

the **Banner** *of Truth*

March 2022
Volume 88, No. 3

The Official Periodical
of the Netherlands Reformed
Congregations of the
United States and Canada



In this issue...

A Blessed Prayer Day
The Complaint of the Suffering Surety
The Song of a New Heart

For our young readers...

Home At Last
Nets

"Yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth." LUKE 11:8b



Meditation A Blessed Prayer Day <i>Rev. J.J. Witvoet</i>	51	Questions & Answers Questions from Our Readers <i>Rev. H. Hofman</i>	61
Bible Study The Life of Moses (4) <i>Rev. C. Vogelaar</i>	52	Current Events	62
From Our Inheritance The Complaint of the Suffering Surety <i>Rev. W.C. Lamain</i>	54	TIMOTHY – for the Young The Confession of Faith (27) Article XXVIII: That Everyone is Bound to Join Himself to the True Church <i>Rev. A.M. den Boer</i>	63
For the Righteous and Those Who Live Without God in the World <i>John Newton</i>	55	Bible Stories for Little Ones Home At Last <i>Submitted</i>	65
Church History The Spread of Christianity (2) <i>J.N. Mouthaan</i>	56	Bible Quiz Nets <i>Aunt LenaBeth</i>	66
Doctrinal Studies The Fall (2) <i>Rev. G.H. Kersten</i>	57	Letters to My Young Readers	69
For Young & Old Arius vs. Athanasius From an earlier issue of <i>The Banner of Truth</i>	58	News & Announcements	70
Reflections The Song of a New Heart (1) <i>Rev. J. den Hoed</i>	60	Back Cover The Power of Prayer <i>Joseph Irons</i>	72

Cover: Oven-baked loaves of bread | © CrustandBeyond.com

THE BANNER OF TRUTH

Publication Number: (USPS 041-540)

Monthly, Official Publication of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations of the United States and Canada. Typeset (Archtype Graphic Solutions) at Pompton Plains, NJ; printed and distributed (AlphaGraphics) at Midland Park, NJ.

Subscription rate: \$30.00 in the U.S. and Canada, payable in U.S. funds; \$35.00 to foreign countries, payable in U.S. funds. Rates listed are for one-year subscriptions.

Rev. J. den Hoed, Editor

972 Hemlock Loop, Lynden, WA 98264
Home: 360-354-0210 • Study/Fax: 360-354-0216

Rev. C. Vogelaar, Assistant Editor

14 Longview Drive, Towaco, NJ 07082-1540
973-265-8632 • E-mail: revcvogelaar@gmail.com

James Okken, Managing Editor

3 Joseph Court, Hackettstown, NJ 07840-4664
973-809-2112 • Fax: 973-381-1483 • E-mail: jamesokken79@gmail.com

John Sweetman, Subscription Manager

11 Split Rock Road, Boonton Township, NJ 07005
973-335-4679 • E-mail: nrcbannersubscriptions@yahoo.com

Copy for *The Banner of Truth* is due the 1st of the month prior to month of publication. All copy (including announcements, obituaries, anniversary notices, and ads) should be sent to James Okken. All announcements submitted for publication must be typed and are subject to editorial policy. Communications relating to subscriptions should be addressed to the subscription manager. Change of address should be forwarded to the subscription manager one month in advance of moving date. Please provide both new and old address.

Archived copies of *The Banner of Truth* (1934 to present) are available at Digibron.nl.

PERIODICAL: Postage paid at Mahwah, NJ

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to

The Banner of Truth
11 Split Rock Road, Boonton Township, NJ 07005

Additional Denominational Sources for Printed Matter

Other denominational periodicals include: *Paul* (mission periodical), 377 Poldon Drive, Norwich, Ontario, Canada N0J 1P0; *Insight Into* (for young people), Rev. P. Van Ruitenburch, Secretary, 8920-3 Broadway Street, Chilliwack, British Columbia, Canada V2P 5W1; NRCEA School Journal *Learning and Living*, Plymouth Christian School, 965 Plymouth Ave. N.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49505.

For a list of denominationally printed Reformed literature write to: Netherlands Reformed Book and Publishing Committee, Mr. Tom Fluit, 0-121 Leonard St. NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49534, or e-mail nrcbnp@gmail.com. For a list of Reformed material which embraces additional publishing companies, write to our discount book distributor: Bible Truth Books, P.O. Box 1290, Grand Rapids, MI 49501.

For free sermons write to: Treasured Meditations, P.O. Box 2753, Grand Rapids, MI 49501.

In all our publications, the Netherlands Reformed Congregations aim to remain true to inerrant Scripture and its Reformed heritage as expounded in the denomination's doctrinal standards: the Belgic Confession (1561), Heidelberg Catechism (1563), and Canons of Dort (1618-1619). The Netherlands Reformed Congregations are also in agreement with the Westminster Standards (1640s): the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. The Netherlands Reformed Denomination in the United States and Canada consists of twenty-seven congregations and approximately 11,000 members. Our sister denomination in the Netherlands has 152 congregations and a membership of approximately 107,000. The North American churches have established a mission post and congregation in Loma Alta, Bolivia, South America.



Meditation

A Blessed Prayer Day

Rev. J.J. Witvoet, Rock Valley, IA

“And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel”
(1 Kings 18:36a).

What a solemn scene is displayed before us in the above words! The history is known well enough. Elijah, the prophet of the Lord, has been instructed, after three-and-a-half years of waiting out the judgments of the Lord upon the land, to appear. He has been sustained by the hand of the Lord by His appointed means—first, in utter seclusion by the brook Cherith and, then, by the widow of Zarephath.

Now he is commanded to show himself to Ahab (verse 1). The Lord will lift the judgment of drought and famine from off the people but not at the expense of His honor. Elijah must reprove the wickedness of the king and the people publicly, but it will also be proven on this day that there is a God in Israel who hears His servants and alone turns the hearts of the people to Himself (verses 18-20).

The double-minded people of Israel are called to witness and confess who they will follow, in whom they will confide—the idol set up by their wicked leaders or the LORD. The unlikely location is Mount Carmel, and upon first meeting with King Ahab himself, Elijah gathers here with all the children of Israel. A multitude will call unto their gods, and a lone servant of God will call upon the name of the LORD in prayer.

Time and space would fail us to elaborate on all the events that go before our text words. We read, “And it came to pass...” From morning until midday hundreds of prophets of Baal made futile attempts to move their god to hear or see them. They had hastily prepared their sacrifice. They called, they cried aloud, they leaped on the altar. They cut themselves with knives and lancets, all to no avail. “The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouths. They that make them are like unto them: so is every one that trusteth in them” (Psalm 135:15-18).

Then, what a difference from the chaos and confusion—the prophet calmly calls all the people to gather near to him. He reverently repairs the broken-down altar of the LORD. Silently, twelve stones are set up, and the wood is placed orderly on them. The bullock is cut in pieces and laid on the wood. Three times four barrels of water are poured upon

the sacrifice, saturating the wood and filling a trench round about the altar. To the natural eye it seems an utter impossibility that the LORD would answer by fire.

At the same time that the people are gathering far away in the temple in Jerusalem for the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet humbly bows his knees on Mount Carmel and prays saying, “LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that Thou art the LORD God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again.”

“Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.”

Dear reader, numerous are the applications that can be made concerning the times in which we live and all that takes place within our nations and governments. We will leave those; we would rather draw your attention to the season of our own denominational Prayer Day and the state and condition of the church and our souls.

Without elaborating on them, have we beheld the judgments of the Lord upon us in light of our own departures, base backslidings, and double heartedness? We read upon the question of Elijah to the people, “How long halt ye between two opinions?” that they answered him not a word. In which way are we silent under the hand of the Lord? Have we learned to put our mouth in the dust in guilt and shame, or do we silently go on, halting between two opinions? Whom do we serve? Are we not conformed to the world? Is there not a drought of true conversions? Are there people who are grieved under the barrenness of their own heart? What separations and divisions have made themselves manifest, not only in the nations, but in the church! What difficulties and disagreements!

No, we do not believe that the Lord has been a land of complete darkness in the past season. Are there not those among us who have been sustained by the brook and the birds? May I ask you, is the brook still bubbling, or has it perhaps now dried up? Others may have found, by the faithfulness of the Lord, a little oil in the cruse and a handful of meal in the barrel in the house of the Lord. However, do not the local congregations also sit as lonely widows when the broader ecclesiastical meetings cannot take place? Let this burden be felt, and may the Lord arise in due season for His honor and for our denomination. Oh, that it might become evident, “My doctrine shall drop as the rain, My speech shall distil as the dew, as the small

rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass” (Deuteronomy 32:2).

In the meanwhile, when, the Lord willing, we receive the opportunity again this Prayer Day, may we be moved to gather together to call upon the name of the LORD. May it be orderly, with solemn importunity and with a great sense of our guilt. Elijah had to wait until the hour when the evening sacrifice was offered. He acknowledged the God-ordained time and desired the togetherness of the worshipers in Jerusalem. Oh, people of the Lord, separated and scattered in these days, may there be a meeting at the throne of Grace!

Ah, friends, where does it lie? Not in the first place because of our coming together but something much deeper, much more wonderful. “It came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came...” At the moment the sacrificial lamb was slain, which pointed to the great sacrifice the Messiah would make, Elijah drew near.

There can only be a true Prayer Day—a drawing near to the altar of the covenant-keeping Jehovah in holy confidence,

a receiving of a blessed answer, and a lifting of His righteous judgment—because the fire of God’s eternal wrath fell upon His beloved Son. How necessary to receive this personal application!

By the word of the Lord, Elijah received this precious faith; he knelt by the altar that pointed to the cross, and he was not put to shame. How evident the Lord’s eternal salvation by Christ’s sacrifice is in the life of His people. This becomes and will remain an eternal wonder to them. This may also be seen in Elijah. He, together with Moses, appeared with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration and “spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem” (Luke 9:31b).

Oh, that the Lord would lead His people further in this season, from the brook, from the widow’s house, and unto the Altar and the only Sacrifice for sin. May there be new ones converted unto the Lord this year. We read, “And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, He is the God; the LORD, He is the God.” May this be the fruit for us and our children this Prayer Day. □



Bible Study

The Life of Moses (4)

Rev. C. Vogelaar, Clifton, NJ

“And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.” (Exodus 3:14).

What Moses saw at Horeb was a mystery; an insignificant bramble bush was burning but was not consumed. “And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush” (verse 4a). The Lord knew what Moses needed, and that was instruction. Therefore, God called him and said, “Moses, Moses.” He was called by his name. The place was holy ground. Moses answered “Here am I.” The Lord had a wonderful message for him. He would be God’s servant—he would be a shepherd for an oppressed people in the wilderness.

