

Insight Into

July/ August 2019



Netherlands Reformed Congregation, Rock Valley, Iowa

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Insight Into

General Information

Insight Into is the official youth periodical of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations in the United States and Canada.

As a Reformed magazine, **Insight Into** seeks to promote the knowledge of the truth and to give biblical guidance to young people in their daily lives.

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MEDITATION

A Precious Promise for our Seed

“I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring” (Isaiah 44:3b).

Rev. C. Vogelaar

The prophet Isaiah may speak in this chapter of rich promises for an undeserving people. The blessing of the Spirit will be poured on the unworthy. The contrast is indicated with “yet now” in verse one. Jacob or Israel signifies the entire nation. The lamentable division of the days of Jeroboam will be a thing of the past. Israel is God’s servant. God has freely chosen him as His own. This is the only foundation and sole reason. God formed them from the womb, that is, from the very beginning of their national existence.

He encourages them with, “Fear not, O Jacob, My servant, and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen” (verse 2). God speaks here the word of His good pleasure, His gracious election. He calls His child, Jesurun, which means “darling,” a term of endearment. The promise is that He will pour water upon those that are thirsty. Thirst is a desire which must be fulfilled; otherwise, they will die. This indicates a great need. The dry and thirsty ground indicates being made sensible of our desolate condition, our barrenness and unfruitfulness. This is what the Lord teaches an awakened sinner. They will hunger and thirst after righteousness, earnestly desire to have a Saviour, and receive a longing for Christ and His grace.

The Spirit and His gifts and graces are compared to water for its purifying, softening, fructifying, and refreshing nature. The Spirit will be poured “upon thy seed.” What an encouraging promise this is, also for our days. There may be so many concerns about what will become of our youth, our children, and our grandchildren. There are so many temptations, and the world may allure so powerfully in the hearts of young and old. By nature, they seek satisfaction of their thirst for happiness where it never can be found. However, when the Spirit is poured upon our young people, our seed, there will be a thirsting for God, the living God, as in Psalm 42:1, “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.”

Then they feel the emptiness of all the pleasures and riches of the world and the service of sin. Then there will be sorrow because of having sinned so much against a good-doing God. Then that which is spoken of in Acts

2:17 will be fulfilled, *“And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.”* No matter how dark and often discouraging the times may be, God will fulfill His Word, which we also read in Psalm 72:5, *“They shall fear Thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.”*

Before the pouring out of the Spirit on Pentecost there was a praying congregation. It was the place of those who had received a rich promise--the place of a beggar bowing his knees, pleading upon God's own Word and promise. May the Lord give such a pleading and begging to Him for our youth, for our seed, for our offspring, that they may also *“spring up as among the grass”* (verse 4) and that they may say *“I am the LORD's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD and surname himself by the name of Israel”* (verse 5).

My young friends, you want to belong--perhaps to a group of friends--you don't want to be excluded. That is understandable, but I wish you the desire that you also, by grace, may belong to that people who with Ruth say, *“Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God”* (Ruth 1:16). Then you will be bound to God's precious Word and to His people, united by the same desire--the desire that you may serve and glorify Him.

“There will be no change of company hereafter; those that are our companions here will be our companions in eternity. If never gathered in heart and affection out of the world, we live with the world and die with the world. Ruth said to her mother-in-law, “Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried” (Ruth 1:16-17). Moses also chose “rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Hebrews 11:25). By these portions of the Word, we may try our religion. Who are our companions? Where do we feel at home--with the world? Or with the people of God's family?”

~ John Grace



Love for the Church!

Rev. H. Hofman
(Translated from *De Saambinder*)

Those who have visited the imposing Notre Dame in Paris will know that this example of architecture makes a great impression. The cathedral attracts millions of visitors every year!

While standing there face to face with what for centuries has been a part of history, you cannot help but imagine the gray past of the Middle Ages, or even before that. Napoleon was crowned here. A nail of the crucifixion, the crown of thorns, and a splinter from the cross of Christ are safely stored in a vault. Of course, you know our opinion about this idolatry.

