

the **Banner** *of Truth*

July 2022
Volume 88, No. 7

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

In this issue...

Paul's Encouragement

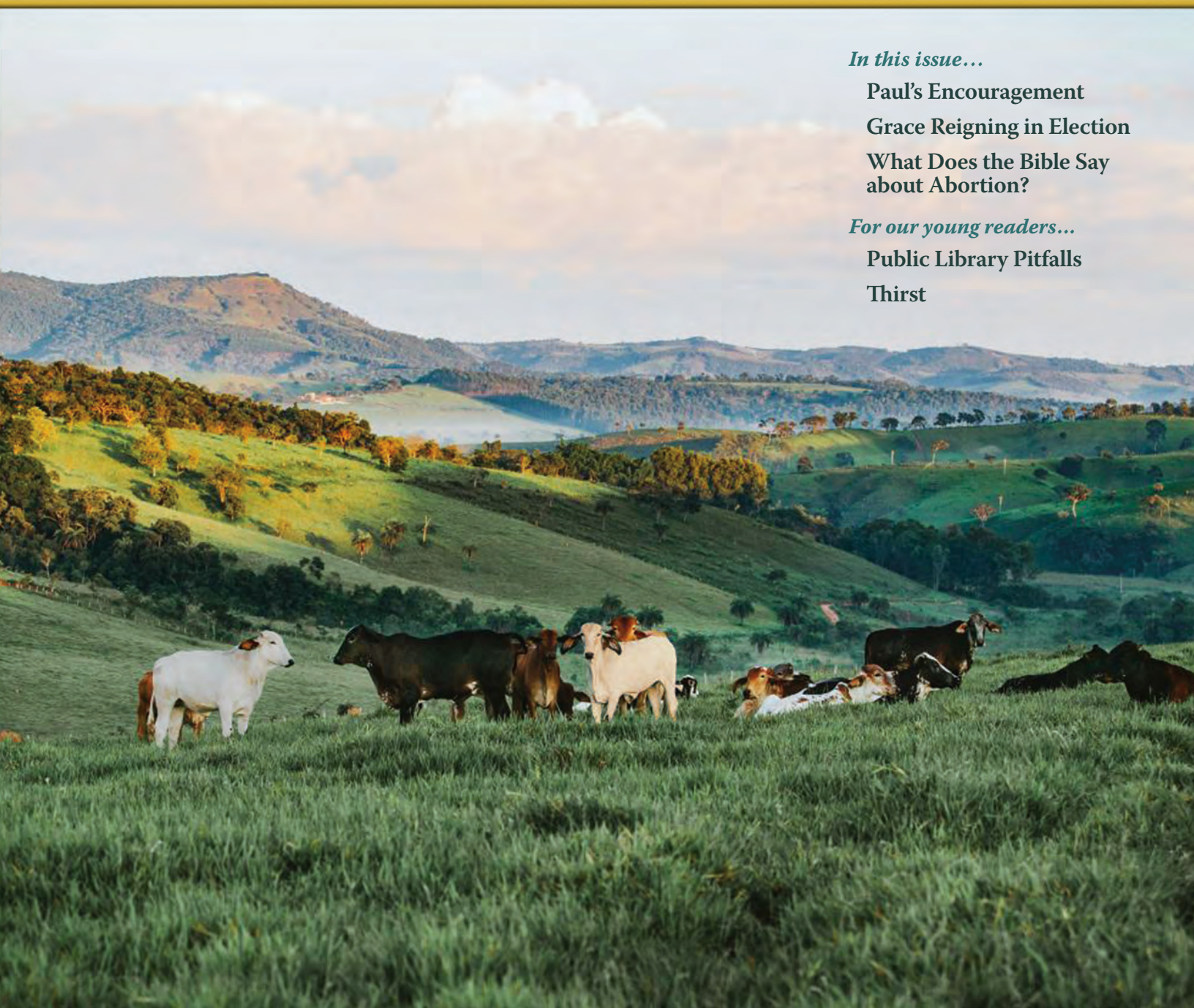
Grace Reigning in Election

What Does the Bible Say
about Abortion?

For our young readers...

