,” he said as he took the woman’s hand in his. “My name is Roger VanElston and this is my son Todd.”

Recognition flitted across the faces of the man and woman as they heard the last name.

“You’re the one who found them,” the little boy’s mother said as she shook Todd’s hand. There was pity in her eyes. “Thank you so much for everything you did.”

“I...I...wish I could have done more,” Todd said as tears began to cloud his vision. He looked down at the floor not knowing what else to say. There was an emptiness in the eyes of these people. And then for some reason he went on, “He is with Jesus now. They both are. That is what he told me just before...just before...”

The man and woman stared at him with eyes wide following this last statement and for a moment neither of them spoke. Finally the man asked him questioningly, “Did you say that Andrew spoke to you?”

“Yes,” Todd said slowly, uncertainly. “Just as I was going to call 9-1-1 he stopped me and told me that Jesus was there for him. He also said something about not hurting inside anymore.”

Tears rolled down the cheeks of the little boy’s father and mother and they embraced, rocking slightly back and forth. The tears quickly turned to sobs and they slowly walked away toward the corner. Bewildered and confused by what had just taken place, Todd and his father began to make their way to the door only to be stopped by a woman who appeared to be in her mid-thirties.

“Please, don’t go,” she said as she stepped between them and the door, tears streaming down her face as well. “I know you’re confused but if you will give us a minute we will explain everything to you.”

Todd’s father nodded assent, took him by the arm, and both of them walked over to a sofa that was situated just to the right of the picture galleries and sat down.

A few minutes later the boy’s parents came over and sat down next to them. Neither said anything for a bit, seeming to search for the right words.

“I’m sorry about that,” said the boy’s father finally, pausing to look into Todd and his father’s eyes. “You have to understand that what you told us was quite a shock. I guess I should start from the beginning...”

As it turned out the little boy, Andrew, had not been this couple’s biological son but had been adopted by them only eight months earlier. He had been born exactly seven years to the day before the accident to a single mother with a terrible addiction to drugs and had lived in squalor his entire life. About four months before they had taken him in he had witnessed his mother brutally taken from him in death. He had not spoken a single word since that awful night. Often they would find themselves standing outside the closed door of his bedroom listening in agony of soul as he would cry himself to sleep, knowing only that there had to be a reason why God would have given this child to them and yet not understanding how

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His plan would or could be carried out. Though they had attempted counseling with their pastor and even several sessions with a Christian psychiatrist they had never been able to break through the wall he had erected around himself. The only one who had ever come close had been Grandpa Mike, not his real grandfather, of course, but his adopted grandfather. For some reason they shared a special bond and would often spend time together as had been the case the night of the accident. Maybe it was because they were both alone, the grandfather having lost his wife a few years previous. Whatever the case, Andrew had always seemed to enjoy spending time with him.

They had taken him to church with them; he had attended Sunday school, and had even begun to attend the Christian elementary school with some of his new brothers just the week before. Through it all, though, he remained silent, seemingly entirely without feeling. His new mother and father and even brothers and sister had spent countless hours reading Bible stories with him and explaining as best they could the mysteries of grace and salvation. They shared with him the amazing stories of Christ's birth, life, and death on the cross. Each day, with profound patience they would search his face for some evidence that he understood and comprehended what they were saying but were invariably left not knowing what this little boy was thinking, unable to perceive what heart-aches were bottled up inside this little one's heart and soul. For eight months they had placed their trust in their heavenly Father and given themselves entirely over to His will.

"So you see," the man said as tears streamed down his cheeks, "what you shared with us was an answer to more prayers than you could ever imagine."

Wiping the tears from his face with the back of his hand he continued.

"These aren't tears of sorrow, they are tears of joy. You have no idea what this means to us. Those few words you spoke earlier have turned this time of mourning into a time of rejoicing.....it is just a miracle that God put you there."

There was silence for a minute or so as Todd, his father, and all those gathered around them attempted to take it all in, overcome as they were by the sheer magnitude of it all.

Once again Todd's father took charge of the situation and suggested they take a moment to pray. All agreed that this was certainly fitting and requested that Todd's father lead the prayer. Standing in a circle there in that

room with the pictures of the grandfather and young boy in the background they gave thanks to God for their lives, and especially their deaths. Not that He had taken their loved ones away, for each of them grieved deeply for their earthly loss, but they rejoiced in their deaths because God through His mysterious wonder work of grace had taken them home to be with Him. Both of them.

As his father ended his prayer Todd realized that the prayer he himself had offered up only yesterday as he sat beneath the maple tree in their backyard had been answered. And what a marvelous, almost unimaginable answer it was.

Over the next weeks and months Todd and his family talked often of the events of those few days and had since become very close to Andrew's family. Although the idea had occurred to Todd while he and his father had been turkey hunting some weeks after the accident, it wasn't until early in the fall that he was able to follow through with it. On a pleasant Saturday afternoon he, his father, and Andrew's family had gathered at the place where the accident had taken place. For two solid hours they carefully planted hundreds of daffodil bulbs just inside the woods and around the old oak tree. They had intended it as a memorial, not for the lives of those who had been lost but to the faithfulness of God to his people. A reminder each spring of that night and how God, in ways far above our ways, had out of death brought life, just as the daffodils bloomed with all their beauty after the cold of winter had faded.

Kneeling there now among the blooming daffodils, their sweet scent enveloping him, Todd whispered a prayer of thanks. There were still some tears even after all this time but more and more they had become tears of utter joy as he considered that night and the events that had transpired since.

After some time he gradually walked back to his truck and climbed in. As he shut the door he noticed that the little boy in the carseat next to him was now awake. Reaching over he placed his chilled hand on the boy's cheek and was rewarded with a toothless smile that would melt the heart of a giant. This was his first child, born about eight months previous to him and his wife, the only sister the little boy named Andrew had ever had. There had never been any questioning or searching of names for the little one who sat in the carseat next to him. They had named him Andrew Michael. ❖

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

# Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter

**June 1 Read Acts 16:25-34; Belgic Conf., Art. 22, Par. 1**

Faith! What a beautiful word for the child of God. For it is by a childlike faith that we know that we are saved only through Christ. This faith is not something of ourselves. Of that the Scriptures are clear. This faith is a gift of God through which the Holy Spirit gives to us the assurance of our salvation. It is by faith that we know that the only way of salvation is through Christ. Let us enjoy this beauty each and every day. Sing Psalter 73:1, 2, and 6.

**June 2 Read Romans 5:6-11; Belgic Conf., Art. 22, Par. 2**

This paragraph continues the instruction about faith. The emphasis is on the sufficiency of not only Christ's satisfaction but also the sufficiency of faith for us to embrace that satisfaction. People of God, do you look for another way of salvation? Do you wish to have some of salvation or the realization of that salvation be your work? We need to rest assured that our salvation is in Christ alone. We must see that faith which is the free gift of God is all that we need to embrace that salvation. Let us pray to God for such help that we need to believe this truth. Sing Psalter 152 .

**June 3 Read Ephesians 2:5-9; Belgic Conf., Art. 23, Par. 1**

Justification. The cornerstone of the great Reformation. It took Martin Luther years to see it. What about us? Is it just one of those words we learn about in essentials? Have we grasped the concept and that only by faith? Do we still seek to justify ourselves by works? Let us not reintroduce the errors of the Middle Ages into our lives and churches. Let us seek for the happiness that is given to those who are justified by faith alone. Sing Psalter 83.