Immediately following this fire in Paris, many emotional reactions from around the world came pouring in. One cannot help but think what many rightly fear today: Did the church indeed vanish to the margins of society? Suddenly this sad fact seems not to be the case considering the outpouring of (financial) support! Naturally many emotions can arise when an icon of about 850 years old threatens to go up in flames in a few hours.

Never did I, however, witness such a spontaneous outburst of financial liberality. Within the first twenty-four hours after the disaster, three hundred million euros were pledged. French millionaires and companies donated hundreds of millions as if it were nothing. UNESCO was immediately ready for the rescue mission. The love of the world for “the church” was immense. Germany, Poland, the United States, Russia, and the Vatican, politics and church, joined forces. Everything suddenly seemed to take care of the mother church.

Talk about love for the church! People in Paris cried, prayed, and sang for the preservation of “the” church! This spontaneous response warmed one’s heart. If you didn’t know better, you would be impressed not just by

the amounts mentioned but even more by the words used by media, art lovers, architectural historians, and the common man on the street. You had the impression that a kind of deification took place of a building made of wood and stone. Am I wrong to think that this occurs among us as well? That is at the same time the tragedy of this fire.

Weeping Jeremiah

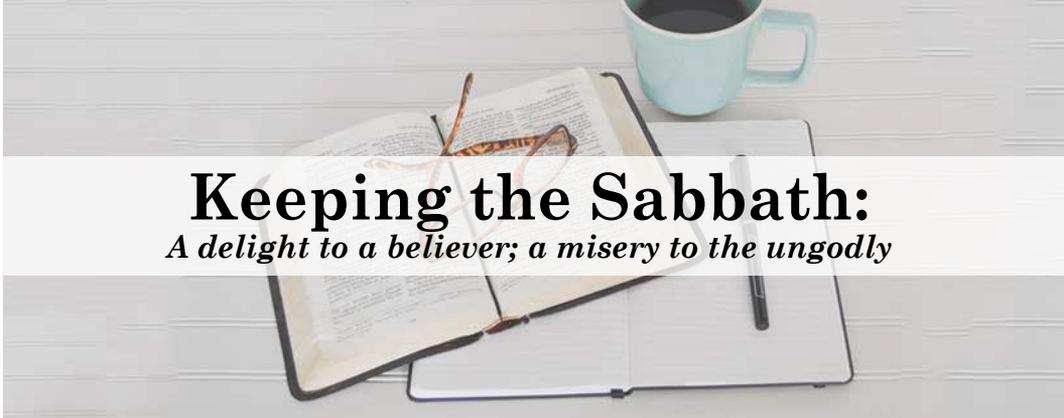
In Paris hearts were burning for Notre Dame. I couldn't help but think: Were there also tears before the eternal God because of a profound sorrow after God? What a sad lack of such sorrow when crying, praying, and singing takes place at the sight of a burning church building, but is not accompanied by the depth of weeping Jeremiah of old, because of the personal sorrow after God and a heartfelt repentance within.

Imagine that for a single fire the world would weep because of the evil we have done? It could result in a worldwide Reformation. These thoughts just came to the surface from the sight of crying, praying, and singing people at a burning church building.

All church buildings

Dear friend, what will it be when in the day of days the whole world shall burn, when *"the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up"* (2 Peter 3:10)? Then tears will flow, and there will be mourning and weeping. Like everything else, all church buildings will burn. Will we have more in that day? That burning heart, saved, reconciled to God by the blood of Christ, with which the people of God will enter the courts of the Lord? Let us be kindly warned, and divinely granted by God to you and me.

While many churches may have their buildings well insured, I had to think involuntarily: Are we indeed 'well insured' for eternity? The Apostle Paul writes, *"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 8:38-39). Remember, in the Day of Judgment, we will not be able to turn to an insurance company or policy for a burning church building and much less for a never-dying soul. Then only that which has been accomplished by the Surety on Calvary will have eternal value. May that be our portion by the grace of faith.