Public Library Pitfalls

Thirst



"For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." PSALM 50:10



Meditation Paul's Encouragement 147 <i>Rev. H. Hofman</i>	Questions & Answers Questions from Our Readers 157 <i>Rev. H. Hofman</i>
Bible Study The Life of Moses (8) 148 <i>Rev. C. Vogelaar</i>	Current Events 158
Curatorium Announcement 149	TIMOTHY – for the Young The Confession of Faith (31) 159
From Our Inheritance Grace Reigning in Election 150 <i>Horatius Bonar</i>	Article XXIX: Of the Marks of the True Church, and Wherein She Differs from the False Church <i>Rev. A.M. den Boer</i>
Doctrinal Studies The Fruits of Holy Baptism (2) 151 <i>Rev. G. Hoogerland</i>	Bible Stories for Little Ones Gideon (2) 160 <i>Submitted</i>
Contemporary Issues What Does the Bible Say about Abortion? 152 <i>Taken from June 1979 Banner of Truth</i>	Bible Quiz Thirst 161 <i>Aunt LenaBeth</i>
For Young & Old Public Library Pitfalls 153 <i>Grand Rapids Modern Media Committee</i>	Letters to My Young Readers 164
Church History The Spread of Christianity (6) 155 <i>J.N. Mouthaan</i>	News & Announcements 165
Commentary The Man Born Blind (4) 156 <i>Rev. H. de Leeuw</i>	Minutes of Classis Midwest Spring 2022 Meeting 166
	Back Cover Gideon's Fleece 168 <i>John Newton</i>

Cover: Herd of cattle | © Pexels.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 (Archetype 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

Paul's Encouragement

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

The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring my people again from the depths of the sea” (Psalm 68:22). It is evident that Paul feared greatly on the way to Rome. The depths of the sea stared him in the face. Ah, who would not fear when all the Lord’s waves and billows go over someone’s life? Who would not fear when storms of trial settle in a person’s life? Or when the proud waters reach unto the lips and all hope upon some token of God’s love is taken away? John at Patmos saw a throne set in heaven out of which proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices. How tempestuous it is round about Him when the Lord comes to judge His people and gather His saints together unto Him (Psalm 50). It will storm when the Lord comes to testify against His church, when He comes to reprove them for sin and iniquity. Such storms are necessary but also profitable. Depths of trial must lead to depths of undeserved mercy. “But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (James 1:4). Let us not forget those who at this moment are in such storms. Battles and depths at the frontlines are often fought in secret and not in the least at the frontlines of one’s own deceitful heart. The Church militant here upon earth in this valley of tears lives in enemy territory. Remember those that are in bonds.

We read that, “all hope that we should be saved was then taken away” (Acts 27:20b). What? This was Paul’s conclusion as well as that of those that were with him in the ship, but had the Lord told Paul that this was the case? Ah, what can be done when other voices take over the conversation? What can be said when there is no more answer to the accuser? What must be said when circumstances block the access or even go contrary to the fulfilment of the promise? This: let all hope upon self-help and self-maintaining be taken away. Let all self-reliance perish in the very same depths. When we cannot “bear up into the wind, we let her drive” (Acts 27:15b). This is a necessary and profitable lesson in the life of grace. “My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him” (Psalm 62:5). It is for this reason that storms sometimes must arise. As long as we can keep the rudder in our own hands, there is yet abundant reason for such a storm. Euroclydon drives Paul all the way to where the Lord wants him to be. Close by Crete, Clauda, driven up and down in Adria, these are the stations along the way.

“What I do thou knowest not now.” In the midst of all that causes despair and woe we read of a visit in the night. “For there stood by me this night...” No, the wind did not cease or die down, and the ship did not become a safer

place, but faith was strengthened upon the certain promises of God. Blessed exercise of faith. The God of Paul has not changed. The promises have not been altered. The Lord does not fulfill all our wishes, but He does fulfill His promises. With the Lord there is no variance or shadow of turning, and neither has God’s purpose changed. “Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee” (Acts 27:24). Thy God hath commanded thy strength.

“Whose I am, and whom I serve” (Acts 27:23b). When we carefully read these words, I cannot but think of Lord’s Day 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism... “That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ...” Whose I am: refers to those divine and holy negotiations stemming from the stillness of eternity, when the Son of God intervened on behalf of such a one as Saul of Tarsus. Not because Saul was a would-be believer but because of infinite and sovereign mercy toward an undeserving wretch. How could such a one ever be reconciled with a holy and righteous God? Those thoughts of peace needed to find a way while maintaining all the attributes of God. For that cause the Son of God needed to descend to depths, mire, and floods in which there was no standing. He cried in the daytime, and there was no answer; in the night season and was not silent. When the eye of faith reaches that depth, “Whose I am” is sweeter than honey in the mouth, and becomes the blessed confession of the heart.