**June 4 Read II Galatians 2:16-20 Belgic Conf., Art. 23, Par. 2**

This second paragraph continues to show us the proper understanding of justification. It is nothing that we can do. Young people, be vigilant for this idea. Fight against those who would have you believe that there is some-

thing yet that you must do for salvation. If we think we must perform some act, than we will end up like Adam with a covering of fig leaves which will wither and leave us naked before God. Hold fast to this truth in all of your lives. Sing Psalter 390.

**June 5 Read Romans 6:12-18; Belgic Conf., Art. 24, Par. 1-2**

We cannot, as some do, stop with justification. We must go on to the truth of sanctification. The word means to be holy. Our lives must be holy in the sight of God. As Paul says in Romans we may not "sin that grace may abound." We must seek to walk in a good way each and every day. Then and then only will we be pleasing to our God. Sing Psalter 89:1-3.

**June 6 Read Isaiah 26:1-12; Belgic Conf., Art. 24, Par. 3**

Just as there are errors associated with justification; there are errors associated with sanctification. The good works of a holy life will profit us nothing. They are as filthy rags. If we think that we can profit from our good works, we will fall when we understand that one sin leaves us unfit for salvation in ourselves. Only through the love of God will our good works be profitable. Only through the blood of Christ will we receive the robe of righteousness necessary to enter the kingdom of heaven. Sing Psalter 252.

**June 7 Read Colossians 2:13-17; Belgic Conf., Art. 25**

Why do we not cut the Old Testament out of our Bibles as many do today either literally or figuratively? Why are we convinced that it is necessary to know the truths found in the Old Testament? We do this because God has commanded us to. Yes, Christ fulfilled all of the Old Testament with his death, resurrection and ascension. But He did not erase one word of it. It is for our profit and for our salvation that we cling to its truths. Let us glorify our God by our use of the Old Testament as part of the whole word of God. Sing Psalter 42.

**June 8 Read Philippians 2:5-13; Belgic Conf., Art. 26, Par. 1-2**

This long section of our beloved confession instructs us in the proper way of going to God. This proper way

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is through Christ as He instructs us in John 14:6. This proper way is not by saints or someone else as some teach to their destruction. Young people, study this article and learn how to go properly to God in prayer. And then take time daily to pray to our heavenly Father. Sing Psalter 235.

**June 9 Read Hebrews 2:14-18; Belgic Conf., Art. 26, Par. 3**

People of God, are you bold in your prayers? No, this is not the boldness that is so evident in the world today toward all sorts of authority. This is not the boldness to make God one of us and call upon His holy name as a “good buddy.” This is the boldness that we can have as we seek Him and seek Him through Christ. We must be bold as we enter into His presence in prayer. We must be bold knowing that through Christ He will answer our prayers and give to us all things necessary for body and soul. Let us go to Him in prayer every day and often every day. Sing Psalter 233:1-3.

**June 10 Read Hebrews 4:12-16; Belgic Conf., Art. 26, Par. 4-5**

Knowing that we can approach the throne of God in prayer, we also must know that we can be assured that what we ask for will be granted to us if it is the will of our heavenly Father. Because Christ is our mediator we can have this assurance. Christ has suffered all the pains of this earth, sin excepted, for us. There is no reason for us to seek another mediator. We have the perfect mediator. Let us approach that throne of grace in boldness and in the confidence that our heavenly Father will care for us. Sing Psalter 233:4-6.

**June 11 Read John 10:11-16; Belgic Conf., Art. 27**

What do you believe concerning the church of Christ, people of God? The church of Christ is our sanctuary on this earth. In this church we find the assurance of our salvation. It is through this church that Christ gathers His people against the day of His coming. Is the church precious to you? Do we seek to know the church wherever she may be in this world. Christ’s church is a catholic church, a universal church. Let us pray for it daily in our prayers. Let us seek its good as we wait for the coming of the Lord. Sing Psalter 348.

**June 12 Read Hebrews 10:19-26; Belgic Conf., Art. 28**

In the last article we learned about the church of Christ. In this article we see that we are bound to join ourselves to this church. Young people, as you seek employment in your life, do you remember the teaching of this article? Fathers and husbands, as you may be seeking a change in jobs, do you remember the beauty of this ar-

ticle? Belonging to the true church is a necessity for the child of God. He may not just join or stay in any church. He must not walk contrary to the ordinance of God. Let us seek that true church and let us live in harmony with its members in the love of Christ. Sing Psalter 349

**June 13 Read Ephesians 2:13-22; Belgic Conf., Art. 29, Par. 1**

The confession continues in its description of the church of Christ. That church has certain marks by which we may know that she is a faithful manifestation of the body of Christ here on this earth. The true church preaches the Word faithfully every week; the true church administers the sacraments in accordance to the command of Christ; and the true church disciplines its members in order to keep that body of Christ pure. People of God, do you seek the true church? Do we strive to keep the church of which we are a member true? Let us seek to do this each and every day. Sing Psalter 239.

**June 14 Read John 10:1-10; Belgic Conf., Art. 29, Par. 2-4**

Young people, do you act in such a way that all around you know that you are a member of the true church of Christ? Do you avoid sin at all costs? Are you Christ-like in all of your actions? This must be your goal as you live a life of the child of God. You must never masquerade as a member of the false church. You must not wish that you were a member of a church in which the marks of the true church are not evident. Scripture shows us the right way to walk. Let us walk in it by fleeing the false and joining the true church of Christ. Sing Psalter 125:1-5.

**June 15 Read Acts 6:1-7; Belgic Conf., Art. 30**

People of God, God is a God of order. He wants order in His church as well. In this month of synods and general assemblies we are once more reminded of this fact. Local churches are given the three special offices in order for the proper governing of the church. Local churches band together in a federation which continues that order in classes and presbyteries. Let us be glad for that order, and let us honor those whom God has placed over us so that we may remain orderly. Let us remember these men in their offices daily that the true church of Christ be maintained unto He returns. Sing Psalter 350.

**June 16 Read Romans 12:4-8; Belgic Conf., Art. 31, Par. 1**

In continuing on with the idea of church offices, the author of this confession sets before us the truth that all office bearers are called by God. Not just the minister receives this call, but elders and deacons do as well.

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Young men, are you preparing to listen and answer this call? Are you, as Samuel was instructed to do, waiting for the word of God to come to you? Let it weigh upon your souls each day that maybe you are to become a minister of God's Word, and overseer in His church, or one entrusted with the mercies of Christ. These are awesome callings and must be heeded as such. Sing Psalter 278.

**June 17 Read I Timothy 5:17-22; Belgic Conf., Art. 31, Par. 2**

People of God including young people, do you honor those whom God has put in authority over you? Do we honor them with proper titles? Do we honor them by giving to them the respect their offices require? God blesses His church with faithful office bearers. God will also take these faithful men from a congregation when the congregation does not heed them as the ministers of Christ. Let us bring the needs of our office bearers to God in prayer often throughout the day. Let us pay them the honor that is due to them. Sing Psalter 398.