Keeping the Sabbath:

A delight to a believer; a misery to the ungodly

Rev. R. M. M'Cheyne (1813-1843)

The first Sabbath dawned on the bowers of a sinless Paradise. When Adam was created in the image of his Maker, he was put into the garden to dress it and to keep it. No doubt this called forth all his energies. To train the luxuriant vine, to gather the fruit of the fig tree and the palm, and to conduct the water to the fruit trees and the flowers required all his time and skill. Man was never made to be idle. Still, when the Sabbath Day came around, his rural implements were all laid aside; the garden no longer was his care. His calm pure mind looked beyond things seen into the world of eternal realities. He walked with God in the garden, seeking a deeper knowledge of Jehovah and His ways, his heart burning more and more with holy love and his lips overflowing with seraphic praise.

Even in Paradise man needed a Sabbath. Without it Eden itself would have been incomplete. How little they know the joys of Eden, the delight of a close and holy walk with God, who would wrest from Scotland this relic of a sinless world! The Sabbath is also a type of heaven. When a believer comes up to the house of God, it is like the morning of the resurrection, the day when we shall come out of great tribulation into the presence of God and the Lamb. When he sits under the preached Word and hears the voice of the Shepherd leading and feeding his soul, it reminds him of the day when the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed him and lead him to living fountains of waters. When he joins in the psalm of praise, it reminds him of the day when his hands shall strike the harp of God: "Where congregations ne'er break up, and Sabbaths have no end."

When he retires and meets with God in secret in his closet, or like Isaac, in some favourite spot near his dwelling, it reminds him of the day when he shall be "a pillar in the temple of his God, and shall go no more out." This is the reason why we love the Lord's Day and call the Sabbath a delight. A well-spent Sabbath we feel to be a day of heaven upon earth. For this reason we wish our Sabbaths to be wholly given to God. We love

to spend the whole time in public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is taken up in the works of mercy and necessity. We love to rise early on that morning and to sit up late, that we may have a long day with God.

How many may know from this that they will never be in heaven? A straw on the surface can tell you which way the stream is flowing. Do you abhor a holy Sabbath? Is it a kind of hell to you to be with those who are strict in keeping the Lord's Day? The writer of these lines once felt as you now do. You are restless and uneasy. You say, "Behold, what a weariness is it!" "When will the Sabbath be gone that we may sell corn?" Ah! soon, very soon, and you will be in hell. Hell is the only place for you. Heaven is one long never-ending holy Sabbath Day. There are no Sabbaths in hell.

"A Sabbath well-spent brings a week of content, and strength for the toil of the morrow, but a Sabbath profaned, whate'er be gained, is a certain forerunner of sorrow."
~ Rev. A. W. Pink (1886-1952)

"These three things together--they will not come, they cannot come, and yet they shall come. "Ye will not come" is in their proud heart; "Ye cannot come" is from their ruin by the fall; but "Ye shall come" is by the Holy Spirit's operations."
~ Rev. Joseph Irons (1785-1852)

"What would Simon have done could I have crept into his parlor and said, while pointing to himself at the head of his table and then at the poor woman at Jesus' feet, "Simon, you are as bad a sinner as that woman"? Would he not have set his dogs upon me, if he had any? Would he have ordered me out of the house, if I had told him, "Simon, your heart is as black and depraved as hers, but she is nearer the kingdom of heaven than you are. You are further off from the Christ of God than she is; because in the depravity of your fallen nature you have that pride that denies your depravity, that pride that conceals it, and that pride that palliates it. She has not, and there is the difference between you and her."