A solemn declaration

The LORD told Moses to put off his shoes from off his feet “for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” It was the place of God’s presence. He said to him, “I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” It was as if the Lord said to Moses,

I am the covenant-keeping LORD, and although the condition of Israel is one of great need, I have not forgotten My promise to your fathers. The Lord is also the God whom Moses had loved and feared already for so many years.

He had come to deliver them, “And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows” (verse 7). The people of Israel had been brought in such great need in order to be taught to cry to the Lord. Before their affliction they felt quite at home in the land of Goshen; life in Egypt was not so bad. They did not feel so much like strangers in a strange country; there was no longing to return unto the land of their fathers. However, the Lord did not forget His word and would not let His people Israel completely assimilate with the Egyptians.

They were His covenant people, and with a solemn declaration the Lord said that He had seen their affliction, had heard their cries, and knew of their sorrows. Also, the time had come to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians: “and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and

honey” (verse 8b); “Now therefore” (verse 9a,); also “Come now therefore” (verse 10a). It was the appointed time for the manifestation of God’s faithfulness and the deliverance of an oppressed people.

Then the Lord told Moses, “And I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people the children of Israel out of Egypt.” This was a clear calling for Moses.

Moses’ answer to the Lord

Yes, if the Lord would have come forty years earlier, Moses would have said, “I am so glad; I have been waiting for it. I am ready.” However, it was not God’s time then, and Moses ran ahead of the Lord. Now it was forty years later—forty years of instruction in the wilderness. Moses had learned something in those forty years. We read that already in verse 6b, “And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.” This was evidence that Moses had

been humbled—that he knew his unworthiness. He could not stand before a holy God with anything of himself, and when the Lord said that He now would send Moses to Pharaoh, Moses replied, “Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” Now Moses was not so ready; He felt utterly undeserving and unqualified to be God’s servant. Yes, the words “Who am I” show clearly the fruit of the instruction in Midian’s wilderness. Others could do this work much better than he. He was now a broken vessel who had lost his strength and ability; however, that was just the time that he would be a fit instrument in the hand of the Master.

Encouragement

Moses did not have to go forward alone. The almighty God would go with him. Before the Lord Jesus departed to His heavenly throne, He encouraged His Church with the words, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” That was enough for the disciples, for He who promised had not only the right and the authority but also the ability to give what he promised. “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.”

God’s answer to Moses’ fearful question was, “Certainly I will be with thee.” The Lord had seen the misery of His people but guaranteed that He would fulfill His promise. There was a special token in this promise: “When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God

upon this mountain.” That was the promise of Him who cannot lie. Israel would be gathered around this mountain where God would speak to them by means of Moses in a solemn way.

The certainty of deliverance

Moses still had an objection or, rather, a question from a fearful heart. What must he say to the Israelites when he would tell them that the God of their fathers had sent him? “And they shall say to me, what is His name? What shall I say unto them?” What must Moses then say unto them? God’s servants need the certain knowledge that God has called them and sent them. Where else should they find their hope and their strength? They themselves are but feeble, changeable creatures and not able to fulfill the obligations of the calling which the Lord has laid upon them. They need to be able to say, “God Himself has sent me.” The Lord did not leave His servant without a reassuring answer.

“And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM” (verse 14a). That should be enough, Moses. I am the unchangeable JEHOVAH, covenant LORD, and I will never be different from whom I am now. Tell the children of Israel, “I AM hath sent me unto you.” What a comfort this is also for God’s servants and people today that, no matter what may change and has changed in the world, in the Church, or even in their own heart, God is faithful to His name. Moses had to proclaim the Being of God as He had revealed Himself in and through Jesus

Christ. Christ is also the I AM, the Bread of Life, the Good Shepherd, the Door of the sheep, the Light of the world, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the True Vine. Blessed are those who may find shelter under His wings also in our perilous times. We read in Hebrews 13:8, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” He has promised never to forsake His Church. “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

Young and old, all other hiding places will be swept away, but in Him there is still a place for those who cannot find any other resting place. He still calls the weary and heavy-laden to come unto Him. There is rest and peace; there is communion and fellowship between a holy God and an unholy, unrighteous sinner. Blessed are those who may rest and trust in Him. □

(To be continued)

Yes, if the Lord would have come forty years earlier, Moses would have said, “I am so glad; I have been waiting for it. I am ready.” However, it was not God’s time then... Now it was forty years later—forty years of instruction in the wilderness... Now Moses was not so ready; He felt utterly undeserving and unqualified to be God’s servant. Yes, the words “Who am I” show clearly the fruit of the instruction in Midian’s wilderness. Others could do this work much better than he. He was now a broken vessel who had lost his strength and ability; however, that was just the time that he would be a fit instrument in the hand of the Master.



From Our Inheritance

The Complaint of the Suffering Surety

Rev. W.C. Lamain (1904-1984)

(Excerpt from a sermon)

“But I am a worm, and no man...” (Psalm 22:6a).

In the Garden of Eden, Adam stood as the jewel of God’s Creation, formed out of the dust of the earth, adorned with God’s image, and having a chaste soul. Although he did not wear any clothing, nevertheless, Adam was not naked, for he was adorned with the glory of God. His heart and thoughts were continually occupied with God. His life was holy, and he meditated on God’s law, day and night. He delighted himself in the Lord. Although his feet did tread upon the earth, still his heart was by God and with God, for his walk was in the heavens. But alas! Man did not think it good to keep God in remembrance and broke the bond between God and heaven. Adam no longer desired the fellowship with God but gave himself over to the Prince of Darkness. He despised God’s image, chose hell above heaven, reproach and contempt above honor and glory. Oh, in what a terrible abyss did Adam cast not only himself but also all his posterity, for they were represented in him as the head of the Covenant of Works. All mankind fell with him.

Now God opens the eyes of all those that were ordained to salvation, that they may behold their wretched and miserable state. They all learn something of this, for it is essential to know their misery out of the law of God. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God. In the further discovery of their guilt, sin, and lost condition, they come to acknowledge:

*Against Thee only have I sinned, done evil in Thy sight,
Behold, in evil I was formed, and I was born in sin.*

Still, we know all this only in part. In the depths of Christ’s humiliation and in His suffering, the depth of our fall is revealed, and the terrible nature and character of sin is exposed, all because of God’s severe justice and holiness. That which Christ suffered is a clear design of what we have deserved because of original and actual guilt. God cannot and will not renounce His justice, and for this reason all our iniquities were laid upon the Surety. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and for this reason Christ complained, “But I am a worm, and no man.”

A worm has its habitation in the earth, and Christ had to leave the heaven of heavens, His residence, and His throne, to take on our flesh and blood, and tarry upon this cursed earth for a period of time. He came from heaven to

this earth to elevate miserable earthworms, whose habitation is in the dust, to raise them up out of the dust and make them heirs and citizens of heaven. Upon the basis of His perfect righteousness, Christ came to pay their debt, to atone for their iniquity, to lift the needy out of the dung-hill, and to set them with the princes, even with the princes of His people. Worms are despised creatures. They crawl over the ground, are defenseless, and no one pays much attention to them. They are constantly in danger of being crushed underfoot, and when this occurs, you see them writhe and shrink.

Now compare this with the life of Christ upon this earth. He was dishonored and ignored from the manger to the cross. He was treated with nothing but contempt, reproach, and being trodden underfoot, from the beginning to the end. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ crawled as a worm in the dust. There the powers of hell were loosed upon Him, but also God’s justice and wrath burned furiously against Him. All the guilt and sin of the elect oppressed Him so that His sweat became as great drops of blood that fell upon the earth.

It was His will to become as a worm, that He might bow under God’s justice and atone for the rebellion and pride of the elect. He was willing to become as a worm, so the despised worms that were worthy to be crushed might be elevated to kings and priests of God and the Father. Christ became as a worm that His people might be acquitted before the tribunal of God and through the operation of the Holy Spirit be able to sing of the ways of the Lord; one day the praises of God will be their eternal employment. He became as a worm that He might deliver His people from the dust to which they are so attached that they may consider the things above where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Here in this time-state they not only know themselves as worms but also learn to creep as a worm, accepting and embracing the righteous judgment of God so that the promise of the covenant may be fulfilled in them: “Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel” (Isaiah 41:14).

Christ became as a worm to deliver earthworms from the guilt and pollution of sin that He might present them to the Father as a chaste virgin, having neither spot nor wrinkle. □

For the Righteous and Those Who Live Without God in the World

John Newton (1725-1807)

(Excerpt from the sermon “Motives to Humiliation and Praise,” *The Works of John Newton*)

At all events, it shall be well with the righteous. Rejoice, believers, in the Lord. You may be assured, upon the warrant of His faithful promise, either that He will preserve you from the evils which our sins give us such cause to apprehend; or, if He should appoint you to share in a common calamity, He will make you shoes of iron and brass when any part of the road on which you travel through this wilderness towards your heavenly home, shall prove very difficult and rugged. Pray for grace to sit loose to the world, and you will have nothing to fear. The first Christians rejoiced in the spoiling of their goods, and so shall you if the Lord calls you to the trial. You have the same Saviour to support you, and you likewise have treasures far better and more enduring, out of the reach of violence. The Lord teaches us to consider even the loss of life as comparatively of small importance when He says, “Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.” They cannot do that without His permission. The very hairs of your head are numbered, and most of those who have suffered death for Him, who died upon the cross for them, have thought the honor of dying in His cause more to be valued than a thousand lives.

My feelings are painful for you who live without God in the world. I do not wonder if your heart trembles like the leaves of a tree when agitated by a mighty wind. You know

not what may come upon you, but you forebode the worst—and, should it prove so, you have no resource, no hiding place, no Almighty Friend to whom you may with confidence apply for help in time of trouble. Death, at least, is inevitable; and will you dare to die, (yet die you must) if your heart be unhumbled and your sins unpardoned? We preach to you a gracious, powerful Saviour, who invites you to seek Him, and has said, “Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” Seek Him then today while it is called today. Now is the accepted time, the day of salvation. Tomorrow is not your own.

Let believers rejoice and be glad. The Lord reigns, your Lord reigns. He who loved you and gave Himself for you, possesses and exercises all power in heaven and earth. Though clouds and darkness are about His throne and His paths are untraceable by us, we are sure that He is carrying on His great designs for the glory of His great name and for the extension and establishment of His Church, in a way worthy of Himself—worthy of infinite wisdom and goodness. Make His name your strong tower of refuge. Hold out faith and patience. Yet a little while, and we hope to meet where “the wicked cease from troubling; there the weary be at rest” and hear those welcome words, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” □

A Friend Who Never Sends His People Away

Rev. W.C. Lamain (1904-1984)

“... who is the health of my countenance, and my God”
(Psalm 43:5b).