**June 18 Read Romans 16:17-20; Belgic Conf., Art. 32**

One of the marks of the true church is Christian discipline. The elders must care for the flock using this mark. The members of the flock must see that this too is ordained by God in order that His church may remain holy. To have the final remedy of excommunication applied in a church is not a shame on that church, but rather we must see that our covenant God will use this means to bring the erring saint back into the fold. Let us not treat discipline as something old-fashioned, but rather let us seek a church where this mark is evident. Let us see that it is to be used for the unity of the church of Christ. Sing Psalter 265.

**June 19 Read Colossians 2:6-13; Belgic Conf., Art. 33**

The churches of the Reformation had to return to the proper use of the sacraments. This is seen in the extensive treatment of this subject in the confessions of those times. Christ instituted the sacraments as means of grace for His people. The church must use them properly. We must be satisfied with the two sacraments that He has ordained for us. We must not worship them in themselves but rather we must use them for the confirming of the faith wrought in us by Christ. Let us love these signs and seals as they have been instituted by Christ. Sing Psalter 203.

**June 20 Read I Corinthians 12:12-18; Belgic Conf., Art. 34, Par. 1**

One of the great earthly joys on this earth is the birth of a covenant child. Soon after that joy should be the

joy of baptism into the true church. Baptism is a precious sacrament to us because of its meaning. A child (or adult for that matter) has applied to him the sign of the washing away of sins through the blood of Christ. That sign shows to all who witness that we are clean from our sins through the blood of Christ. Let us receive this sign of separation from the world with joy, and let us seek to walk with him who was baptized in that life of holiness. Sing Psalter 213:1-3.

**June 21 Read I John 5:1-6; Belgic Conf., Art. 34, Par. 2**

We do not hide the baptism of our children from the congregation. We take them all to witness that they must help this baptized child reach the years of discretion thoroughly instructed in the doctrine of the true church. In witnessing the sacrament we remember our own baptisms and seek to live lives that are true to the sign of washing from sin. We should seek to put off the old man and to walk the way that the new man of Christ should walk. Baptism is not just for those baptized, and it is not just for the parents who present their child for baptism; it is for all of the congregation who witness this blessed sacrament. Sing Psalter 64.

**June 22 Read Acts 8:26-36; Belgic Conf., Art. 34, Par. 3**

It is common in the churches of today to baptize children of believers. But this was not always the case and is not always the case today. First of all we must cling to the truth of infant baptism. There are those who would wrest this wonderful truth from us. To them we must give no heed. Secondly we must see that there are those adults who, like the Ethiopian eunuch, receive that word late in life and who crave baptism as the proper sign of their regeneration and salvation. We must seek these souls as well. Baptism must not be taken for granted but must be given its proper place in the Church of Christ. Sing Psalter 425:4-6

**June 23 Read John 6:32-40; Belgic Conf., Art. 35, Par. 1-2**

People of God, do you long for the proper administration of the Lord's supper in your church? No, I do not mean that all of your churches are doing it improperly, but rather do *you* long for its administration? Do you look forward to the Sunday in which you are nourished and supported by this means of grace? The pictures seen in communion are great. Let us seek to understand them, and let us long for the day in which we will be in sweet communion with the whole Church of Christ in heaven with Him. Sing Psalter 203.

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**June 24 Read I Corinthians 10:23-29; Belgic Conf., Art. 35, Par. 3**

The signs seen in the bread and wine are most explicit to us, the church of the new dispensation. We see in the bread the body of Christ broken for the sins we commit daily. We also see that He alone is the bread of life and that there is no salvation except in Him. In the wine we see His blood poured out for our redemption. We also see the joy associated with wine. This joy can only be found in the true Church of Christ. Let us care for our spiritual lives as much as we care for our physical lives. Sing Psalter 368.

**June 25 Read Matthew 22:1-4; Belgic Conf., Art. 35, Par. 4**

The signs of the Lord's Supper are misrepresented by many. We must not do this. We must see how Christ Himself has intended for them to be understood and to be used. These signs show to us that Christ and Christ alone has wrought our salvation. It is nothing that we have done or can do which gives to us the joy of salvation and the joy of communing with all the saints around the table prepared for us in heaven. As we consider this sacrament let us consider and cleave to its true and proper meaning as a means of grace ordained by Christ. Sing Psalter 334.

**June 26 Read John 13:18-21; 26-30; Belgic Conf., Art. 35, Par. 5-7**

The Lord's Supper is not for everyone at any time. We must use it only as Christ has instituted it for us. To do anything else would be to lose the symbol and the meaning of that symbol. It is good that our elders guard the table. It is good that we see that it must be a solemn sacrament. Done solemnly the Church of Christ will receive the full benefits which it can give to us. Used improperly the church will bring the condemnation of God Himself upon itself and upon the church which does not maintain this mark of the true Church of Christ. Let us use it properly with joy. Sing Psalter 370.

**June 27 Read Romans 13:1-6; Belgic Conf., Art. 36**

People of God of all ages, there are those in authority all around us. Do we honor them as those ordained by God? In this lawless age in which we live, it is easy to disregard the authority and do what is right in our own eyes. We know what troubles this brought the church of old in the days of the judges. This same attitude will bring trouble to the church today. Let us give all authority the honor bestowed upon them by God. Sing Psalter 223.

**June 28 Read I Corinthians 15:51-59; Belgic Conf., Art. 37, Par. 1-2**

We are living in the last days. Are we living in the truth of the doctrine of the last days? Do we believe that Christ will come and receive us into heavenly glory? Are we watching the signs which He has given to us so that we are ready for His coming on the clouds of glory? Not only must we be watching but we must be ready as well. We must know that He has made His coming known in His Word. Let us study that word so that we can truly see the signs of the coming of Christ. Sing Psalter 32.

**June 29 Read Revelation 20:10-15; Belgic Conf., Art. 37, Par. 3**

With the coming of Christ comes the judgment. There, are two parts to this judgment. First of all there is the judgment of the wicked. Since the time of Cain the church has battled against those who are Satan's allies. The church has had a hard fight in the battle for the antithesis. The reward is coming in the last day. Christ and His angels will separate the wheat from the chaff and send Satan and all of his henchmen into eternal damnation. Let us await that day with patience even as the farmer awaits the day of the harvest. Sing Psalter 224.

**June 30 Read Revelation 21:1-5; Belgic Conf., Art. 37, Par. 4-5**

The second part of that judgment day is that of the taking to glory both the living and saints who have died. The souls under the alter will see all the church triumphant gathered into glory. They will be avenged for the sufferings that they sustained on this earth. We need to live the life described in this confession as we await the day that we will be gathered into glory. We have that in principal but someday we will see Jesus face to face. Let us pray that God may help us to await that day and to patiently confess His name in our daily lives. Sing Psalter 106.

**2004 PRYP Convention**

**Topic:** Drawing Near to God

**Location:** Covenant Hills, Otisville, MI

**Dates:** July 12-16

**Speeches:** Rev. R. Cammenga, Rev. R. Kleyn,  
and Rev. W. Langerak

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# What Churches Need More Than Anything (2)

by Rev. David Overway



**W**e rejoiced together in our previous article in the fact that God has given us as Protestant Reformed Churches the one thing churches need more than anything: the knowledge of the truth. It is only by God's grace that we have this precious gift, but how blessed and privileged we are to have it! For we also saw that many other churches are lacking in this today, are unwittingly suffering the consequences of this lack, and are attempting all sorts of things to counteract the consequences of their ignorance of the truth. And all of this will be unsuccessful. For God alone can determine what His church needs and He has determined that her greatest need is knowledge of the truth.