~ Rev. Joseph Irons (1785-1852)



pro·pit·i·a·tion

noun

Rev. H. Hofman

Propitiation, propitiate, propitiatory sacrifice ... I can image if young people are trying to pronounce these words that they might stumble at the pronunciation, let alone to know their meaning. Still these may be words which frequently are used in sermons and writings of our forefathers, reason enough to take a closer look at their meaning. Before I do so though, I want to point out that propitiation is not only a *difficult* word, but it is also an extremely *important* word. I read somewhere that modern versions of Scripture have eliminated this word because it is archaic and no longer understood. Both may be true, but if these and the like words are then replaced by weaker and less precise expressions, we have a very serious undermining of the authority of the Scriptures. In that case a strong, definitive, and fundamental element of the doctrine of reconciliation is lost. Why is propitiation such an important word?

Propitiation has everything to do with the wrath and justice of God. To propitiate means to fully satisfy or appease offended justice. In the tabernacle there was a cover of pure gold which was called the mercy seat. The blood of the sacrificial animal was yearly sprinkled upon that cover. It shows and underlines that God, outside of the finished work of His Son Jesus Christ, is angry, full of wrath, yes, a consuming fire, and that blood was and is necessary to appease the offended justice of God. Something of this divine displeasure is learned when the Lord by His Holy Spirit opens the eyes of a sinner. This does not necessarily mean that such a sinner actually meets with that anger, because then it would consume him in an instant. But deep impressions of God's displeasure over sin cannot be missed. These impressions are necessary to learn that a sinner cannot stand or exist before a God who must punish sin. Then I must humble myself on account of always having missed the mark. The fruit of this

discovering work is a seeking of the Lord with the whole heart. Remember that the love of God is also poured out into the heart! Later on, when the Lord teaches more of myself and Himself, the wrath of God against sin becomes an unbearable burden for that convicted sinner. What a wonder when at God's time the Holy Spirit shows that there is One who appeased God in His wrath and hot displeasure so that in Christ He can now show mercy through faith in Christ's blood (Romans 3:25). Let's not *remove*, *weaken*, or even *substitute* a word for something less powerful than the word propitiation. It is the very core of reconciliation with God.

“Pride is a vice, which cleaves so fast unto the hearts of men, that if we were to strip ourselves of all faults, one by one, we should undoubtedly find it the very last and hardest to put off.”

~ Rev. Thomas Hooker (1586-1647)

“Pride not only withdraws the heart from God but lifts it up against God.”

~ Rev. Thomas Manton (1620-1677)

“All the sin of heathendom, all the sin of Christendom, is but the outgrowth of the one root--God dethroned, and self enthroned, in the heart of man.”

~ Rev. Andrew Murray (1828-1917)

“There is not one of us who can take to himself the least jot of glory without sacrilegious robbing of God.”

~ John Calvin (1509-1564)

What is Necessary

Rev. P. Van Ruitenburg

Who is not ever lonely, sad, bad-tempered, out of humour, or depressed? Who does not seek joy, true joy, or substantial joy? Everyone is looking for true happiness. The problem is that our eyes are closed to our deepest need and that stands in the way of seeking for true joy and meaning in our lives. We do not see this unless God opens our eyes to it. Natural man does not understand these spiritual things and is deeply blinded to them. That is why people seek joy in Christmas, parties, good food, drinks, sexuality, and much more, without ever being really satisfied.