We read about David in Psalm 77, “I remembered God, and was troubled” (Psalm 77:3a). There are people who seem to receive something every day. God’s poor people seldom receive anything. Do you know how much they receive? In general, as much as is needed to keep them from despair and to keep them bound to heaven. Yet, it appears with God’s people that with all the distress, with all the strife, and with all the sorrow, they have a refuge in the blessed wounds and under the wings of the righteousness of Christ. They sing of Him:

*Who has not turned my prayer from Him,
Nor yet His grace from me.*

He is a Friend who never sends His people away. Oh souls, when you can no longer find answers anywhere, when everything seems lost and you become so anxious that you fear one day to fall into the hands of Saul, you may feel free to call upon Him, for He will not turn you away; His gates

stand open day and night. Just lay your concerns before His countenance. Pour out your heart before Him. He is a refuge at all times.

Has the Lord once spoken in your life, even though it was just one word? Then you may say, “Remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope” (Psalm 119:49). God’s people are so anxious for the Lord to speak in their lives. Yet, both in need and in death, in living and dying, they have a refuge in God. They may come to Him with all their needs. Spoken with respect, these people are not afraid of God. A time has come in their life that the middle wall of partition has been broken down. They are able to sing with the poet in Psalm 43 (Psalter 417):

*Then at Thy sacred altar bending,
My heart to God in prayer I’ll raise
With harp and voice in worship blending,
Thy courts resound, while psalms, ascending
To God, my highest joy, bring praise
For all His wondrous ways.* □



Church History

The Spread of Christianity (2)

J.N. Mouthaan, Veenendaal, the Netherlands

(Translated from *De Saambinder*)

The Christian congregation fled from Jerusalem in 70 A.D. when the city was destroyed by the Romans. The Christians were also seriously oppressed by Rome.

Nero accused the Christians of burning down the city of Rome. Many Christians were put to death. The Roman historian Tacitus wrote, "Their death was exacerbated with all kinds of mockery. Clothed with the skins of animals, they were torn apart by dogs, and in this way, they died, or they were nailed to a cross or condemned to the flames so that they would serve as the light at night when daylight had passed. Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle and presented a show in the circus while he mingled among the people in the clothing of a chariot driver, while standing on a chariot" (*Annals*, 15.44.4-5). The Apostle Peter was also one of the martyrs. That was a heavy blow for the Christian church. For himself, however, it was the fulfillment of the prophecy of his Master. John writes later in his gospel that Peter had glorified God with his death (John 21:19). The Apostle Paul was also put to death during this time of persecution. Clement, the Bishop of Rome, wrote about him: "Six times he carried the shackles, he was pursued, he was stoned, he became a messenger of the gospel in both the east and the west and received the highest recognition for his faith. After he had taught and reached the uttermost regions and had made a confession of his faith before rulers he departed from this world and went to that holy place. He became a great example of perseverance" (1 Clement 5.6-7).

Asia Minor

About the year 100 A.D. the center point of the Christian Church was moved from Jerusalem to Asia Minor, the area which we know today as Turkey. The congregation at Jerusalem, however, continued to exist. After the fall of the city of Jerusalem, the Christians returned. The church father, Epiphanius of Salamis (315-403 A.D.), relates that the students of the apostles performed great tokens and performed healing wonders ("over maten en gewichten," 15).¹

The new leader of the congregation was Simon, the son of Cleopas, of whom we read in the New Testament. John, who was the only apostle still living, was active in Ephesus in Asia Minor. The Word must not just remain in Judea.

About the year 150 A.D. the number of Christians had grown to about forty thousand followers. Congregations could be found throughout the entire Roman Empire in the cities of Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome. As a result of this growth, there was a proportional decrease in the number of Jewish Christians. In 139 A.D., the first Christian of Gentile background became Bishop of Jerusalem.

In spite of the persecution, the growth of Christianity continued. Clement of Alexandria wrote that charred, crucified, and beheaded Christians could be seen about the city (*Vlechtwerken*, chapter 20, par. 125).² In spite of this, in about 200 A.D. the Christian church had more than two hundred thousand followers.

What was the secret of this growth? The late G. Roos writes about this in his book *de Regenbui* (*The Rain Shower*), that we should not look or expect to see a strong church structure. There were no evangelical committees. People were evangelists in the place where they stood. That is how powerfully they were touched by the gospel. That is how the church grew. In the kingdom of God, the growth is the same as with a lump of yeast. "The beginning, which is of God, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, works long and powerfully" (*de Regenbui*, page 32).

The growth was not due to a good organization but had as its source a spiritual origin. The Holy Ghost worked in the hearts of the first Christians so that the Risen One became a living reality for them, and they had a living hope which was mirrored in their daily walk.

We will consider this somewhat further in our next article. □

(To be continued)

1. over maten en gewichten = about measures and weights
2. Vlechtwerken = woven works

Providence

All events are wisely disposed of by the governing care of God's providence. Providence is a servant to God's eternal counsel and purpose. There is no altering the course of providence.

—Matthew Mead



Doctrinal Studies

The Fall (2)

Rev. G. H. Kersten (1882-1948)

(Taken from *Reformed Dogmatics, Volume 1, Chapter 16, The Fall*)

Fall of man (continued)

With his words the devil tried to raise doubt concerning the Lord's commandment and to cast suspicion upon God as if He did not seek the glory of man. Satan asked: "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden...? For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:1b&5).

The answer that the woman gave to Satan's first attack shows that she knew the Lord's command although she did not quote it exactly as the Lord gave it. When we compare Genesis 3:2&3 to Genesis 2:16&17, we see that she omitted certain words the Lord had spoken which were not without significance. Also, she spoke of the "fruit of the tree" while God spoke of "the tree" which contains a stronger injunction than Eve mentioned. This inaccurate version of the injunction had already weakened Eve's position. In her encounter with Satan, Eve should have confined herself to the words God had spoken which she knew since she also had perfect knowledge.

Now Satan made a direct attack. He infers that God is a liar. His word is diametrically opposed to the word of the Lord. God had said, "For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." The serpent said, "Ye shall not surely die." Upon this word already Eve should have lashed out against him as a liar who speaks on his own. She listened, however, and thus gave herself into his claws. It is remarkable that God, the woman, and the serpent spoke of death as the punishment of sin. Thus, not only Satan but also man was conscious of good and evil and, also, of the punishment that was threatened.

Moreover, we must notice the hellish plan to tear man away from God. This intention is evident in the words of the serpent, "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Your eyes shall be opened, namely, to see now that you are under God, and the freedom with which Satan alluded to separates you from God. This, then, is the significance of the words "as gods, knowing good and evil." In this case being as God lies in the knowledge of good and evil, not in the doing of it. God knows evil but does not do it. Committing evil cannot be an inducement to eat of the forbidden tree. Yet, Satan represents the knowledge of good and evil as God knows it for Adam and Eve, commands them to do the good, and forbids their doing evil. According to Satan's delusion, a person eating of that tree shall be as God, knowing for himself what is good and evil. He shall be free from God,

be his own lord and master, stand beside God and not under Him. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was indicative of God's authority over man. As we can clearly see in Satan's words, to eat of this tree would be to attack God's authority. Thus, in the words of the devil two matters are included:

- a) he presents God as a liar; and
- b) he stirs up man against God to tear himself loose from Him.

Their eating of that tree, then, was more than stealing an apple or a pear or some unknown fruit. It was making God a liar and making themselves loose from God, and that is what happened. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." Covetousness led her to eat, while God's commandment should have prevented her. Covetousness is sin and leads to committing sin (Romans 7).

Thus, Adam was not deceived by the serpent, "but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (1 Timothy 2:14b). Adam ate, not ignorantly, but consciously when the woman gave it to him, knowing the fruit of the tree given him by Eve, and being near to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Both Adam and Eve willingly and consciously ate. Both believed the lie and severed themselves from God.

The Fall was in the decree of God

Some Infralapsarians, in order to weaken the offense that man by nature makes in God's sovereignty and to maintain strongly the responsibility of man for his acts, wanted to include the Fall in God's foreknowledge but not in His decree. Considering what was said in the chapter on predestination in which we spoke about Infra- and Supralapsarians at length, we will here only remark that this type of reasoning will never satisfy the man who would reply against God. The same rebellion that makes man oppose God's decree will prompt man out of enmity to God to ask why God did not prevent the Fall if He knew it was coming. We cannot resist this bitter enmity by removing the Fall out of God's decree. Paul stops the mouth of the gainsayer in an entirely different manner, namely, with the sovereignty of God, saying in Romans 9:20-23, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make

one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory?"

They are fitted to destruction because God had in eternity decreed it. That decree predestinated election and rejection and included the entire human race in the Fall according to His sovereign good pleasure, as all God's decrees are sovereign.

About this Perkins writes: "To say that God knew beforehand about the Fall of Adam, but did not ordain it by an eternal decree is entirely wicked, for the least things in nature do not take place without God's decree and will (Matthew 10:30). By His eternal counsel God has also decreed works that are sinful (Acts 4:28). Therefore, those who say this are casting God's providence aside, or at least they are ascribing to God an empty providence. Furthermore, the Fall is a means by which predestination is executed and ordained to that same purpose."

Man fell, then, according to God's decree, as also the fall of the angels was in His decree. God did not passively allow sin, and although according to all His perfections He hates sin, nevertheless, He willed it in order to glorify Himself in righteousness and mercy. "The LORD hath made all things for Himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil" (Proverbs 16:4). Regardless of the purpose of those who would include the Fall in God's knowledge, but say He did not decree it, we must insist that God knows all things by virtue of His eternal decree. Thus, God knew that man would fall because He had decreed that man would fall. Since God's decree is unshakably firm and will certainly be performed, the Fall of man, as well as that of the angels, had to take place. Still, God had given man all the necessary faculties to remain standing. Nor did the decree of God oblige man to commit evil. Not God's decree, but God's law is the rule for man's actions. Besides, Adam did not know about this decree, so it could not influence his actions. Therefore, the decree does not remove man's responsibility for his deeds although because of the decree the Fall must necessarily take place. □

(To be continued)



For Young and Old

Arius vs. Athanasius

(Translated from the April 1960 issue of *The Banner of Truth*)

A catechism student from one of our congregations asked me to tell us something about Arius, including when and how he lived.

I am pleased to find interest regarding the doctrines of the Truth. The student in question need not be concerned that I would think ill of his question; on the contrary, I appreciate his desire to increase knowledge. Now to the matter at hand.