But how shocking is the breadth and depth of the lack of knowledge of the truth in churches today. The author of a recent article in *Christianity Today*, in referring to a sociologist's book on American religion, says that "doctrinal ignorance is one feature of American religion" that amazes this sociologist the most. The author says, "He sites familiar statistics: 58 percent of Americans cannot name five of the Ten Commandments, and just under half know that Genesis is the first book of the Bible."<sup>1</sup> In another article, Charles Colson reports "that most church and lay leaders—90 percent, according to one survey—have no understanding of worldview." He also notices "signs that the church is dumbing down, moving from a word-driven message to an image—an emotion-driven message."<sup>2</sup>

There are others, of course, in the modern church world who do know a bit more doctrine than is reflected by these statistics. But even among these, how many can clearly explain basic historic truths of Christianity? How many are there who cannot correctly explain, and therefore do not understand the Trinity, the Atonement, Predestination, the Origins of the universe, etc.?

Why does this ignorance exist in the church world today? There are especially two reasons. The first is that

the church simply does not value intellectual knowledge anymore. The culture in which we live places more importance on an individual's feelings, emotions, and experiences than on seeking and finding an absolute and logically knowable Truth. (This phenomenon is known as postmodernism.) To its shame, the church has allowed itself to be infected by this worldly philosophy rather than living antithetically opposed to the thinking of the culture in which she lives. Being infected with this thinking, then, churches do not value intellectual knowledge of the truth, and therefore do not bother to learn and at the same time are not taught by their ministers.

The second reason for this ignorance is the reality of false doctrine, false teaching in the churches. With widespread and rapidly increasing progress the lie is displacing the truth in so many churches today. And this despite the fact that the Scriptures are replete with texts (and even whole chapters) which explicitly warn the church against false doctrine and false teachers. One of these clear passages is Matthew 24:11 and 12, "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." In another place we read, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies..." (II Peter 2:1). And referring to only one more, a text which describes exactly what we see in the church world around us today: "... the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine... and they shall turn away their ears from the truth" (II Timothy 4:3, 4).

But is it really so simple? Is it true that simply a knowledge of the truth is what churches need today? Is it true that the churches' lack of knowledge of truth is what is causing them to shrink rather than grow? Is a knowledge of the truth really the only thing churches need to regain in order to grow and thrive once again? It is. It is, with but one point of clarification. When we

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speak of a knowledge of the truth, we mean a *believing* knowledge of the truth. This means that first of all, and very importantly, one must have an intellectual, mental acknowledgment that the facts presented in Scripture are true. But then, also, for this knowledge to be real knowledge of the truth, one must also have a firm confidence that those truths mean something personal to him. A real knowledge of the truth is always this kind of knowledge, a knowledge of faith.

Having said this, we return to the question, is it really true that this knowledge of the truth, this believing knowledge of the truth, is so vital to churches today? Answer this: would you say that it is important for churches today to know Jesus? Of course it is. Since it is true, then, that it is vital for churches to know Jesus, it is equally true that churches must know the truth. For Jesus *is* the Truth (John 14:6.) Jesus Christ Himself is the Truth of God embodied. Everything He thinks is truth. Everything He does is in harmony with the truth. Everything He says is truth. So Christ is Truth, and because He is such, He reveals Truth (John 1:14, John 18:37). The Truth reveals the truth. Christ reveals the truth, and in doing so, reveals Himself. Knowing the truth, one knows Jesus.

You see then, knowledge of the truth is this fundamental, this serious. One who doesn't know the truth doesn't know Jesus. He simply cannot. This is so because one who doesn't know Jesus, doesn't know Him because he doesn't know the truth with a believing knowledge. If you, as a believer, know Jesus, then you know the truth. And, if you, as a believer, know the truth,

then you know Jesus. And the more you grow in the knowledge of the truth, the more you will grow in the knowledge of Jesus.

This truth that Jesus displays reveals Himself to us and also reveals God Triune to us. To Philip's request, "Lord, show us the Father," Jesus responded "...he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:8,9). He that "sees" or knows Jesus with a believing knowledge, "sees" or knows the Father; and the Father here refers to the Triune God. He that knows Jesus knows God. So knowing the truth, the truth of the Scriptures, the doctrines of the Word of God, we know Jesus. And knowing Jesus, we know God.

This knowledge of God that is ours through our knowledge of the truth is a knowledge whereby we not only know about Him, but we know Him personally, as a Friend. And knowing God in this warm and personal way is life eternal, is salvation. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God" (John 17:3). This deep, warm knowledge of God gained only through a knowledge of the truth is what churches need so desperately today. And by God's grace, this saving knowledge of God is what we have in our churches. May we be faithful to it and thankful every day.

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>*Christianity Today*, October 2003, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup>*Christianity Today*, December 2003, p. 72. ❖

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*Rev. Overway is pastor of Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Wykcoff, New Jersey.*

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## Pastor Profile

# Rev. Daniel Kleyn

edited by Kris Moeller

**R**ev. Daniel Kleyn was born "down-under" in Tasmania, Australia on July 14, 1966. He is the second-oldest in a large family and has ten brothers and three sisters.

His parents, Nicholas and Luberdina (Ina) Kleyn, have been in the USA for about three years. This is the second immigration they've made. In the 1940's, while

they were children, they immigrated from the Netherlands to Australia. They now live in Grand Rapids, Michigan and are members of Grace PRC. They thoroughly enjoy being members of the PRC, living in the USA and, of course, being closer now to most of their children and grandchildren.

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Rev. Kleyn moved a few times during his lifetime. As a boy, he grew up on two farms which were located in the Northwest part of Tasmania. First, he lived on a cattle farm in Lapoinya and then on a dairy farm in Natone. He and his siblings helped a lot with farm work which included regularly milking about 120 cows. Their work was often interspersed with fun or, at times, made to be fun.

As far as hobbies are concerned, they didn't have a lot of time for them on the farm. Rev. Kleyn thinks his father wished they would consider milking cows or picking stones from the fields a hobby. Needless to say, they didn't! When they did have time, he and his brothers fished. There were lobsters and trout in their dams and rivers. They (with their cousins) also hunted once in a while for rabbits or for wallabies (a small breed of kangaroo). They would eat what they shot. Kangaroo patties taste pretty good!

Together as a family they played a few outdoor sports such as Aussie rules football and cricket. With their large family, there were usually enough of them for a couple of teams!

Now, once in a while, Rev. Kleyn enjoys fishing either from a boat in the summer or through a hole in the ice in the winter. One other hobby he has had in the past and would like to get back into again someday is wood-working. For exercise, he enjoys bike-riding and rollerblading. He and his wife also enjoy a game of tennis once in a while.