“Whom I serve” is the fruit of the work of the Son of God in Paul’s life. I am not my own. “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdest thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldest. Now Another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not (John 21:18). That lesson of bowing under and submitting to the wisdom and way of God is learned again and must be practiced even on the way to Rome. Then Paul’s song at eventide, pondered with delight, will encourage all those that sail with him and, hopefully, some of our readers as well. □

Christ chiefly manifests Himself in times of affliction because then the soul unites itself most closely by faith to Christ. The soul in time of prosperity scatters its affections and loses itself in the creature, but there is a uniting power in sanctified afflictions by which a believer (as in rain a hen collects her brood) gathers his best affections unto his Father and his God.

—Richard Sibbes



Bible Study

The Life of Moses (8)

Rev. C. Vogelaar, Clifton, NJ

“And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt” (Exodus 12:13).

The Lord had spoken loudly to the king of Egypt, but the severe plagues had not brought him on his knees. The hail, the locusts, and the thick darkness that came upon the land had not caused him to surrender unto the Lord. Yes, it seemed for a little while, after the plague of the locusts, that Pharaoh repented. “Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said, I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you. Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and intreat the LORD your God, that He may take away from me this death only” (Exodus 10:16&17).

After the ninth plague, Pharaoh “called unto Moses, and said, go ye, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you.” However, this was not a solution. If the sheep and cows had to stay in Egypt, then the Israelites could not sacrifice unto the Lord. When Moses told Pharaoh this, Pharaoh became very angry and said, “Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die.” Moses answered that Pharaoh was right in what he said, “I will see thy face again no more.” The last plague was about to follow, the most terrible one of all these plagues. “And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts” (Exodus 11:5).

The lamb

The Lord also gave instructions to Israel. Each household had to take a lamb of one year old in its full strength. That speaks of Christ, the Mighty One upon whom is laid help. The lamb should be unblemished. Christ is the holy Son of God without spot or any blemish. The lamb should be roasted whole, not boiled; it had to be used as a whole. If the household were too small for the lamb, it had to be shared with the neighbor next to his house. We need a whole Saviour, a complete Saviour. He was burned in the fire of God’s wrath. The lamb had to be slaughtered on the twilight of the fourteenth of the month, and the blood was to be applied on the doorposts and lintel of the house. The blood had to be applied by hyssop, which is a token of purification as the poet says in Psalm 51:7a, “Purge me

with hyssop, and I shall be clean.” Christ will be proclaimed as the Lamb of God, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29b). The prophet also spoke of Him in Isaiah 53:7b, “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter.” John on Patmos saw a Lamb as if it had been slain. Without this Lamb, there will be no escape from the righteous wrath of God upon sinners.

We are not better than Pharaoh. We also often harden our heart against all the warnings and callings that come to us, also in the serious times in which we and our children are living. Have we learned to flee to this Lamb? Have we learned that His blood alone is sufficient to cover us from God’s righteous judgments?

The blood necessary

The blood of the lamb had to be applied to the doorposts of the houses of the Israelites.

- 1) It was not sufficient to be an Israelite and not belong to the Egyptian idolatrous people.
- 2) It was not enough to be circumcised as a token and sign of the covenant of grace, as Israel was, and to live under that covenant as a separate people.
- 3) It was not sufficient to have much distress and tribulation as Israel had endured in the house of bondage. No, we may have much distress and many convictions, but they will not shelter us against the storm of God’s wrath.
- 4) It was not enough that the people had been encouraged by Moses and by the signs he performed, even though the promises had come to them and the Word of God was spoken to these people.
- 5) It was not enough to have initial tokens of God’s sparing hand, His gracious dealings in the plagues, the distinction with Egypt. It is a blessing if the Lord opens His Word for us and we may experience tokens of His mercy, but it will not give us escape from the wrath of God.
- 6) Even the slaughter of the lamb was not sufficient, though his blood had been shed. No, this blood must be on the doorposts of the houses of the Israelites. It also must be upon the doorposts of our heart if it is well. The blood spoke of sacrifice and pointed to the sacrifice that Christ brought on Golgotha. Therein was the only satisfaction of God’s justice. There was a blessed substitution, I instead of you, whereas you should otherwise have suffered eternal death. In His blood we see the submission, the willingness of Christ to bear the wrath of God. In His blood is perfect

salvation. Oh, the saving love was displayed in His blood, of which we read in Zechariah 9:11b, “By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.”