Arius was a Presbyter (minister) in Alexandria where a flourishing congregation had been established and from where Christianity had spread over the entire country of Egypt and Arabia. In 318 A.D., Arius began to promote the terrible doctrine that the Second Person in the divine Being was the first created being. With this he denied the Godhead of the Son. He twisted the testimony of Paul in Colossians 1:15 and made of the Firstborn the first created of all creatures. The Son is the Firstborn, the eternal begotten of the Father, coequal with the Father and the

Holy Spirit, true and eternal God. Arius denied this and taught that the Son was created, although before all else was created, but then as a creature and not as God.

Because of this horrible, blasphemous heresy, the Synod of Alexandria, held in 321 A.D., judged him a heretic, and he was deposed from his office. This did not, however, quiet the turmoil which Arius had created. He had a glib tongue, and many followed him; even among the bishops he had many followers. Caesar Constantine the Great also began to concern himself with the differences. After he was further informed about the situation by Bishop Hosius of Cordova, Caesar Constantine ordered a Church Council to take place which gathered in Nicea in 325 A.D.

No less than three hundred eighteen bishops gathered at this council. Even Caesar Constantine appeared there. At this solemn gathering, the Lord used a young deacon by the name of Athanasius as a means in His hand to grant a victory in maintaining the true doctrine. With a fiery zeal Athanasius defended the Godhead of the Son. Arius was

again condemned and excommunicated, and his books were ordered to be burned. In this way the church was saved from going into heathendom into which Arius's heresy would certainly have brought it.

Caesar Constantine changed his mind because of the influence of the many bishops who supported Arius. In 350 A.D. he commanded that Arius should be reinstated in his office. Athanasius, who, in the meantime, had been elevated to the office of bishop, faithfully refused to obey Caesar Constantine and even prevailed to move Caesar so that he agreed with him. The enemies, however, managed on two occasions to have Athanasius labeled a troublemaker at two African Synods, and he was banned to the city of Tur in 336 A.D. That is how far the Lord permitted enemies the victory. The enemies rejoiced. Arius would again be solemnly taken into the communion of the church after he hypocritically swore to the truth of the Nicene Creed.

The bishop of Constantinople, however, did not trust Arius, but Caesar commanded that Arius should be reinstated. The bishop then prayed to the Lord that the Lord would do right and that Arius would not escape the reward of his unrighteousness. The Lord heard this prayer.

What happened? Jubilantly, the followers of the wicked Arius went with him on the appointed day to the church. Suddenly, however, Arius was struck with severe pain even before they reached the church. He collapsed and died before the church doors. God had spoken!

The unexpected death of Arius made a deep impression upon the people. May it also make a deep impression upon us. Many are so inclined to choose the side of the apparent winning party. It is self-evident how necessary it is to look

beyond all human wisdom and to place the Word of the Lord above all human wisdom and might even though it is discarded by all of mankind.

In spite of what happened, the unreasoning enemies did not change their course. Instead of turning back in shame, they continued in their enmity against Athanasius. In this we see how blind and hard a person is, and unless the Lord stops him, he never gives up the strife against Him.

After the death of Arius, Athanasius was returned from his exile and joyfully received by his congregation, but the followers of Arius managed to win Caesar Constantine to their side. He hated Athanasius. Athanasius was again deposed, and soldiers were even sent to deliver Athanasius either dead or alive into the hands of Caesar Constantine. These soldiers forced themselves into the church where Athanasius was leading a service. The congregation was very frightened by the fierce actions of the soldiers. Athanasius, however, remained calm and exhorted everyone to go home quietly. His friends were able to remove him from the church and hide him in a safe place in Egypt. He was allowed to return six years later.

The later emperor, Caesar Valens, continued the persecution against the followers of Athanasius, but this godly minister was able to live out his life in peace until he died in 373 A.D. After a life of strife for the Godhead of the Son, he received the eternal victory which is prepared by Christ for His people.

Dear catechumens, in these times of great declension and denial of the old and unchangeable truths of God's Word, strive to keep the pure doctrines, and may the Lord sanctify them to your never-dying soul. □

Eventual Outcome of Athanasius' Work

(Excerpt taken from the May 1956 issue of *The Banner of Truth*)

Dissensions arose soon amongst the Arians themselves, by which their strength was considerably broken; at the second general Council of Constantinople in the year 381 A.D., their doctrine was again condemned, and the decisions of the Council at Nicaea renewed.

Athanasius did not live to see this triumph. He had died in the year 373 A.D. He had been a bishop for forty-six years, but twenty of those years were spent in banishment. In his eventful life he has been a great blessing for the Church by his bold and steadfast confession of the truth. The words of Immanuel may be applied to Athanasius: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Revelation 2:17b).



Reflections

The Song of a New Heart (1)

Rev. J. den Hoed, Lynden, WA

“And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me” (Isaiah 12:1).

Some ask the question whether the prophet Isaiah or someone else wrote this song. Perhaps the question should be, “May it be my song?”

“In that day thou shalt say...” What a wonderful day it is in the life of God’s children when they may say what the Lord has made known in their heart. That is a day when the Lord gives freedom, love, and desire—no, not to speak about self but to speak of the honor and the glory of that great God, of that only precious Saviour, of the blood and righteousness of Christ. In that day means the day the Lord came over for my soul, when all enemies had to flee away, when all the voices of the accusers had to be silent; that was a day when the Lord came over, when the covenant was renewed in my heart.

In that day when the heart may hear, “Therefore, behold, I will allure her,” the heart may feel the tender drawing love of the Lord. There, hope, love, and desire are awakened to give Him, the dearest Saviour, all honor, glory, and praise. In that day the new heart may say, “Though thou wast angry with me.” So, in the song of a new heart a child of the Lord first wants to speak of how his life has been. He has been a deeply fallen sinner; one who has lived all his life as an enemy of God, one with no desire or need to seek for what has been lost. All his days have been spent in seeking after the pleasures of a sinful world.

The anger of the Lord was not always there; we have awakened that anger. It is because of our sins that there is anger with God. No, we must never think lightly of God’s anger. In holy anger the Lord came and destroyed the first world with the Flood. His was a holy anger which caused fire and brimstone to rain down on Sodom and Gomorrah, when their sin had “waxen great before the face of the LORD.” There is a holy, righteous anger awaiting the end time when the Lord will come to destroy all who are outside of Christ. It will be terrible for all those who have never heard about this God, but that cannot be compared to us who have the great privilege of having His Word and everlasting testimony explained, who all the days of our lives may hear that there is a way of escape.

“Though thou wast angry.” The word *wast* is of the greatest importance here. That word is saying that it has become different in the life of a rebel. *Wast* means that there was a time that eyes were opened to realize sin and the holy anger of a righteous God.

Perhaps you may be inclined to ask, “Is that always necessary?” Ask the prophet; he says “I will praise Thee.” For what will such a one now praise the Lord? For the time when a guilty sinner was stopped upon the way of being forever lost. For the time when he may come upon his knees and with two empty hands he may lift up a guilty, wretched heart to a God who in Christ is ever ready to forgive.

We call that a wonderful observation. God’s anger turned away. David says in Psalm 30:5a, “For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life.” In another place he says, “Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of Thy people, Thou hast covered all their sin.” Here the Lord’s children say, “It is a thing I long to know that Thine anger is turned away.”

Oh, what a wonder when a troubled heart may hear how that is possible. Then this troubled heart may learn that from all eternity there is a divine plan. There a holy God is saying, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love.” In that love He gave the Son of His right hand to come upon this sin-cursed world. He came to stand in the breach between an angry God and His people. He came to heal that breach and open a way unto that which is lost. There He paid the price for sin. All these people may learn something of what that has cost. Then they stand in holy amazement and say, “Oh Lord, what a wonder that from heaven such a way has been opened to save a wretch such as me.”

What a wonderful observation. Here the child of the Lord may begin the song of a new heart. Though the Lord is angry with my sin, He is not angry with my person because the Lord sees His people in that precious blood price of His Son. Blessed are those people who, with that God-given eye of faith upon the Lord Jesus Christ, may in Him see a door opened unto eternal life. Now they long again and again to see a sign along the way by which they may be assured that this is the way unto the Saviour for whom their heart longs. They now yearn for a living confirmation, “And Thou comfortest me.” How beautiful the song of a new heart. In that song you may now notice two words, Thou and me. Thou is the Holy Father who is satisfied in His Son, and says “Come, there is balm with Me for My children upon the way to the heavenly kingdom.” No, then the Lord does not strike down His people. He comforts the smallest, weakest, little lamb.

Who is that struggler? So often he walks the journey full of doubts and fears. So often he hungers for a small crumb of the love and mercy of Him whom he cannot miss anymore. “And thou comfortest me.” How? When He opens His Word, and when through the lattice of that Word they may look upon Jesus; when they believe He has sought and

saved them; when they may sit under the preaching of his Word as the poorest and neediest and may hear an invitation, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden.” How? When the Lord’s table is prepared and the poor and needy may hear the invitation in their heart and come to the place where they may lift up those empty hands, and

with their heart may hear, “This is My body, which is broken for you.”

May I ask, are you not void of that comfort? Then you may sing the song of a new heart, even in the smallest, trembling beginning, and I may assure you that He, that great God, in His beloved Son will not despise your song. □

(To be continued)



Questions & Answers

Questions from Our Readers

Rev. H. Hofman, Beckwith, Grand Rapids, MI

I once heard the following account of a dying child of God. Someone asked this woman, “What if you still go lost?” She responded with the statement that the Lord would lose more in her condemnation than she would lose. Can you explain what was said here?

Recently I came across the same expression, given as an example in a sermon of one of God’s servants who already rejoices before the throne. In this sermon he spoke about the certainty of the salvation of God’s Church. I believe this certainty is crucial for the understanding of what this child of God meant. It is by the sovereignty of divine election and the grace of regeneration in the time, that God’s Church is made the property of Christ.

Dear reader, in this matter the holy name of God is involved—the name Jesus, who shall save His people from their sins—the name Jehovah, the I AM THAT I AM, who never forsakes the work of His own hands. So, now, wherein lies that certainty of the salvation of His Church? Does it flow from the merits of their good works before God? Does it depend on any of their sacrifices of thanksgiving, decent life, or any other wave-offering unto the Lord? No, certainly not! Here the veracity of God, of His promise, of His very essence is at stake, so to speak. So I read in the above-mentioned sermon how that in Christ alone, the Son of God, salvation lies firm. Christ has with His blood redeemed them that were under the Law, being made a curse for them. In Him all the demands of God’s holy justice were met and perfectly satisfied. Now there is no condemnation anymore for them who are in Christ Jesus. It is a salvation worked out from eternity, unto eternity. In this wonder the Church may not, cannot, nor needs to do anything. It is all undeserved and free grace but anchored in the veracity and good pleasure of God.