Especially during his grade school years, Rev. Kleyn attended quite a few different schools. He attended Sister's Creek Primary School for grades 1 through 3, and Boat Harbor Grade School for grades 4 and part of 5. Then he moved from Tasmania to Western Australia (the other side of the country) for a year and attended a grade school there. For grade 6, he moved back to Tasmania and attended Leighlands Christian School. Then he attended Burnie High School for grades 7 through 10. High school ends in Australia at grade 10.

After finishing high school, Rev. Kleyn worked for six years as an Instrument Mechanic/Technician. This involved mainly computer maintenance in a paper mill. He still enjoys fixing electronic equipment, if there's occasion to do so.

During this time of working, he was convinced of the call to study for the ministry. He then attended Tasmania State University in Hobart for a year. Although the college was three and a half hours from where his parents lived and from the church he was a member of (The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Burnie, Tas-

mania), he would travel back every weekend. Half-way through that year, he and his wife, Sharon, were married. After moving to Michigan in 1990, he attended Grand Valley State University for three years.

Peer pressure was present during Rev. Kleyn's school years, especially in the public schools which he and his brothers and sisters attended (because there were no Christian schools available). Some of this involved (as it does for the youth today) the language people used, the mocking he and his family received because they attended church, the fun people would make of their large family and the ridicule for not joining with others in the use of the world's entertain-

ments. It helped to find and have Christian friends at school. In this way, peer pressure could be positive because they would stick together to help and encourage each other.

There were also times when there were pressures at work for Rev. Kleyn. He was sixteen when he started his apprenticeship at the paper mill. Many of the men he worked with were non-Christians and would often talk about their weekend "fun". It was also an environment in which he had to be willing to be part of the minority who prayed before having lunch each noon. Sometimes because of this and because of the conversation that would go on, he would have lunch at his workbench instead of in the lunch room.

This all helps Rev. Kleyn appreciate (and he hopes the young people in our churches do too) the benefits of having our own schools, including our own high schools. It also points to the benefit of being able to have a job, if that's possible, with fellow believers in Christ instead of among ungodly people. It is true that one is forced to take a stand in an ungodly environment, but it is also easy to be affected and influenced.



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Rev. Kleyn married Sharon Hanko. They met in Tasmania when she came with some friends and her parents to visit the church there (The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia). They met in August of 1988, and were married in June of 1989 in Grand Rapids, MI. They lived in Tasmania for the first year of their married life.

The Lord has been pleased not to give them children, but their marriage has been blessed in many other ways. He has given them a strong marriage in the Lord. They are very thankful for the place and work He has given them in His church and Rev. Kleyn appreciates very much the help and encouragement his wife gives him in his calling and work. They have enjoyed being able to visit almost all of our PR churches together, as well as a number of our mission fields, and to make friends and acquaintances in all these places. The Lord is always good, providing grace according to their needs and using all things for their spiritual benefit.

Even before he was a teenager, the Lord used Rev. Kleyn's parents to encourage him to consider studying for the ministry. Various other members and ministers of the church he was a member of did the same. Some other family members would also mention it once in a while.

The late Prof. Homer Hoeksema was instrumental in helping him begin his studies. This was during the time that he was his pastor in the EPC of Burnie, which was a most enjoyable and blessed time! He began studying New Testament Greek with Prof. Hoeksema, and then attended college for one year in Tasmania, and then three years in Grand Rapids, Michigan. When they knew of his desire to enter the seminary, family members and peers gave him much encouragement and support, also financially.

Seminary days were enjoyable for Rev. Kleyn. There were many memorable events. The rigors of practice preaching certainly leave a lasting impression on his mind, but he is very thankful for the way he and his fellow students were taught to preach. He remembers well the busyness, with many late nights and many early mornings being used to finish his assignments. Indirectly this was a good preparation for the work of the ministry. They also had times of fun together as professors and students.

After graduating from seminary, Rev. Kleyn was called to Edgerton Protestant Reformed Church in Edgerton, Minnesota where he has been preaching for about five and a half years.

Rev. Kleyn very much enjoys teaching catechism. What stands out is the fact that children have such a remarkable ability, at a young age, to learn the Scriptures and the truths of God's Word. He has even seen this in children who are not yet in catechism. An experience that stands out is that he learned the hard way that when a first grader says he needs to go to the bathroom, he needs to go!

It is very rewarding for Rev. Kleyn to witness in the work of the ministry God's work of grace in leading the youth of the churches to spiritual maturity so that they make confession of faith, marry in the Lord and take seriously the place Christ gives them in His church.

It is also rewarding for him to observe the work of the Spirit applying the Word preached to the lives of believers so that there is evidence of a striving to live a life of thankful obedience to God. There is also evidence of the people of God having strength of faith as they face and undergo the many burdens and trials of life.

Rev. Kleyn was not, of course, directly involved in the controversies of 1924 or 1953. He has, however, thoroughly enjoyed learning about this history of our churches, especially through first-hand accounts of the splits as related by his wife's grandfather, Rev. C. Hanko. He has grown to appreciate God's goodness to our churches through these controversies, as well as to see the importance of being well-acquainted with our history. It is his desire that our young people do, too.

To the men who are considering the ministry of the Word to be their calling, Rev. Kleyn has this advice: "Pursue this with zeal and with much prayer, especially in light of the need we have in our churches for ministers of the gospel. It is my hope and prayer that many more of the men in our churches would give serious consideration to this calling. It is a calling that can often be difficult, and the responsibilities of it are great. But it is certainly a great blessing and privilege to be used of Christ for the proclamation of His Word of truth and salvation. And it is a calling that I believe every young man should consider to some extent. It is true that not all are called, but all should at least consider whether or not they are."

Regarding the attitudes and behavior of our young people, Rev. Kleyn knows that we are bombarded by worldly materialism. We live in much affluence. We all, including also the youth, need to fight against being tempted and affected by materialism.

One thing it would be good to see more of among the young people is that they make the church central in

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their lives. They are often tempted to place many other things first, such as recreation, college, a career, a boyfriend or girlfriend, etc. The church should be first, and thus such things as faithful attendance and making confession of faith.

Rev. Kleyn observes many encouraging things about our young people, such as the following: He sees their spiritual growth and maturing in the faith. He sees them defend the truths of the Reformed faith as graciously given us as churches. For example, he is aware of them defending our stand against common grace—and just

recently of their speaking out (in school and/or college) against the movie, “The Passion of The Christ.” He is also encouraged to see them seeking out as friends those with whom they are one in the faith, through participating in the young people’s conventions and the young adult retreats. He knows for a fact that attending these activities often helps them in finding a godly spouse. ❖

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

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Our Young People’s Federation

# Federation Board Nominations

by Sara Huizinga

As the convention gets closer, so does the time for new Federation Board members. The new members will be chosen at the upcoming convention by the delegates from each Young People’s Society. The members voted in will assume their positions and begin their duties in 2005.

The nominees for the office of Vice President are Alex Kalsbeek and Daniel Holstege. Alex is 21 years old and a member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church. While going to school at Calvin College, Alex works as a cook at Russ’ Restaurant and also as a wallman. His goal for the Fed Board is to encourage the young people of our congregations to remain in Young People’s longer and to remain active members in our societies.

Daniel Holstege is also 21 years old and attends Calvin College. Dan is a member of Southeast PRC. He would like to bring leadership with spirituality and a good work ethic to the Fed Board. Dan would also like to see the Fed Board branch out and explore new areas and ideas.