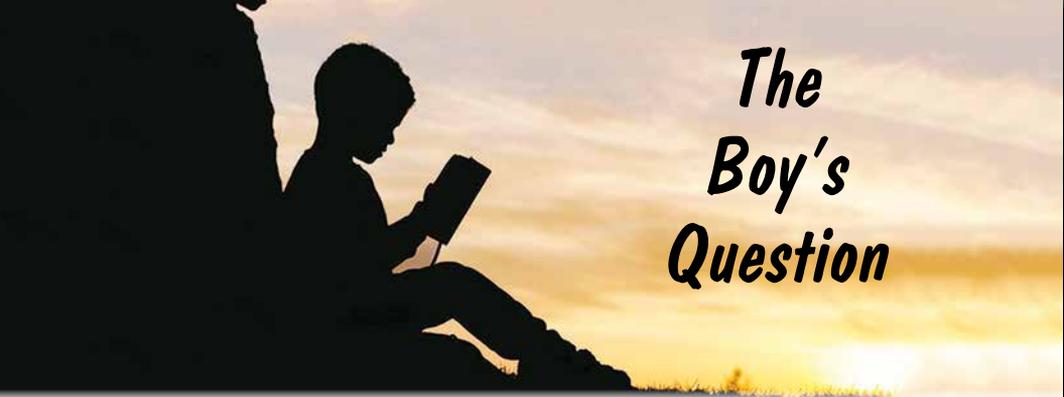
What is it that we do not see? The curse that rests on us. That is why people do not seek a Saviour. We do not see how unclean we are, and therefore we are not looking for someone who can wash our sins away. We also do not see that we are lost sheep that need the true Shepherd. We need to feel soul sick to seek the Healer. We need to realize what rebels we are to find a Mediator, and what is necessary.

Or have we meanwhile seen how lost we are, and does our heart cry out for a solution to escape the well-deserved punishment? Christ does not want to be known intellectually, but He wants to be needed, dear, and glorious. That is what God's Spirit does to make us thankful to God and to realize what we are living for! How deeply grateful lost sinners are when the Mediator reveals Himself as a willing Saviour. Count on it that the door of their heart opens and a joyful meaning and desire of this life enters. Even when Jesus reveals Himself for the first time, there is unspeakable and glorious joy.

“And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick” (Luke 5:31).

“And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire” (Luke 3:9).

“He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ” (John 1:41).



The Boy's Question

Taken from *The Young People's Magazine* April 2019

A boy heard his father ask God to curse his soul if he did not win some bet that he had made. The father was foolish and sinful to have made the bet. He was to gain or lose some money on an event that may well have been completely out of his control. One thing is certain; it was under God's control. And the fact that everything is under God's control means that no one should bet on anything whatsoever.

More importantly, this was a very sinful prayer. If God had answered the man's prayer, He would have sent the man's soul to hell for ever. We should have a very solemn feeling about hell, especially if we have reason to believe that we are still on the way there. Hell is what we may call a God-forsaken place; so no one can have God's blessing there. It is a place of punishment that will go on for ever. So there can be no happiness in hell, no friendship, nothing that is good in any way.

Perhaps his mother had been teaching the boy from the Bible. But he asked his father a very wise question: "Are you willing that God should take you at your word?"

"No, no, no," gasped the man, suddenly realizing how serious the words that he had spoken were. The question followed him all day. He left work early, very upset. In the evening he went to a little prayer meeting held near his home. His son's pointed question was "still sticking in his heart," as someone said. The question was described as "*sharper than any two-edged sword.*" These words are used in the Epistle to the Hebrews to describe the Word of God (4:12), but there can be no doubt that the boy's question was based on the Word of God, which was why it had such an effect on his father.

When he reached the place where the prayer meeting was held, the father told people what had happened and asked them to pray for him. We are not given many more details about what happened, but we are told the most important thing. The man was converted. God, who had made him feel his sin, applied to him the truth about Jesus Christ, so that he trusted in Him as the Saviour of sinners. The man confessed, "The most powerful preaching I ever heard was that anxious and solemn question of my little son."



Getting to Know Rev. J Witvoet

With Questions from the
Insight Into Committee

1. Rev. Witvoet, are you willing to share some experiences and first impressions now that you are installed in your first congregation?

I vividly remember sitting at my desk that Friday morning after being installed as minister. I was glancing over a list several pages long of names of the elderly, widows, and widowers of the congregation, all names with no faces. I had just returned from the school after the opening chapel on the first day of the season. The image of hundreds of children, young people, parents, and grandparents was still before my eyes, all souls bound for eternity. The silence was broken by the ringing of the phone. It was a member whose mother had fallen in front of me in the hallway at school an hour or so before. “Oh? her hip is broken? surgery ... Okay, so then she’s being transferred?” A few more brief words and I hung up. I looked at my blank notebook page; the Sunday was less than two days away. What I overwhelmingly felt was the solemnity, responsibility, and the impossibility of being ordained to such an office. Although the above three “impressions” should always remain for an office-bearer, we do not feel them every day like they were felt that morning. It is a blessing if we may.