Reader, it is in the context and assurance of certainty that this dying child of God gave her answer. She was granted

such a firm assurance and confidence of her state of grace in Christ that, indeed, if she would go lost, God would lose more than she did. Strictly speaking, this is, of course, not possible because the Godhead is immutable. What did she mean? Her state lay so firm in Christ that she *could not* go lost, but if she did, God would then lose His honor and glory, and that is now eternally impossible. Here the honor and glory of God rises high, and God is praised with reverence deep (Psalter 420:5). In this woman, the voice of God-dishonoring unbelief was forever silenced. No, this was not presumption. Here, the sovereign grace of God was e’er her fortress and her tower (Psalter 422:6). How often do we not sing this stanza without realizing the glorious truth of it by faith? The Church of Jesus Christ is not saved on the ground of a broken heart, a serious prayer-life, a decent life or any such thing, no matter how precious these things may be in themselves—when with steadfast step, their countenances beaming, with brightness of the light that from Thy face is streaming—they’ll praise forever God’s name, His justice and salvation.

The statement in question, however, was a bit longer, the way I read it in the account given in the sermon. This dying saint apparently also said, “I would lose not so much because since my birth I (already, HH) lie lost in Adam, and that is what I made myself worthy of a thousand times.” Do you see how God would lose more than she would? It was a hypothetical statement.

The above-mentioned underscores time and again the need that we explain clearly what such examples show and should not leave them to readers or hearers to figure out. May the Lord grant more of such testimonies, not only on a deathbed, but also in our families before the evil days come so that our children and grandchildren would hear more and learn to flee to the foundation of God which standeth sure, and let the Church of God not rest till they have made their calling and election sure: “For if ye do

these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:10b-11). □



Current Events

The Bible’s Accuracy Vindicated...Again

Sometimes the Bible offers an insight that sheds further light on an unsolved question of science. That seems to be the case with the Assyrian destruction of Lachish in 701 B.C., an event recorded in 2 Kings 18:13. The accurate biblical accounting of this event has provided scientists with a reliable anchor from which to better answer two tricky dilemmas: one having to do with geophysics and the other with archeology. In the words of one archeologist and Jewish scholar, “[It] may be clearly stated categorically that no archeological discovery has ever controverted a single Biblical reference.” Yet, “scores of archeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible.”

—*ChristianHeadlines.com*

More than 4,000 Pastors Protest Against Canadian Law

Thousands of churches across Canada and the U.S. raised alarm about the scope of new Canadian “conversion therapy” law that describes biblical morality as a “myth.” Thousands of pastors have now devoted a sermon on affirming biblical, sexual morality in response to this law which effectively criminalizes such teachings. The law describes as a “myth” the biblical belief that heterosexuality is preferable. Counseling that does not align now carries a potential five-year jail sentence, and could even encompass private conversations. Pastors believe the scope of the new law could open the door to religious persecution. The pastor in the U.S. leading the protest against this law said “[We will be] faithful to the Bible. And that’s what’s already leading to laws made against doing what we are commanded to do in Scripture, which is to confront that sin. And that’s just going to escalate.” He sees trends already manifesting in the United States. “I think it’s reached a level there in Canada that it hasn’t yet reached here, but it’s coming,” he said, “It’s coming fast.”

—*FoxNews.com*

Excessive Punishment for Chinese Bookseller

An online bookseller in Zhejiang province, China, lost his appeal against the seven-year prison sentence and fine of 200,000 yuan (approximately \$31,600) imposed in 2020 for “illegal business operation.” His lawyer provided sufficient evidence to prove excessive punishment and they were optimistic about the appeal. The court dismissed the appeal and upheld the sentence, however, leaving the bookseller where he has been held since September 2019. His online bookshop had sold more than 20,000 books (mostly Bibles and other Christian books). Police used the bookshop’s records to contact buyers across China and more than eight hundred books were confiscated..

—*ChurchInChains.ie*

Please note the new address for Rev. Hofman:

Send your questions to Rev. H. Hofman, 2339 Deer Trail Dr. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505, or hofman@premieronline.net.

Attack in Camaroon Leaves Christians Barbarically Wounded

The sun had set, and families in a tiny village in northern Cameroon were ending their day when Boko Haram militants stormed the area. This was the second Boko Haram attack on the small village in less than a week. During the attack, militants chased away members of the village’s vigilante group and took eight women hostage. Before releasing some of them (it’s not clear if all have been released), Boko Haram militants barbarically cut off their ears. The women are currently receiving medical care. Much prayer is needed in this situation—prayer for healing for these women who have suffered beyond comprehension for their Christian faith—prayer for peace in Africa where attacks and the threat of attack by Islamic extremists continue in almost daily occurrences against the church.

—*OpenDoorsUSA.com*

Former Mosque Leader Beaten for Faith in Christ

A former mosque leader in eastern Uganda who converted to Christianity was hospitalized with injuries after Muslim relatives beat him. He lost a large amount of blood and was critically ill. He had not returned home since leaving Islam in 2016. Relatives had long sent him messages urging him to return to tend to a portion of land supposedly allocated to him, he said. He had been reluctant to go back home but decided to do so. “I was shocked to receive a cold reception and slept without food, only to be attacked and beaten badly in the morning by my brother and my uncle,” he said. “My uncle said that the family spent a lot of money training me as a Muslim teacher and that I have caused a lot of shame to the family and Muslims at large,” he said. His screams brought police and neighbors who rescued him.

—*ChristianHeadlines.com*

Hindu Nationalists Stop Christmas Services in Northern India

At least ten cases of aggression in Haryana state stopped Christmas celebrations for hundreds of Christians. A Christian leader in Haryana state said a team formed to help distressed Christians was exhausted by calls from church goers attacked on Christmas Day. They received reports from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. In one attack on a Christmas service, Hindu extremists, brandishing wooden batons and stones, assaulted a seventy-three-year-old pastor and seriously wounded his son. Sources asserted that the Hindu nationalists’ aim was very clear—halting Christmas celebrations throughout the state—and Christian leaders said police did little to stop them. “They were extremely well-planned attacks. In many cases, when we spoke to the higher police officers, they straightforward told us, ‘Do whatever you can, don’t call us for help—we have official pressure on us.’”

—*MorningStarNews.org*



Timothy FOR THE YOUNG

The Confession of Faith (27) **Article XXVIII: That Every One is Bound to** **Join Himself to the True Church**

Rev. A.M. den Boer (1929-2004)

We do not believe, as Rome does, in a church which gives salvation, for then salvation would be the work of man. No church is able to save. However, according to God's Word, the Church will be saved, and for this Jesus Christ is the only and all-sufficient Saviour. This article, which we now consider, speaks about the church and our duty to join ourselves to it. It is a very serious subject, especially for the present days.

With sorrow we must admit that the condition of the church is not at all good. Its walls are cracked and broken down as in the days of Amos. Millions have completely broken with the church, and this number increases alarmingly over the whole world. Is it not the great decay before the end of the world will come, whereof God's Word speaks?

There are people who no longer ever go to church, but to them the above does not apply. They are a so-called non-ecclesiastical people (in Dutch, *onkerkelijken*). They say that there is no longer any church and, therefore, read the old fathers at home. Although there are God-fearing people among them, this practice has a great danger in it, for in succeeding generations you see generally a great decay, and little or nothing remains of the religion of the parents. If one felt a little of the great responsibility of bringing up children, he would then confess that this is not the right way. Really, such an attitude is contrary to the Word of God, for He has promised that there will be a Church upon earth until the end of the world. Is this not encouraging in a time when so many things discourage us?

The Lord will continue to build His Church, and for this He uses His Word which is preached or read. You will probably ask, then, why so many people leave the truth. For many the great prosperity which we enjoy is too much; they think they are able to take care of themselves and no longer need the Lord. How foolish! Others are offended by the many short-

comings of the church. Although they are not perfect themselves, they are looking for a perfect church which does not belong to this dispensation.

Some think it is not right that unconverted persons are in the church, and they seek a church of only converted persons. We should remember the Word of the Lord teaches that the church will be here upon earth only in part; think of the parables of the net with good and bad fish and of the field with wheat and tares. In Philippians 3:12, Paul said, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

It is true that the Lord has said that the church should be as the light of the world, but often because of the persecutions of the enemy it is more like a night lodge in a garden of cucumbers. Nevertheless, the church may not be hidden, but should reveal itself. When we see the church and think of the members of it, we must realize that they are not all converted; the Lord only knows who His people are! One day the Lord will purge His floor. This will happen at the end of the world, and then it will be seen who feared the Lord and who did not fear Him.

In church history there is the well-known name of Jean de Labadie. He did not want to hear of a church with converted and unconverted people, but he attempted to have a church of only true believers. He took the fan in his own hand and thoroughly purged his floor, which is the work of Christ Himself. The church of de Labadie became a disaster. We may not judge another's faith although the Lord has given marks to know true and false faith. The fruit will tell what kind of tree it is! Remember the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. They had no external differences, but internally there was a difference as night and day. Judas was also among the disciples! In the preaching and on house-visitation we must

take this in account. Not all the members of the church may be considered as regenerated. Isaiah's message was woe for the wicked and well for the righteous.

This article also shows very clearly that not all members of the church belong to the Church which is chosen by the Lord from eternity and for which Christ has given Himself as a ransom. They are called by Word and Spirit. This is the essence of the Church, as this article also points out: "We believe, since this holy congregation is an assembly of those who are saved..." These are the people who are drawn by the Lord from darkness to light and who will receive the salvation of the Lord. According to Isaiah 62:12a they are called a holy people: "And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD." In Psalm 111:1b they are called the upright: "I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation."

Outside of this, congregation, there is no salvation as the article so plainly says, "We believe, since this holy congregation is an assembly of those who are saved, and that out of it there is no salvation..." The Lord has made His habitation in His Church, and outside of it He will not show mercy, as we read in Hebrews 12:22a, "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God." All those who will not be saved will be outside, as we read in Revelation 22:15a, "For without are dogs..." These and many other texts show clearly that not all members of the churches are also members of the one Church.

Nevertheless, we are responsible for our deeds and called to join the true Church, for this article says, "That no person of whatsoever state or condition he may be, ought to withdraw himself, to live in a separate state from it." This we also find in Hebrews 10:25, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." When grace is bestowed upon us, we will seek communion with other believers. When this is not possible, they are sad. "Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me," as we hear from Heman in Psalm 88. David was also sorrowful when he was not able to go up to the temple, "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God" (Psalm 84:2). Herein we are condemned when we do not join the church.