The second office is that of Vice Treasurer. Luke Koops and

Eric Gritters are the two nominees. Luke is 20 years old and is a full-time student at Grand Valley State University. He attends First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland and would like to see the Fed Board create more opportunities for young people to fellowship with those who are separated by distance, whether this be young people on the mission field or in isolated congregations. Luke would also like to find more occasions for the young people to expand their appreciation for what we have come to believe in the Reformed faith.

Eric Gritters, a member of Hudsonville PRC, is 20 years old and is currently employed by Superior Ground Cover. Eric’s goals are to help the young people become more aware of and more involved in the workings of the Federation Board.

The third office is Vice Secretary. Rachel Nagelkerke and Deborah Key are the two nominees. Rachel is 19 years old and a member of Hudsonville PRC. She currently works as a Sales Assistant at Meidema Produce. Her goal for the Fed Board is to see the members strive to improve the Beacon Lights and to get the young people more in-



*Daniel Holstege*



*Rachel Nagelkerke*

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involved in their societies and fundraisers for the conventions. By doing so the purpose of the Fed Board, which is aiding the young people in their spiritual growth, would be fulfilled.

Deb is also 19 years old. She is a member of Grandville PRC and is a full-time student at Calvin College. Deb would like the young people themselves to be involved in the actions and decisions of the Federation Board. She would like to see more input and involvement from the society members themselves, and not just from their secretaries and elected office bearers.



*Deborah Key*



*Greg VanOverloop*

Greg VanOverloop and Dave Bouwkamp are nominated for the fourth office, that of Youth Coordinator. Greg is 46 years old and attends Hudsonville PRC. He is currently employed as a Category Manager. Greg's goals for the Fed Board are to put more of an emphasis on the Fed Board constitution, and he would like to

see an increase in communication between the Fed Board and the Young People's Societies.

Dave is 43 years old and is a member of Faith PRC. He is a bricklayer by trade. Dave's goal is for the Fed Board to collect and organize, in a convenient format, information that would help Young People's Societies in planning conventions and fundraising. This would eliminate the chaos of doing everything by "scratch."



*Dave Bouwkamp*

The fifth and final office is Spiritual Advisor. As of right now Rev. Rodney Kleyn is the only nominee. Rev. Kleyn is 30 years old and is the pastor of Trinity PRC. He hopes that the Fed Board can be used to encourage unity and closeness in our churches, through organization of events and activities that bring our young people together.

These are the nominees for the Federation Board offices. Please prayerfully consider who you will be voting for at the upcoming convention. ❖

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*Sara is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church and is Vice-Secretary of the Federation Board.*

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## Church History

# George M. Ophoff (16) Consequences of the Decision of Classis Grand Rapids West

by Prof. Herman Hanko

In the last several issues of *Beacon Lights* we discussed the proceedings of Classis Grand Rapids West which led to and brought about the deposition of Rev. Ophoff and his consistory. We do not intend to deal extensively with the doctrinal and church political issues which were involved in these proceedings of the classis.

These issues have been discussed at length in other writings of our Protestant Reformed Churches. But it is well that we pause here in our story to reflect on the results of the issues which were raised by the controversy that ended in the formation of our denomination.

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The decisions of Classis Grand Rapids West to require of Revs. Ophoff and Danhof either to express agreement with the decisions on common grace, or face expulsion from the denomination are in some ways difficult decisions to evaluate.

The Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in 1924 had officially adopted three points in which the error of common grace was briefly outlined. These decisions, according to Article 31 of the Church Order, were settled and binding in the churches. It was, from this point of view, wrong to express disagreement with them. When, therefore, after these decisions were taken, Revs. Hoeksema, Ophoff and Danhof expressed publicly their disagreement with these doctrines, they were violating Article 31 of the Church Order. This was, in fact, the position of the classes and the ground for their actions.

But, considered from another point of view, the Synod of 1924 had itself seemed to leave the door open to further discussion. For one thing, the Synod had before it a motion to censure Rev. Herman Hoeksema for his opposition to common grace, for he had publicly expressed disagreement with the doctrine on the floor of Synod. But this motion was voted down. The implication seemed to be that opposition to the doctrine was permitted in the churches.

That it could very well be true that Synod was permitting disagreement and open discussion in the churches on the question of common grace was seemingly evident from another decision Synod took. It advised the churches that much development of the doctrine was still required, and synod urged upon the churches further study and discussion of the issues. Blame can hardly be laid at the feet of those who interpreted Synod's decisions as allowing full discussion within the churches on the question.

If both Classis Grand Rapids East and Classis Grand Rapids West had taken the position that the decisions of the Synod of 1924 were settled and binding and were insisting that the ministers in the classes express agreement with these decisions, one can understand such action; and, understanding it, agree with the decisions that were made in connection with Revs. Hoeksema, Ophoff and Danhof. I say, "agree with," but that must be taken in a very limited sense. Both classes deposed ministers. This is not within classical power and both classes sinned grievously when they engaged in such discipline.

But, because of the fact that Synod's decisions were ambiguous and that Synod seemed to approve of on-going discussion, both Classis Grand Rapids East and

Classis Grand Rapids West could have done quite differently than it did. It could have done one of two things when the matter of the objections of Revs. Hoeksema, Ophoff and Danhof against common grace were brought to them. It could have postponed treatment of the matter and referred the whole question to the Synod of 1926 for an interpretation of Synod's own decision. Or, better yet, it could have listened to the objections of Revs. Hoeksema, Ophoff and Danhof, carefully weighed them in the light of Scripture and the confessions, and, if they were persuaded by the force of these objections, over-tured Synod to reconsider the whole matter of common grace and retract the erroneous decision that had been made.

But Classis East and Classis West did not follow either one of these two paths. And the history of the decisions of both bodies cannot lead to any other conclusion but that men in both classes were determined to ram the doctrine of common grace into the confession of the Christian Reformed Church and squelch at all costs any opposition to this doctrine.

For one thing, no discussion on the issues was permitted. No opportunity was given to Revs. Ophoff and Danhof to explain their position, tell classis of their reasons for repudiating common grace, and defend themselves against the charges that had been laid at their door. Classis had not come together to weigh the whole matter of common grace and to hear the defense of the accused. Danhof and Ophoff were simply put before one question: Will you subscribe to the doctrine of common grace or not? If you will, your position in the churches is secure. If you will not, you are to be expelled from the office of the ministry and from the Christian Reformed Church. When attempts were made to discuss the issues on the floor, they were declared out of order.

Further, the overtures which had brought the matter of common grace to Classis Grand Rapids West were so identical in the language which was used that the only conclusion to which one can come is the there was prior collusion on the part of certain men in the Classis to get the issue on the floor of this assembly, to do so with as many men from the Classis as possible, and to dispose of the whole matter as quickly as could be managed. One cannot help but gain a sense of the ruthlessness with which matters were handled.

There was nothing charitable about the proceedings, and Classis gave no indication of any interest in the serious doctrinal questions which were involved. It is not

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surprising, therefore, to conclude that great injustice was done and that great sin was committed.