2. In your opinion, what is the main task of the minister, taking into account that you were called to such a large flock?

The main task of the minister, whether called to a large flock or small, must always be the bringing of God’s Word. First, it is by the preaching in a public worship service in God’s house. This is the Lord’s ordained means, and he is a minister of the divine Word. But this does not mean that this task is only reserved for the pulpit. He must strive to do this constantly in all his labours, in visiting, in counseling, in instructing, in conversation, and so on. He is to be “*instant in season and out of season*” (2 Timothy 4:2). But there is a deeper aspect within this mandate. He must not be content to merely bring the Word of his own choosing. “Oh, this is a nice text; I think I will preach on it.” It should be, “What is Thy Word, for this

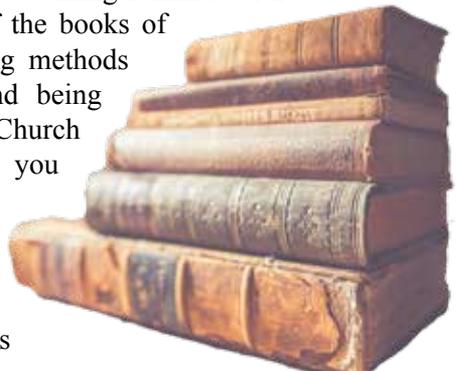
people, at this time; what wilt Thou have me to say?” Does he always feel he receives something? No, but it should always drive him on his knees. Then for preacher and hearer alike, *“A man hath joy by the answer of His mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!”* (Proverbs 15:23). Friends, has this ever been your experience?

3. What is your opinion about the following statement: “A minister is first a husband, then a father, and then an office-bearer”?

What is really meant by it, I’m sure, is from a practical standpoint. “Be careful that you do not let your official work take up so much of your time that you spend little quality time with your wife and children.” An office-bearer can always find more to do, more visits, more time in the study, more meetings, and so on. This is a real threat to our families, no matter what our occupation is. On the other hand, being an office-bearer is not just a black suit you take off. The tasks and responsibilities are always there. You never take the office-bearer “hat” off and put on the husband or father “hat.” Nor is one calling more important than another. Should he ever be more of a father than a husband? Is being a husband more important than being a father? The same holds true for an office. He should be a husband, a father, and an office-bearer at the same time. The love of a father and the devotion of a husband should permeate the office-bearing. But friends, he is none of these unless it comes from the great Husband, Father, and Office-bearer.

4. How are you benefiting in your daily labours as a minister from the four years of Theological School?

The practical instruction received in Theological School is necessary and profitable. You learn how to study and how to utilize the available tools and resources. There is unmeasurable value in studying the doctrine and the past history of the church; becoming familiar with the structure, authors, and dates of the books of the Bible; learning of and applying methods of interpretation and exegesis; and being taught the great importance of Church Order. Eventually these are things you automatically end up using every day without thinking about how you are doing it, and at the same time you are still learning by them. I dare say there is not a day that goes