It is also a condemnation of the sects who exalt themselves above all churches. Everyone who does not want to bow under the yoke of King Jesus withdraws from the church. This is in force for members and ministers. We find this through all ages, also in our days when new groups are formed. Often it is a desire for power and the lust of selfishness, but above all it is rebellion against the yoke of Christ.

Sorrow should fill our heart when we look about us and see that there is so much division in the churches, whereby the body of Christ is rent. We have to be most careful, for the devil goes around as an angel of light, especially when there are schisms. It has always been his aim to make divisions. Not where enmity is but where love is found will the Lord give His blessing. Love and divisions do not go together.

The Gospel Brings Tidings

William Gadsby (1773-1844)

The gospel brings tidings, glad tidings indeed,
To mourners in Zion, who want to be freed,
From sin and Satan, and Mount Sinai's flame,
Good news of salvation, through Jesus the Lamb.

What sweet invitations the gospel contains,
To men heavy laden with bondage and chains;
It welcomes the weary to come and be blessed,
With ease from their burdens, in Jesus to rest.

For every poor mourner, who thirsts for the Lord,
A fountain is opened in Jesus the Word;
Their poor parched conscience to cool and to wash,
From guilt and pollution, from dead works and dross.

A robe is provided, their shame now to hide,
In which none are clothed but Jesus' bride;
Though it be costly, yet is the robe free,
And all Zion's mourners shall decked with it be.



Bible Stories for Little Ones

Home At Last

(Based on Joshua 20-24)

Finally, the children of Israel were home in Canaan! For so many years they had wandered and wandered, walked and walked, in the deserts and through the valleys. Many, many years ago their fathers had left the land of Egypt where they had been under a wicked king. Moses had led them; then Joshua had led them, and not until now were they finally reaching the home for which they had been longing. Oh, just remember all those years! What awful things they had to go through because of their grumbling and forgetting about God—the serpents which had bitten them until Moses raised up the brass serpent on the pole—the punishment they received when they bowed to the golden calf while Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments from God—the quails they greedily ate and the plague of the Lord that followed—and all the other punishments because they would not listen to God and Moses, His appointed leader.

Then there were all the wonderful times God had helped them—oh, much more than they had deserved! He had protected them from so many enemies. He had fed them and led them even though they had acted so terribly towards Him. What a good God He had been to them.

Now they were home in Canaan, in their own country, in the land to which they had been traveling for forty years. Many of their enemies had been destroyed, and now they had all this land on which to live. How happy they were to be here. First, Joshua helped the people divide up the land so that each tribe had its own area. Remember, there were several tribes, or families. Each one was given a big piece of land on which to make his home except the family of Levi; they were given cities mixed in among all the other families. In that way they could teach the people as a minister would.

Also, six cities had a special name; they were called cities of refuge. Maybe you could think of them as *safety cities*. These six cities were places where you would be safe if you accidentally killed another person. No one could chase after you to kill you once you were safely in one of these cities. These cities were not safe for just anyone who had done something terribly wrong. They were safe only for those who had killed a person by mistake or in an accident. Here is an example: If you were very angry at your

brother and went to his house at night and killed him, that would be very much a sin. That would be murder. You could not run to a city of refuge for that sin. You would have to be punished; you would be put to death. However, perhaps you were cutting down a tree in the forest with an axe. Your brother was next to you, helping you, when suddenly an awful thing happened. The head of your axe came off the handle and struck your brother so that he died. You killed him, but you did not mean to do so. You killed him by mistake. You could then run to the city of refuge for safety. You would be safe there because in your heart you really did not intend to kill your brother.

Do not those six cities of refuge remind us of another place of refuge? God commanded Moses to set up these six cities which pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ who is the place of refuge to which guilty sinners may flee. Each person in the world is such a guilty sinner, but only those who feel their guilt and the need of refuge will flee unto Him. May the Lord Himself teach us this by His Holy Spirit.

The children of Israel had reached their home at last, and now Joshua was also going to go home. Go home? Could he not live in Canaan with the Israelites? Yes, certainly, for a little while, but then he must go to his eternal home, to heaven, to be with God forever.

Joshua had been on a long journey, too. His was not only forty years long—his journey was one hundred ten years long! That was how long his life had been. None of us know how long our journey will be. Will it be only ten years, only thirty years, or ninety years? Joshua's journey to his home in heaven was just like the Israelites' journey to Canaan. How much the journey to Canaan reminds us of each Christian's journey to heaven!

Joshua knew that his time was coming to leave the earth. He had done the job God had given him to do, but before he left, he wanted to talk to the people God had given him to lead. Joshua called all the people together and reminded them of all the things God had done for them. He reminded them of all the help God had given them and of all the times He had been with them even when they were so wicked. Then Joshua said something important.

“Today,” he said, “you must make a choice. Today you must choose whom you are going to serve from now on. Are you going to bow down to the gods of the Canaanites and to the gods which your fathers served many years ago, or are you going to serve the true and living God who has helped you all these years?”

“Today,” Joshua said, “you must choose whom you will serve. I have already made that choice, and I and my family are going to serve the Lord.”

The people were amazed. “Of course, we will not forsake the true God” they cried. “It is He who has helped us so much. We promise that we will serve Him, too.”

Then Joshua told them, “You really cannot serve the Lord rightly, for He is a holy and jealous God. If you turn from Him and serve other gods, God will punish you.”

“Oh, no,” cried the people. “We will never leave Him. We will serve Him and obey Him.”

Do you think that happened? No, it did not. It was not long after Joshua died that the people found idol gods of other countries and began to worship them, and they had to be punished for it.

Did you ever realize that Joshua’s words from the Bible are talking to us today? Yes, he is telling us today, right now, “Today I want you to make a choice. Choose you this day whom you will serve.” Do you know what he means? We also must choose between serving God and giving our lives to the world. Of course, we must have God’s help to make such a promise because otherwise we will backslide and serve the world just as the Israelites did.

Are you listening to Joshua? Pray for God’s help to make the right choice. Pray that He may turn your heart from the world to Himself. “To day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart.”



Bible Quiz

Nets

Dear Boys and Girls,

“Hey!” Charlie looked behind him in surprise. How was the soccer ball in the net when he had tried so hard to block it?

Aaron chuckled. “You kicked it in yourself with your foot!” he explained gleefully. “A point for me!”

Charlie ran his hand through his unruly hair and then set both hands on his knees. Frowning in concentration, he prepared himself for the next shot. He would not let the ball go in the net again!

There are many kinds of nets. Soccer nets catch soccer balls, fishing nets catch fish, and butterfly nets catch butterflies. There are many shapes and sizes, but they are all used to catch something. If a bird, bat, or flying squirrel comes in your house, a net can be useful to catch the creature and put it outside again. Nets are strong and quickly trap the victims. Before they know it, they are caught.

Temptations are like nets. They catch us by surprise and quickly snare us. Before we know it, we are caught. Your mom asks who took the brownies,

and you are tempted to lie. Before you have thought it through, the words already come out of your mouth. “Not I!”

It is not only tempting to cheat, lie, sneak, or go along with others in sin, but it is also very easy. It is easy to skip your duties and do wrong things. How much harder it is to try to do what is right. Do you know why this is? Our hearts are inclined to evil. We are born with a heart that leans towards doing as we like.

The temptation to sin is strong. One heedless move, and we have already been caught. That is why the Lord taught His disciples to pray, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” He teaches us that we cannot stand a moment against sin ourselves. We must be taught that we not only cannot stand against sin, but we do not *want* to either. We do not only *fall* into sin, we *lean* towards it.

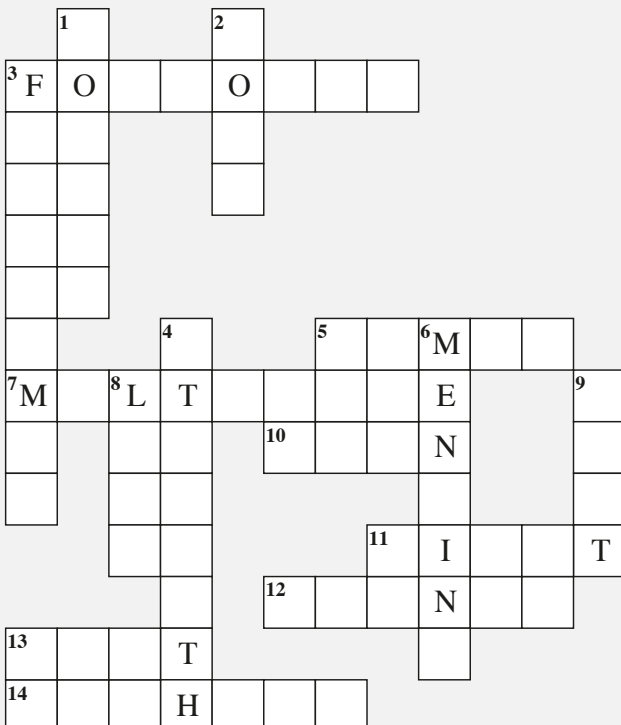
We are as a fish that swims close to a net. So often, we do not stay as far as we can from sin. Often, what we think will make us happy leads to trouble, instead.

When a person receives a new heart, he also comes to fight against many enemies. He feels weak and unable to fight against sin, Satan, the world, and self, and he must often pray, "Deliver me from evil.... Keep me and help me!"

In 1 Timothy 4:16a, we read, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them." To take heed means to watch...pay attention...be careful. Take heed of your own heart; it is as a net, ready to sin and loaded with sin. We cannot trust ourselves to do what is right. Our hearts are deceitful. We cannot mend such a heart.

We must take heed also of time. Pay attention. We may think we will live a long time. We may think that the end of life is far away, but how do we know? The devil traps us into the net of being too busy to think about it, and sometimes, the net of death comes suddenly and unexpectedly. Wise King Solomon wrote of this: "For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them."

God knows how and when we shall die. That is not for us to know. This means that we must be made ready before that time comes. Ask the Lord to prepare you. Even if we were able to escape every temptation in this life, we would still have a heart that does not love and serve God, unless He gives a new heart. Such hearts love the Lord because He first loved them. Ask Him to catch you in that GOOD net, the net of His Word!