The results for the Christian Reformed Church were catastrophic. The denomination, by synodical and classical decision, had set itself upon a path of false doctrine, apostasy from the truth and deviation from the Scriptural teachings with respect to the central question of the sovereignty of God's grace. The first consequence of this was that doctrinal departure has developed in the Christian Reformed Church with startling rapidity. The many false doctrines which are widespread in the Christian Reformed Church today all can be traced back to the error of common grace.

An error which arose in the mid-sixties and was approved by the Christian Reformed Church is the error of the universality of the atoning death of Christ. This error can be traced back to the first point of common grace, which taught a gracious well-meant offer of the gospel to all men. There were those who saw that if God is gracious in offering the gospel to all men, then it followed that Christ died for all men in some important and significant ways. Synod agreed. The third point of TULIP was denied.

Another error which was officially approved by the highest assembly of the Christian Reformed Church was evolutionism. This error can be traced to the second and third points of common grace, which taught that through the inward restraint of sin by the Holy Spirit, the unregenerated wicked could do good. It was reasoned that, if unregenerate men could do good, their scientific work was good and ought to be accepted by believers. Since scientists had "proved" that the earth is very old and came into its present form through processes of evolution from lower to higher forms of life, therefore the church ought to accept this doctrine as correct.

In a way, the life of the Church of Christ can be compared with climbing a mountain. In the perpetual calling of the Church to develop the truth of the Scriptures, the Church finds herself on a very steep mountain. The development and enrichment of the truth is always a matter of strenuous labor and diligent and faithful study of God's Word. This development is slow and cautious as the Church finds her ways up the steep slopes of the mountains of the truth. But once the Church turns her back on the truth, she starts sliding downhill. And when she starts downhill, she soon loses all the ground she gained. The descent is characterized by increasing speed. While the slide backwards may be somewhat slow at first, it gets momentum until there is no stopping.

The speed she attains on this downward slide is startling and frightening. Just think: about three generations have passed since 1924, and already in the Christian Reformed Church there are those who deny fundamental and basic truths of the Scriptures, and the speed with which the truth is being lost is ever increasing, so that its destruction as a Reformed church is not far off.

The same descent can be seen in the worldliness that is present in the church. Early in the common grace controversy, even before official decisions were taken on the doctrine, Rev. Hoeksema had warned that the adoption of common grace would lead to worldliness, for common grace built a bridge between the church and the world which would be wide enough for two-way traffic. So it has come about.

While sins such as movie attendance, card playing and the dance were officially condemned by the Christian Reformed Church, even after 1924, they are now not only openly and officially approved, but the members are encouraged to bring the film arts under the rule of Christ—whatever that may mean. Divorce and remarriage are openly and commonly practiced. Homosexuality is condoned in some quarters. And all is done in the name of a religion which accepts common grace.

But to return to Rev. Ophoff and the congregation of Hope, there is no doubt about it that for the Consistory and congregation, the consequences were momentous. The congregation had to face the fact that their minister and elders had been deposed by Classis. And they had to come to their own decision about the rightness or wrongness of these decisions of Classis. The result was a split in the congregation. The congregation was organized in 1916 with seven families. By 1924, the congregation numbered around thirty families. The split brought the number of families back again to seven or eight.

The congregation which owned a parsonage and church building on the corner of Riverbend and Kenowa lost both buildings. It was forced to move its worship services to an old schoolhouse across the road, less than a stone's throw from its old property, and had to find another house to serve as a parsonage for its pastor. One marvels at the faithfulness of God. Hope Church grew to more than its original size by the time the split came in 1953, when once again its numbers were reduced. Now it is a congregation of 100 families, and has, over the years, given birth to three daughter congregations, all of which number more than fifty families.

But the congregation, under the leadership of Rev. Ophoff and its elders, was determined to follow the path

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of truth. Whatever the cost, the issue was faithfulness to the Scriptures. And on this course of faithfulness the congregation set herself with firm faith in the care of God.

But we are primarily interested in Rev. Ophoff. There is a reference in the classical minutes to one of his speeches. It was at the time when Rev. Ophoff was asked on the floor of the Classis whether or not he would unequivocally abide by the decisions of the Synod of 1924. The minutes record that he answered, No. But apparently he had the opportunity to speak in that connection, because the committee later reported as a ground for Rev. Ophoff's deposition that he had taken a "defiant stand" and had used "strong language." The speech itself was not preserved in the minutes, and one could almost wish that he had been present to hear it.

But that some speech was made was evident also from the fact that at least one statement in it was publicly reported. The classical meetings were news of sufficient importance in those days to rate columns in the *Grand Rapids Press*. And the *Grand Rapids Press* carried a headline the next day which read: "OPHOFF PREFERS DEATH." Apparently he had made some such remark on the floor on the Classis as he had explained the reasons for the stand which he took.

In the mouth of anyone else, a statement such as this would have sounded pompous and airy, an overly sensational exaggeration of the situation. But if you knew Rev. Ophoff at all, you would also know that the statement was made by him with every ounce of conviction behind it. He meant what he said, and he would have indeed been prepared to die rather than submit to the three points. His life was not threatened, of course. The days of the Roman Catholic inquisition were long since past; and the noble role of martyrs were not to be increased on the floor of Classis Grand Rapids West. But the fact remains that for Rev. Ophoff the issue was exactly that important. Common grace was an important enough heresy to stake one's life upon the issue.

A stand such as this can only be explained in the light of a deep and abiding conviction concerning the importance of the truth. It must be remembered that Rev. Ophoff took this stand practically alone as far as his own personal life was concerned. He understood full well that his congregation would be decimated by this decision. He knew that all his family would disagree. Not only his mother, brother and sister opposed him, but other influential members of his family who were in the ministry disagreed with him and remained in the Christian Re-

formed Church. These were Rev. Schaap and Prof. Schultze, who later became president of Calvin College. From a human point of view, the future was very dark. Rev. Hoeksema stood with him and the congregation of Eastern Ave. Rev. Danhof and the congregation in Kalamazoo were agreed. But that was all. Whether these three groups could maintain the cause of the Church of Christ was, from every human viewpoint, a doubtful question. It could not but be that a certain loneliness stole over his soul as he stood against the might of Classis Grand Rapids West and the whole of the Christian Reformed Church. But the truth required it. Nothing could stand in the way of one's conviction concerning the truth.

For the Protestant Reformed Churches, it meant the beginning of their history. We exist today because of the courageous stand of a few men who feared not men because they feared God. It seems astounding. The churches and the truth which we love so dearly had their origin in the determination of a few to sacrifice all for the sake of the truth of the Scriptures. From an emphatic "No," which rang through the councils of Classis Grand Rapids East and West have come the churches to which we belong.

God has done this. There is no other explanation. God gave these men the insight into the truth to see the wrong of common grace. God gave these men the courage to stand for that truth against insuperable odds. God gave these men the faith to believe that, when they stood for the truth, God would prosper their work and never bring their cause to defeat.