This blood had to be applied on the lintel, showing the covering under that blood. It had to be on the side posts so that the residents were surrounded by the blood and separated from the ungodly. The Israelites must be in the house, behind the blood, in order to be spared. The blood was not put on the threshold of the house because no one was allowed to trample or step upon that blood.

A wonderful deliverance

The Bible does not say “When you see the blood, I will pass over you.” It says, “When I see the blood.” God, the righteous Judge, will pass over those whom He sees covered by the blood. The eyes of faith can be so dim that one cannot see the blood of Christ, but the Father sees it. He was well pleased with it

*The Bible does not say “When you see the blood, I will pass over you.”
It says, “When I see the blood.”
God, the righteous Judge, will pass over those whom He sees covered by the blood.
The eyes of faith can be so dim that one cannot see the blood of Christ, but the Father sees it. He was well pleased with it as He showed in the rending of the veil in the temple and in raising His Son from the grave on the third day.*

as He showed in the rending of the veil in the temple and in raising His Son from the grave on the third day.

Thus, the Passover Feast was instituted. In that terrible night in which there was crying and moaning in the houses of the Egyptians (even in the palace of Pharaoh), there was safety in the dwellings of the Israelites. That blood was to be a token unto them, a memorial, “And ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations.”

What a rich preaching is here for poor and needy sinners. It is necessary that we are called out of self-made hiding places of our tears and prayers, our earnest seeking of the Lord, our humbling ourselves in the dust, our confession of guilt. None of these will save us, but only the BLOOD of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth from all sin. How important it is that this blood may come upon us and our children—not as Israel once cried in enmity against Christ before Pilate but in a saving way out of His eternal love. □

(To be continued)

Curatorium Announcement

The Curatorium of our Netherlands Reformed Theological School met on Wednesday, June 8, and was gladdened with the help the Lord has given our instructors and students in the past season which was made evident in their examinations. We may announce that Student J. Slingerland received his diploma after four years of study and was declared a candidate for the ministry. He is eligible to receive a call beginning Monday, June 13, 2022. May all of us try to remember him before the Lord, asking that He may grant him clear direction in the way that he must go in the weeks to come.

Student P. Kleijer was promoted to his last year of studies. May he receive a little rest, along with the instructors so that they may take up their studies once again at the appointed time.

At this time, no new students were admitted into our theological school. We take comfort in the fact that the Lord Himself is the keeper of His vineyard and calls His servants at His own time. May He preserve us from complacency, however, and work a true need among us, especially for the sake of our rising generation.

Rev. J. den Hoed, *Chairman*
Rev. H.D. den Hollander, *Clerk*



From Our Inheritance

Grace Reigning in Election

Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)

(Taken from the September 1979 issue of *The Banner of Truth*)

“For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass’s colt.” Accordingly, he finds fault with election as a mere system of arbitrary partiality and favoritism and tells us that if there be such a thing as total helplessness in man and sovereign election in God, then man is not to blame if he be lost. Man’s entire apostasy and death in sin so that he cannot save himself and God’s entire supremacy so that He saves whom He will are doctrines exceedingly distasteful to human pride, but they are scriptural.

Why was one thief saved and the other lost? “Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight.” God was not bound to save the one, and He had power enough to have saved the other, and neither could save himself. What made the difference? *The sovereign grace of God.*

Why was Paul saved and Judas lost? Was it because the former deserved to be saved and the latter to be lost? No, neither deserved to be saved. Was it because the one was a fitting object for the grace of God and the other not? No, the one was no more a fitting object than the other. Was it because Paul chose Christ and Judas rejected Him? Well, how was it that Paul chose Christ? Was it not because Christ chose him?

Why was it that Judea was made a land of light and Egypt remained a region of darkness? Who made the difference? Man or God? Was God unjust in leaving Egypt in the shadow of death when He made light to arise on Israel? What had Israel done to deserve a privilege like this?

Why is it that Britain is a land of light and Africa a land of darkness? Who made the difference? Who sent the gospel to Britain and withheld it from Africa? Is God unjust in leaving the mighty continent in the hands of Satan and in delivering from his yoke this small island of the sea?