Across

3. And they straightway left their nets, and _____ Him.
5. And when he had gone a little farther thence, he saw _____ the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. (Mark 1)
7. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the _____ of fishes. (John)
10. He lieth in wait secretly as a _____ in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net. (Psalm 10)
11. And He said unto them, Cast the net on the _____ side of the ship, and ye shall find. (John 21)
12. Now when He had left speaking, He said unto Simon, _____ out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. (Luke 5)
13. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was _____ into the sea, and gathered of every kind. (Matthew 13)
14. And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were _____. (Matthew 4)

Down

1. Mine eyes are ever _____ the Lord; for He shall pluck my feet out of the net. (Psalm 25)
2. For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my _____. (Psalm 35)
3. And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the _____ were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. (Luke)
4. Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for Thou art my _____. (Psalms)
6. And going on from thence, He saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, _____ their nets; and He called them. (Matthew 4)
8. And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from _____, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. (John 21)
9. In the net which they hid is their own _____ taken. (Psalms)

For the Older Children

* * * * *

Use these words to fill in the blanks:

Affliction spread fall snare escape
falleth men bowed feet

- 15. "Let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him _____."
- 16. "They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is _____ down."
- 17. "Thou broughtest us into the net; Thou laidst _____ upon our loins."
- 18. "The proud have hid a _____ for me, and cords; they have spread a net by the wayside."
- 19. "Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal _____."
- 20. "Surely in vain the net is _____ in the sight of any bird."
- 21. "The wicked desireth the net of evil _____: but the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit."
- 22. "A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his _____."
- 23. "For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it _____ suddenly upon them."

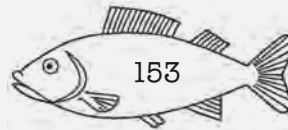
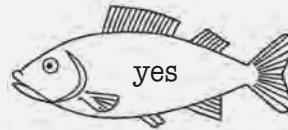
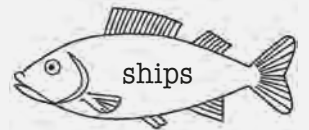
For the Younger Children

Draw a line to the correct answer found in the fish.

- 24. The disciples had worked all night and caught nothing, but now how many fish were caught in the net? (Luke 5)
- 25. Did the net break? (Luke 5)
- 26. They called to the other disciples to help, and they filled up both _____. (Luke 5)
- 27. Seven disciples worked all night and caught nothing, but now how many fish were caught in the net? (John 21)
- 28. Did the net break? (John 21)
- 29. They came in their ship, _____ the net behind them. (John 21)

Answers to February's "A Convenient Season" quiz:

- 1. Die, pluck, heal, build
- 2. In God's hand (Thy hand)
- 3. When God may be found
- 4. First
- 5. Too late, when the door was shut
- 6. 8
- 7. Gospel Mark 1:15
- 8. Whole John 5:4
- 9. Time Acts 24:25
- 10. Pleasures Hebrews 11:25
- 11. Buried Luke 16:22
- 12. Feet John 11:32
- 13. Chickens Matthew 23:37
- 14. Messengers 2 Chronicles 36:16
- 15. Broken Proverbs 6:15
- 16. Destroyed Proverbs 29:1
- 17. Earth Psalm 34:16
- 18. Evildoers, they that be cursed of Him, transgressors (vs. 9, 22, 38)
- 19. 70, 80



Please send your answers to the address shown below:

Aunt LenaBeth
180 Jacobs Road, Newfoundland, NJ 07435
E-mail: auntlenabeth@gmail.com

Answers to previous quizzes were received in December from:

Clay Bakker (2) 10	Kari Groen 20	Daniel Remijn (2) 2	Lydia Van Manen (2) 30	Tena Versteeg 8
Amber Bissechop 8	Kurtis Groen 21	Lauren Remijn (2) 18	Rosalee Van Manen (2) 27	Caleb Vogelaar (3) 12
Eryn Bissechop 15	Evan Kaat (3) 11	Collin Rozeboom 12	Kaiven Van Middendorp (2) 28	Matthew Vogelaar (3) 12
Sara Bissechop 14	Logan Kaat (2) 3	Jillian Rozeboom 1	Konner Van Middendorp (2) 28	Jayden Weeda (2) 16
Britni Blom 28	Shane Kaat (2) 3	Nevaeh Rozeboom (2) 2	Nathaniel Van Pelt 2	Jonathan Wesdyk (3) 24
Marissa Blom 26	Sophia Kegel 8	Alex Rus (2) 23	Brett Van Velthuisen (2) 9	Rebekah Wesdyk 21
Tiffany Blom 2	Joey Koenen (2) 2	Kaela Rus (2) 11	Kenna Van Velthuisen (2) 2	Allyson Ymker 17
Carly Brouwer (3) 11	Lydia Koenen (2) 4	Lakia Rus (2) 13	Kason Van Velthuisen (2) 11	Cameron Ymker 21
Derek Brouwer (3) 29	Abby Maassen (2) 6	Erica Schortzman 4	Trent Van Velthuisen (2) 9	Heidi Ymker 26
Thomas Brouwer (3) 29	Maelyn Maassen 1	Gavin Spaans (4) 19	Ellie Van't Zelfde (2) 12	Paxton Ymker (2) 19
Jaxon DeKorne 2	Noah Maassen 2	Wilson Spaans (4) 18	Levi Van't Zelfde 10	Quentin Ymker 16
Juliette DeKorne 3	Lydia Mol 23	Megan Taylor (5) 22	Raelene Vande Stroet 9	Whitney Ymker 43
Kylie DeVisser 7	Madeline Mol 15	Renee Taylor (3) 14	Wyatt Vande Waerdt 15	
Kaylee Den Boer (2) 11	Olivia Mol 19	Colin Ten Hove (2) 22	Aubrey Vanden Berg 9	
Sarina Den Bok (6) 19	Teddy Mol 23	Hannah-Jo Ten Hove (2) 9	Heidi Vandenberg 24	
Cody Driesen 27	John Murphy 22	Esther Teunissen 17	Kristen Vandenberg 11	
Kacie Driesen 23	Andrew Murphy 1	Leah VanBrugge 1	Esther Vanden Broek 14	
Toby Driesen 27	Lindsey Muis 9	Naomi VanBrugge 1	Ian Vanden Broek 13	
Lindsey Driesse (2) 14	Marielle Neels 19	Nathan VanBrugge 1	Austin Van Den Top 11	
Kaylynn Ekema 30	Blake Pannekoek (2) 11	Sophia VanBrugge 1	Caleb Van Den Top 9	
Weston Ekema (2) 19	Lauren Pannekoek (2) 22	Maurice Van Garderen (2) 26	Collin Van Den Top 8	
Gerilyn Engelen 17	Max Rayburn 3	Emmalyn Van Garderen (2) 27	Lys Veldhuisen 1	
Trevor Engelen 18	Andrew Remijn (2) 22	Nicholas Van Liere 1	AaneKors Versteeg 8	

Key to numbers following names:

- Numbers in parentheses represent how many quizzes person answered in the month being reported.
- Numbers without parentheses indicate how many quizzes person has completed toward earning Bibles for Bolivia.
- Solid box indicates person has earned a Bible in the month being reported. Each time six quizzes are completed, another Bible is sent to Bolivia.

17 Bibles were sent to Bolivia this month. The total is now 507—thank you, boys and girls!



Letters to My Young Readers

Lindsey Driesse

Thanks for your note, Lindsey. I like how you colored your “five loaves and two fishes.” It is wonderful when it is good weather to play outdoors, isn’t it? Every season has something pleasant—spring days for hiking and biking, summer for games and gardening, fall for running and raking, winter for sledding and skating and snow sculpting—and ever so much more. We made snow families and a snow dog one day; the snow dog was sitting on a toboggan. Have you made any snowmen? Winter is a beautiful time—when the snow comes down, it is so pure and white—may it remind us of the little prayer, “Wash me whiter than snow...”

Welcome to our new members:
Lys Veldhuisen, Naomi, Nathan, &
Sophia VanBrugge, Nevaeh Rozeboom,
Joey Koenen, Kenna van Veldhuisen,
Daniel Remijn, Andrew Murphy,
and Jillian Rozeboom.

Love,
Aunt LenaBeth



Anniversary and other announcements will be placed upon request. A donation for their placement would be appreciated. For consistency, size is limited. Please send your request to the managing editor, James Okken, whose address is shown inside the front cover. Requests for placement should be made **by the first of the month prior to the month of publication.**

■ The Banner of Truth in Audio Format

Monthly copies of the articles which appear in *The Banner of Truth* are available on MP3s and CDs for those who have reading difficulties such as poor vision. These MP3 files are produced by a committee in Norwich, Ontario, with the support of the Norwich consistory, and they make the MP3 files available to the consistories of the end user. Consistories then distribute the MP3s and CDs which are provided at no cost to the end user.

You may contact Mrs. Tillie Lamain at 616-242-0291 or blamain@netscape.net to arrange for a free subscription or discontinue receiving *The Banner of Truth* on CD.

News & Announcements

Ministerial Calls

Extended:

To Rev. H. Hofman of Kalamazoo, Michigan, by the congregation of Beckwith, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Accepted:

By Rev. H. Hofman of Kalamazoo, Michigan, to the congregation of Beckwith, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Obituaries

LETUS, Willemina Digna (nee Maas) – Age 66, February 2, 2022, Kingston, New York; Husband – William; Children – Yael & Itamar Brunstien, Adi & Raz Shani, Yarden & Or Ehood; 7 grandchildren; Brothers – Rens (deceased) & Connie Maas, Rinus & Marry Maas, Cornelis & Thera Israël; Sisters – Ina (deceased) & Gerrit van Leeuwen, Ria & Cees van der Have, Mieke & Erik de Graaf; Brother-in-law – John & Jan Letus; predeceased by parents Jan & Willemina. (Rev. H. de Leeuw, Psalm 55:22.)

SINKE, Leuntje (Louise, nee de Bat) – Age 88, January 24, 2022; Vineland, Ontario; Husband – Jack; Children – Jackie & Frank Westerink, Sandra, David & Marcia, Joanne & Lance Teunissen; 17 grandchildren, 5 great-grandchildren; Sister – Tina Brouwer; In-laws – Cora Debat, Jake Sinke, Joanne Erkelens; predeceased by brothers Marinus, Herb, and John, and sisters Anna Sinke, Johanna Overbeek, and Maat Bolle. (Rev. A.H. Verhoef, Psalm 91:1.)

VAN HARTEN, Hendrik – Age 80, January 13, 2022; Picture Butte, Alberta; Wife – Nel; Children – Leneke & Mark Fintelman, Erika & David Schuit, Menno & Barb, Marieke, Marleen & Tim Verhey, Ben & Krista, Margareth & Quin van Liere, Elsa & Mike Ymker; also survived by grandchildren and great-grandchildren. (Rev. E.C. Adams, Proverbs 19:20&21.)

VAN HOLLAND, Herman – Age 77, January 20, 2022, Rock Valley, Iowa; Wife – Donnadell (nee Bleeker, deceased); Children – Tony, Gwen & Mark den Hollander, Todd & Aimee; 6 grandchildren; Sisters – Jacoba Nagel, Henrietta & Glen Mantel, Alberta; Brother-in-law – Karlin & Carolyn Bleeker; predeceased by an infant brother. (Rev. J.J. Witvoet, 2 Samuel 19:34-37.)