We are heirs of their courage and faith. We do well to ask ourselves the question whether we have the same courage and steadfastness of purpose today. This is important that we ask this question. We live in a time when doctrine is not considered so very important. Doctrine is a relative matter, it is said. One can take it or leave it. Important enough in its place, it has no real bearing on the issues of life. But there were men whom God used to begin our Churches who thought quite differently. To them the truth was a matter of life and death. And they were but echoing the sentiments of thousands of martyrs before them. Is the truth which we love that important to us? Would we give up all for it? Would we literally give our lives, rather than deny it? Would we? Would you? ❖

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

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# That Day In June, 1944

by J.P. de Klerk

**J**une 6. Some elderly people will remember this momentous date; younger ones won't. Now 56 years ago: D-Day, when thousands were killed, whether in the cold water of the Canal (North Sea ) on their way to or on the beaches of Normandy. The drive for the liberation of Western Europe began. For thousands of others the worst was yet to come.

First Caen, a crucial intersection south of the landing area (it was rubble when it was finally "secured"). Hitler's army did not give up easily. In September: Arnhem...(the Bridge too far), bad weather, failing radio communications, widespread destruction and loss of life, mistakes, traitors, all along the trail (some of it narrow, single file dikes).

Then, come Christmas: Bastogne (the Battle of the Bulge), and then the winter of our discontent (the "hunger winter") when starvation was rampant in the major cities in The Netherlands, until the representative of Hitler, Seyss Inquart, finally (April 1945) allowed the Allies to drop tons of food. With four-engine bombers they came (American B-17s and Liberators, and British Lancasters of the Royal Air Force) with their loads (such as boxes of crackers and canned meat and vegetable stew) from an altitude of approximately 500 ft on designated fields outside the cities and rocking their wings in greeting on their way back over the populated area where the pilots saw all those people waving (they couldn't see the tears). Those guys must have had a ball: no anti-aircraft

guns firing at them and the associated deadly shrapnel flying around.

During one of these food droppings, one American pilot threw his cap out of the little side window of the cockpit, and got it back ten years later in a surprise meeting with the guy who had picked it up and succeeded in locating him because his name was written inside .

And in May 1945, it was all over...the Second World War had ended in Europe. Nobody who fought in it or lived through it can forget it.

Therefore the people in the photograph in a Dutch village are so happy to remember how their country got its freedom back, from time to time. Praise the Lord.



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



# "LITTLE LIGHTS"

## Just Like Father

... *let it shine!*

by Connie Meyer

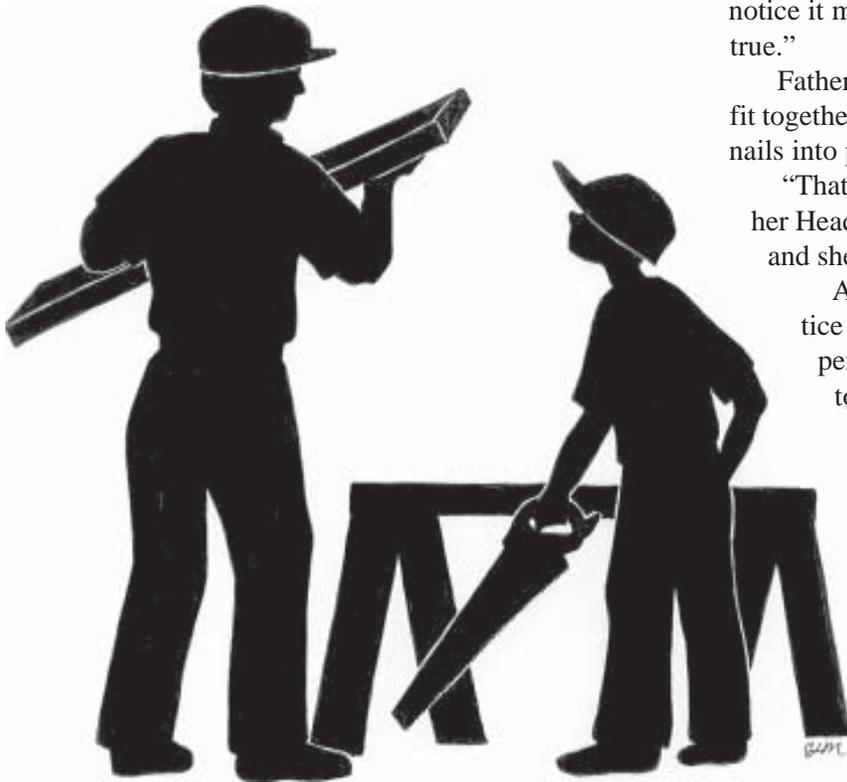
Andy put on a hat just like Father—and helped to get the tools: hammer, ruler, pencil, square and saw. Andy knew where to find them all. Father began to measure the boards.

“Can you get the nails, Andy?”

Andy nodded. He knew just the size they would need.

“Yes, those will work well. Now let’s cut the wood.”

Father began to saw the boards while Andy helped to hold them still.



“Would you like to try to saw, Andy? I’ll hold the board while you cut.”

It was harder to do than Andy thought. His arm went back and forth and back and forth. The saw went back and forth and back and forth. But he still hadn’t cut through the wood.

“Keep going—you’re almost through. Keep telling that arm to saw!”

Andy stopped a moment, took a breath, and started again. He could hardly keep his arm on the task. But finally a scrap piece of wood fell to the floor.

“It’s amazing how our bodies work, isn’t it? Our head tells our hands what to do, and they do it. Maybe we notice it more when our hands are tired, but it’s always true.”

Father showed Andy how the pieces of wood would fit together to make a bench. They began to hammer the nails into place.

“That’s just how it is with the church, too. Jesus is her Head and she is His body. He tells her what to do, and she does it. That’s just the way it works.”

Andy pounded in the last nail. He tried to notice how his head told his arm what to do. It happened so smoothly and so well, that it was easy to miss! But it was still very amazing.

Father set the bench on the floor and they sat down on it together.

“You did a good job, Andy. The bench is good and sturdy. It will look fine on the porch.”

Andy smiled. He had learned to build with wood—just like Father.

*“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine... but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together... according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Ephesians 4:14-16). ❖*

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

## BEACONLIGHTS

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## Church News

### BAPTISMS

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

*Mark 16:16*

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:  
Brody James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jeremy Driesen—Doon,  
IA

Brynn Alexis, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Brummel—  
Faith, MI

Braden Jay, son of Mr. & Mrs. Pete VanPutten—First, MI  
Easton Dean, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kelly TenBroeke—  
Georgetown, MI

Jason Wei-Yong, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dennis Lee—  
Georgetown, MI

Isaiah John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Lane Brummel—Hull, IA  
Damon Trent, son of Mr. & Mrs. James Haveman—Hull,  
IA

Leah Faith, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Zylstra—  
Lacombe, Canada

Megan Dedra, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Bill Pipe—  
Loveland, CO

Sadie Michelle, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nathan  
Langerak—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:

Susan Vander Schaaf—Faith, MI

Kelly Mol—Faith, MI

Shauna Schut—Georgetown, MI

Stephanie Kerkstra—Georgetown, MI

Alex Vander Schaaf—Georgetown, MI

Emily Veldman—Georgetown, MI

Thad Terpstra—Holland, MI

### MARRIAGES

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

*Matthew 19:5*

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Gary Boverhof and Miss Marsha Meinders—  
Edgerton, MN

Mr. Kevin Kuiper and Miss Amy VanDonsellar—Hope, MI

Mr. Jason Bertsch and Miss Tarah VanMeeteren—  
Redlands, CA

Mr. Shane Marion and Miss Stacy Prins—Trinity, MI