Did not all equally reject Him at first? What made the unbelief of some give way? Was it because they willed it or because God put forth His power in them? Surely the latter. Might He not, then, have put forth His power in all and prevented any from rejecting the Saviour? Yet, He did not. Why? Because so it seemed good in His sight.

Is it unjust in God to save only a few when all are equally doomed to die? If not, is there any injustice in His determining beforehand to save these few and leave the rest unsaved? They could not save themselves, and was it unjust in Him to resolve in His infinite wisdom to save

them? Or, was it unjust in Him not to resolve to save all? Had all perished there would have been no injustice with Him. How is it possible that there can be injustice in His resolving to save some?

There can be no grace where there is no sovereignty. Deny God’s right to choose whom He will, and you deny His right to save whom He will. Deny His right to save whom He will, and you deny that salvation is of grace. If salvation is made to hinge upon any desert or fitness in man, seen or foreseen, grace is at an end.

One of the controversies of the present day is respecting the WILL of God—as to whether His will or man’s is the regulating power in the universe, and the procuring cause of salvation to souls. The supremacy of God’s will over individual persons and events is questioned. Things are made to turn upon man’s will, not on God’s. Conversion is made to turn on man’s will, not on God’s. Man’s will, not God’s, is to decide which individuals are to enter heaven. Man’s pen, and not God’s, is to write the names of the saved ones in the Lamb’s Book of Life! Much zeal is shown for the freedom of man’s will; little jealousy seems to be left for the freedom of God’s will. Men insist that it is unjust and tyrannical in God to control their wills, yet see nothing unjust, nothing proud, nothing Satanic in attempting to fetter and direct the will of God. Man, it seems, cannot have his own foolish will gratified, unless the all-wise God will consent to relinquish His.

Such are some of the steps in the march of Atheism. Such are the preparations in these last days by the wily usurper for dethroning the eternal Jehovah.

Men may call these speculations. They may condemn them as unprofitable. To the law and to the testimony! Of such speculations the Bible is full. There, man is a helpless worm, and salvation from first to last is of the Lord. God’s will, and not man’s, is the law of the universe. If we are to maintain the gospel—if we are to hold fast to grace—if we are to preserve Jehovah’s honor—we must grasp these truths with no feeble hand. For if there be no such Being as a supreme predetermining Jehovah, then the universe will soon be in chaos; and if there be no such thing as free electing love, every minister of Christ may close his lips,

and every sinner upon earth sit down in mute despair. ◻

God chooses us, not because we believe,
but that we may believe...

—Augustine



Doctrinal Studies

The Fruits of Holy Baptism (2)

Rev. G. Hoogerland, Kruiningen, the Netherlands

The washing away of sins

We saw last time the precious first fruits of self-abasement, humility, and the seeking of our salvation outside of ourselves. These can be obtained by means of a proper insight into the sacrament of Holy Baptism. We now wish to see what other fruits may be obtained by means of this godly ordinance.

We read in the Form for the Administration of Holy Baptism that: “Holy Baptism witnesseth and sealet unto us the washing away of our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ.” Baptism preaches unto all of us that the purification of our impure souls is possible. What is impossible to be accomplished by means of our virtues, duties, our tears or penitence, is still possible. What a rich preaching that is—there is a means available for the washing away of all of our sins.

In the first place, there is a visible preaching for all those who are baptized at every administration of the sacrament of baptism. No matter who you are, or what you have committed, the blood of reconciliation is, as it were, shown to every sinner. This, and this alone, is the means for the cleansing of your impure soul. No one who has been baptized or who has ever attended a baptismal service can excuse himself or herself. Reconciliation is proclaimed in all of its riches, not only in words but also with a visible token. This blood is of inestimable power and value, sufficient for the atonement of the sins of the entire world (Canons of Dort, Head II, Article 3).

Impure children

In the second place, baptism is a preaching for parents who have brought forth impure children. Do you see the impurity in your children? Does the impurity in their lives become visible? Do you perhaps even see your children outwardly indulging in sin? Do you see your children involved in a world full of temptations and a church full of world conformity? Do you despair of the salvation of your children? There is, indeed, reason for great concern. Perhaps it is of great sorrow to you. Yet, their baptism

points to the washing away of their sins through Christ Jesus. Is the Triune God, in whose name your children were baptized, not able to make place also in their lives for that atoning blood?