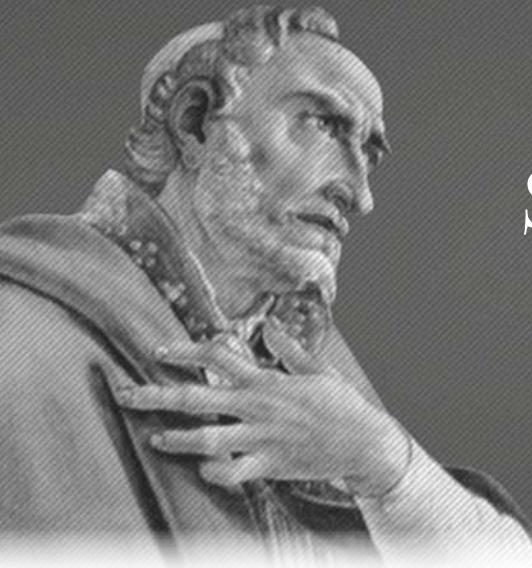


by that I do not refer back to one or more of the thousands of pages of notes or assignments stored in my computer for reference. But let me briefly say that none of this makes a minister or a sermon. Only the Lord by His Spirit can do this, and it needs to happen every time again.

5. What is your message to young people in all the challenges they meet with in our day?

Our young people have to constantly adapt to the age which they are growing up in. “Normal” is not normal anymore. The only normal thing is change. Not only is everything taught as relevant, but free thinking is rampant and we can be fearful it is infiltrating our youth and older ones at an alarming pace. We can reason and figure everything out, and this does not stop at the doors of the church nor in our religion. I find it frightful that more and more from among us seem to be so “converted” without a wonder having taken place. The Lord never changes, and neither does the way He converts a sinner. The order of salvation and the way the Lord by His Spirit leads a sinner into the knowledge of sin and self, and the knowledge of salvation and Christ is ever the same. Salvation is not something to be rationalized; it is a wonder of grace from beginning to end. There is an eternal difference between Christ being formed in the mind, and Christ being formed in the heart. My young friends, much is coming at you in this information age you are growing up in. Ask the Lord for a true conversion and a discerning spirit.





HOW SHOULD WE THINK?

Taken from *The Young People's Magazine* June 2019

Augustine was born in 354 to Christian parents, in a small town then called Tagaste (more recently known as Souk Ahras) in what is now Algeria, North Africa. At that time many professing Christians lived there, but that is no longer so. Augustine's parents made sure that he received a very good education, but he gave up their religion and lived an ungodly life. Later he became religious, but he joined a group whose views were seriously out of line with the Bible. Their ideas led him to excuse his bad behaviour by saying, "It was not I who was sinning but some other nature within me." But no one has any right to excuse their sin in this way.

While living in Milan, Italy, he went to hear the preaching of Ambrose, a noted minister of the time. Ambrose was a very good speaker, and Augustine wanted to learn from his example so that he too could speak well. At this time, Augustine was paying attention to heathen writers and under their influence, he was trying to purify his soul by his own efforts. Of course, that could not work, yet Augustine did give up many of his sins.

It was some time later that he was converted. He became a minister in North Africa and wrote many books in defense of the teachings of the Bible. He did excellent work in opposing some very serious errors which were influencing people at that time--though some of his own ideas were not true to Scripture.

Augustine did learn to speak and also to write well. In his writings he was able to express ideas in very impressive ways. For instance, he emphasized our duty to "think God's thoughts after Him." We should know that God is "perfect in knowledge" (Job 37:16); so God's thoughts are always perfect. But how can we know what God thinks? Only if He reveals His thoughts, and that is what He has done. He has revealed some

of His thoughts in the Bible.

He has revealed all that we need to know about religion, and what He has revealed is perfect. There are no mistakes in Scripture; it is perfectly true from beginning to end. Our thinking must follow what God has revealed in the Bible. For the most important things of life, how thankful we should be that God has not left us to our own ways of thinking! Let us now look at some of God's thoughts on six matters, as these are revealed in Scripture.

1. **Creation:** How did everything begin? Where did this world come from? And the stars? And human beings? Did they just evolve over long periods of time in some random kind of way? That was never one of God's thoughts, but He had a purpose to make the earth. So He tells us that He put that purpose into effect. The Bible says, *"In the beginning God created ... the earth"* (Genesis 1:1). Again, *"He made the stars also"* (Genesis 1:16). And we read this thought of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, *"Let Us make man in Our image"* (Genesis 1:26), and He did.