In Memoriam

“This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles” (Psalm 34:6).

Mr. Martin Vlietstra

On January 18, 2022, it pleased the Lord to remove from the midst of his family, Mr. Martin Vlietstra, at the age of eighty-nine years. Mr. Vlietstra faithfully served several congregations for more than fifty years. He served People's Park, New Jersey (1964-1971); Franklin Lakes, New Jersey (1972-1988); Sheboygan, Wisconsin (1991-2006); and Rogersville, Missouri (2009-2019). The above text was used at his burial in Mansfield, Missouri, on January 26. May the Lord graciously remember his grieving widow, and sanctify this calling to each of us.

— The Franklin Lakes ENRC Consistory
— The Sheboygan NRC Consistory

VLIETSTRA, Martin – Age 89, January 18, 2022; Mansfield, Missouri; Wife – Edith (nee Nyman); Children – Martin & Glenda, David & Cory, Janice & Jim Valkenburg, Jonathan & Jane, Karen & Rick Van Seters, Roger & Beverly, Linda & Jay Velier, Daniel & Dawn, Paul & Wendy; Steven & Stephanie; 48 grandchildren, 29 great-grandchildren; Sisters – Wilma VanderWaal, Alice, Joan & Walt Heerschap; Brother – Dr. Fred & Sue; Sister-in-law – Charlotte Rieder; predeceased by daughter Debra Lynn and twin daughters Susan and Sharon. (Rev. J.J. Witvoet, Psalm 34:6.)

Copy Length of Announcements

Dear reader,

The News & Announcement section of *The Banner of Truth* frequently overflows its customary two pages. Consequently, a good deal of effort is spent attempting to fit the contents. We kindly request that announcements, especially education ads, be restricted to one hundred words (approximately sixteen lines in print). If an announcement is too lengthy, we will reply with a request that it be shortened. You are at liberty to include a link to a webpage where more details can be found. Thank you for your consideration.

—The Editors

Employment Opportunities at Sunset Manor Care Home, Chilliwack, BC

We are seeking applications for keen, warm-hearted individuals to join our excellent team for the following positions:

Nursing: RN's and LPN's who hold a valid license are encouraged to apply. Your professional expertise, knowledge and insight will be most welcomed.

Care Aide: We welcome your application. Training and education can be provided.

For more information and to submit an application, please contact Jake Klaassen at jklaassen@jakesconstruction.ca or Neil Stam at castam71@outlook.com.

65th Wedding Anniversary

On February 8, 2022, our dear parents, and grandparents,

John & Jeanette Van Ginkel

commemorated their 65th wedding anniversary.

“And he said, I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me” (Genesis 32:26b).

1619 Southern Hills Drive,
Rock Valley, IA 51247

60th Wedding Anniversary

The Lord willing, on April 10, 2022, our dear parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents,

Frans & Pia Groeneveld

hope to commemorate their 60th wedding anniversary.

“They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever” (Psalm 125:1).

4309 Spring Creek Road
Vineland, ON L0R 2C0

60th Wedding Anniversary

The Lord willing, on April 12, 2022, our dear parents, and grandparents,

C.J. & Esther Schelling

will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary.

“Give unto the LORD the glory due unto His name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness” (Psalm 29:2).

3127 350th Street, Hull, IA 51239

Education

CALVIN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, COAL-HURST, ALBERTA, continues to invite applications from teachers of any grade or subject specialty to fill anticipated vacancies beginning September 2022, DV. We would be thankful to hear from versatile and dedicated applicants to enable continued provision of Christian education to our children and young people. All applicants must be members of the NRC or a closely-related denomination, and must be eligible for Alberta certification. For more information about any position at CCS, please contact the principal, Mr. Marc Slingerland at 403-381-3030 or marc.slingerland@ccschool.ca. Should the Lord incline your heart to apply, please submit a cover letter, resumé or c.v., and references to office@ccschool.ca.

EBENEZER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, SHEBOYGAN, WISCONSIN, is in urgent need of a teacher for the 2022-23 school year. We have a very small, multigrade classroom school. Certification is not required for this position although it would be helpful. Currently, the school board acts as principal with further oversight by the consistory. May this position and our need be bound upon someone's heart to come over and help us. Any questions regarding this position and all interested applicants, please contact Randal Teunissen at 920-828-0225 or e-mail, rdteunissen@yahoo.com.

LYNDEN NRC, WASHINGTON—The Lynden congregation is seeking an administrator/teacher to come and help us with our small, multi-grade school. Applicants must be a member of the NRC. The ability to become a Washington State certified elementary teacher is preferred. For more information on this position as well as our newly formed school, please contact the committee president, Jeremy Neels, at 360-988-1884 / jeremyneels@gmail.com or the clerk, Jerry DeBruin, at 360-224-0901.

MOUNT CHEAM CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, CHILLIWACK, BRITISH COLUMBIA, anticipates an URGENT NEED for the next school year with multiple openings for teachers both in elementary and secondary. Applicants must hold or be eligible for BC certification, and subscribe to the faith identity of the MCCS Society and the Reformed Congregations in North America, which is based on the KJV and the Three Forms of Unity. Wages vary depending upon experience and post-secondary education. Inquiries should be addressed to the principal, Mr. Jan Neels, at jneels@mccs.ca. Please send your application, along with supporting documentation, to Mr. Jan Neels and to the board secretary, Mr. Toby de Rover, at tobyderover@gmail.com, or mail it to 48988 Yale Road East, Chilliwack, British Columbia V4Z 0B2.

PROVIDENCE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN, is inviting inquiries from qualified teachers interested in teaching in our small Christian school. We presently have openings at the elementary level. For more information, please contact our principal, Tom Kwekel, at tkwekel@pckzoo.com or 616-644-2661.

PLYMOUTH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN, a K-12 NRC school, is accepting applications for teaching positions, including Pre-K, for the 2022-2023 school year. Interested applicants should contact the principal, Mr. Nathan Bleeker, by emailing nbleeker@plymouthchristian.us or by calling 616-454-9481 to request an application or to ask questions about the potential positions.

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, POMPTON PLAINS, NEW JERSEY.

TEACHERS NEEDED

We have openings in both elementary and junior high grades for the 2022-23 school year. Qualified applicants require a teaching degree and an earnest interest in teaching in a Christian school and are a member in good standing of one of Netherlands Reformed congregations or a denomination with similar teachings.

ADMINISTRATOR NEEDED

The school administrator will strive to direct the school according to the Word of God, the Three Forms of Unity, the Constitution of the Netherlands Reformed Christian School, the policies of the NRC School Board, and the regulations of the New Jersey Department of Education. The primary duty of the administrator is to maintain productive relations with the school board, students, faculty and staff, parents and community.

Relocation expenses and financial incentives will be discussed upon inquiry. For more information or to apply, please contact Tim Mol (education chairman) at 973-204-5677 or email timjmol@yahoo.com, or John Van Der Brink (administrator) at 973-628-7400 email nrccs_office@nrccsnj.org.

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, ROCK VALLEY/SIOUX CENTER, IOWA, is looking to fill openings for the 2022-2023 school year. We anticipate needs in special education and other ages/subjects. Full or part time inquiries are encouraged. We are also seeking a music teacher to begin at any time. The focus of this position would be instrumental (grades 5-12 band/orchestra) along with other opportunities in K-12 music. Please contact the principal, Mr. Daniel Breuer, at 712-476-2821 or danbreuer@nrccs.org for further information. Visit www.nrccs.org to learn more about our school. Log in to the main site by registering as a new user and wait for approval.

REHOBOTH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, NORWICH, ONTARIO, is welcoming applications for both elementary and secondary teaching positions for the 2022-23 school year. One particular area of need is a French teacher at the elementary and, potentially, high-school, grade levels. We continue to invite inquiries about our locally developed teaching training program for those who hold a bachelor's degree. Please visit our website at www.rcsnorwich.com for more detailed information about available positions, or contact the interim director, Mr. Andy Stubbe, at director@rcsnorwich.com or 519-863-2403, ext. 223. Submit cover letters and resumes to hr@rcsnorwich.com.

TIMOTHY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, CHILLIWACK, BRITISH COLUMBIA, is looking for teachers who are excited about teaching and have a particular love for the hearts of young people. We have an urgent need for primary teachers but would also consider/encourage secondary and intermediate grade-level applicants. If you are such a teacher, please apply to join our team. Applicants need to be certifiable to teach in British Columbia. For certification requirements and more information regarding the above positions and/or an application form, please do not hesitate to contact either the principal, Mr. Doug Stam, at 604-794-7114 or dstam@timothychristian.ca, or the school board president, Mr. Wim Neels, at 604-858-8834 or wimneels@timothychristian.ca.

TRINITY REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, SUNNYSIDE, WASHINGTON, welcomes applications for a teacher/administrator for our small school. We are an approved school for grades K-8 but currently have students in the lower grades. We have a four-day school week to allow for adequate preparation and administrative time for our multi-grade classroom. To apply or request more information, please contact the school board president, Mr. Arthur den Hoed, at 509-786-2354 or email artdenhoed@gmail.com, or Maaiké Van Wingerden at 509-840-0437 or email trinityrcs@embarqmail.com.

To All Candidates for Teacher Positions

Please visit advertising.nrcea.education for an up-to-date listing of job openings in NRCEA schools as well as links to the school websites for more information about the positions and the schools. When accessing the job bank on the NRCEA SharePoint, please use the following:

User Name:

advertising@nrcea.education

Password: **SchoolJobs!**

The Power of Prayer

Who knows the power of prayer
But he that learns to pray?
Who can its strength declare,
Or who its conquests stay?
Heaven, earth, and hell, have felt its force;
Nor foes, nor friends obstruct its course.

When Jacob's tribes would flee—
Shut in on every hand,
Before a dreadful sea,
And Pharaoh's host on land,
No way was found till Moses cried;
The power of prayer could seas divide.

See Israel victories gain
When Moses intercedes;
And Israel's God gives rain
When old Elijah pleads;
Famine and war, distress and care,
All flee before the power of prayer.

How oft have drooping saints,
Overwhelmed with sorrow's flood,
Unbosomed their complaints
Before their covenant God;
"The effectual fervent prayer" of such,
Jehovah says, "availeth much."

Dark clouds and storms disperse,
And foes are put to flight—
Blessings preclude the cures,
And burdens all grow light—
When saints approach their God by prayer,
Oh, may my soul be often there.

—Joseph Irons