As we consider everything that exists, we are to bear in mind what God has revealed about His thoughts, and we are to think these thoughts after Him. We are not at liberty to believe that what we see around us is the result of evolution; we have a duty to believe what God has revealed of His thoughts. No one was around to see when everything came into existence; so we are dependent on God to tell us about these things. We are to believe that God created all things, and He has told us about it in Genesis 1.

2. **The human condition:** In life we may meet with many difficulties; we may even experience tragedies. And people can be horrible to each other; they may even murder other people. What is wrong with human nature? There are many answers to that question, but there is one answer that many people do not like: Sin is the basic problem in this world.

See what Paul says, *"All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). He is pointing to the fact of original sin, as everyone



has inherited the guilt of Adam's first transgression and also a corrupt nature. What is more, no one measures up to God's standards; we always come short of living to God's glory. And when Paul speaks as he does, he is giving us God's thinking on the matter. It is our duty to think of these things in the way that God has revealed; we are to think God's thoughts after Him. We are to think of the human condition in the way that God describes it.

3. **What does sin deserve?** Probably everyone recognizes that crimes should be punished, certainly when they do serious harm to other people. But what about sins that seem to do no harm to anybody? What about, for instance, a lie that harms nobody--except the person who tells the lie? To answer such questions we should ask, "What are God's thoughts on the matter?" *The Shorter Catechism* sums up the teaching of the Bible in this way: "Every sin deserveth God's wrath and curse, both in this life, and that which is to come" (Answer 84); in other words, every sinner deserves to be punished for ever, for all their sins.

4. **Salvation:** Is there any hope of being delivered from that punishment? This is something we could never know apart from God revealing His thoughts on the matter. We cannot work it out for ourselves. But God, in His kindness, has revealed His thoughts about salvation, and the answer to the question is, yes, because "*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*" (1 Timothy 1:15). God shows mercy; yet when He pardons sin He must remain just. That was why Christ Jesus had to suffer and die: He did so as the Substitute for sinners.

Now remember your duty to think God's thoughts after Him. How should you think about the salvation that God has provided through



Christ? Your thinking should reflect what God has revealed in the Bible. You should confess that you have sinned, and you are called to receive the truths He has revealed about Christ and His sufferings and death--what He did as the Substitute for sinners. You are to think on these things and trust in Christ for yourself, for He is the Saviour of sinners. Hear Him calling to you to believe on Him: *“Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else”* (Isaiah 45:22).

5. **How should we live?** Many people think that they can work out some set of moral rules for themselves. Not so. No one can think out good principles for living in this world without making very serious blunders. In this matter, as in all the others we have looked at, we need to think God’s thoughts after Him. God is perfectly holy, and we should be perfectly holy, too. He tells us, *“Be ye holy; for I am holy”* (1 Peter 1:16). So we are to think God is perfectly holy, and therefore I should be perfectly holy; God made me, and therefore I should listen to Him and do what He tells me.

And we should believe that there is a blessing in leading a holy life. But what are the principles we should have in our minds if we are to live a holy life? The principles are summed up in the Ten Commandments. But we need a new nature if we are to obey these commandments; that is what God tells us and it should powerfully influence our thinking. So we should go to Him, asking Him to give us a new nature, for Jesus’ sake.

6. **What happens to believers after they die?** We cannot know anything about life after death, unless God tells us. But He does tell us about heaven. It is the place of complete blessedness and happiness, because there is no sin there, just perfect holiness. But if we are to reach heaven, we must have the beginnings of holiness in this world.

Augustine, ungodly though he was when he was younger, began to live a holy life. He believed on the Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour whom God had provided. He began to think God’s thoughts after Him. So we can believe that he went to heaven when he died and, with all God’s other children, will be perfectly happy for ever. Are you fit to go to heaven? Are you fit to die?

“The devil is content that people should excel in good works, provided he can but make them proud of them.”

~ Rev. William Law (1686-1761)

“But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble”

(James 4:6).