In the third place, it is a preaching for the dejected of heart, who wrestle with the impurity of their souls, who must loathe themselves. How can I ever be delivered from this guilt? God’s justice must be satisfied, but it seems impossible. Well, in the first place, look at the water in baptism. It preaches unto you the means of atonement, just for you as you are. It is for someone who has tried all of the means and who has come to an end with them. There is nothing which can save you from your sin and wickedness. Yet, there is something. The blood points to the way. Are you not able to believe it when it is preached unto you? Believe when it is made visible for you. Think of your own baptism in which the Lord Himself sprinkled that token upon your own forehead. It is also possible even for you.

Pollution and filthiness

In the fourth place, baptism is a preaching for God’s children, those for whom Christ has not remained unknown. Did sin again gain the upper hand? Must you empathize with the pollution and filthiness that still remains in you? Is the blood of your Mediator still so hidden for you? Does not the preaching comfort you? Is your unbelief and sinfulness so great? Look then with your eyes. “We believe that our gracious God, on account of our weakness and infirmities hath ordained the sacraments for us, thereby to seal unto us His promises, and to be pledges of the good will and grace of God toward us (...) which He hath joined to the Word of the gospel, the better to present to our senses both that which He signifies to us by His Word, and that which He works inwardly in our hearts, thereby assuring and confirming in us the salvation which He imparts to us” (Confession of Faith, Article 33). □

(To be continued)

He may look on death with joy who can look on forgiveness with faith.

—Thomas Watson



Contemporary Issues

What Does the Bible Say about Abortion?

(Taken from the June 1979 issue of *The Banner of Truth*)

(On January 22, 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Constitution of the United States protects a pregnant woman's liberty to choose to have an abortion without excessive government restriction. Norma McCorvey—known by the legal pseudonym “Jane Roe”—wanted an abortion but lived in Texas where abortion was mostly illegal. She filed a lawsuit against her local district attorney, Henry Wade. Thus, this devastating court ruling became known as *Roe vs. Wade*.—Ed.)

It would be, I thought, a very good, indeed, a very necessary thing to place in our church paper this article that appeared in *De Saambinder*, the weekly church paper of the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands and North America. It was sent to the government in connection with the abortion question. It was signed by the delegates from the Reformed Congregations, Rev. A. Vergunst and Mr. F.C. Moree, as well as by the delegates of the Old Reformed Congregations, Rev. E. Du Marchie Van Voort-huisen and Mr. A.H.W. Bouwman.

It might be an instruction for us and for our nation which is sinking away in sin since the texts quoted tell what an abomination abortion is in the eyes of God. “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20).

If murder is at all condoned and is not punished according to God's Word, we can expect nothing other than that the judgment of destruction shall follow the judgment of hardening.

*If this nation will not bow,
It shall soon be overthrown.*

May the Lord humble us before Him. The Lord alone knows how far this evil has penetrated the domain of the church of God. It is an evil that will eat as doth a canker because the truth has very little effect on the conscience any more, and then there is nothing to stop the torrent of sin.

Only the fear of God can keep us from sin. May the Lord grant a prayer.

*Thou didst in trouble on Me call,
And I delivered thee.*

The task of church and government

As delegates of churches, the undersigned, consider themselves obliged to serve the government by instructing them out of God's Word. It is not the intention of the churches to prescribe to the government what they must

do or what they must not do, what they must command or what they must forbid. The relationship between church and state is not a question of power, but it is their intention to serve the authorities by giving a public explanation of the authoritative Word of God, the Bible.

This explanation does not intend to be a personal interpretation.

The obligation of the churches is to show the government that it is bound to the Word of God, what its task and calling is in governing according to God's commandments as the only, true, objective standards, not given by men, but given by God for all ages. This emphatically means that the churches are convinced that neglecting the clear testimonies of Scripture will incur the judgment of God upon our nation.

What does the Bible say?

One of the fundamental commandments is, “Thou shalt not kill”—not take another's life nor your own. Genesis 1:26a says, “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...”, and verse 27 reads, “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.” Verse 31a says, “And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.” Therefore, willful abortion is a terrible assault upon God's work of Creation, a destruction of the unborn. It is not man's prerogative to decide over life and death.

The Bible shows very clearly the relationship between God and the unborn child in the following texts:

Psalms 139:14-16—“I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from Thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.”

Job 10:10&11—“Hast Thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese? Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews.”

Jeremiah 1:4-6—“Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.”

Psalms 22:10—“I was cast upon Thee from the womb: Thou art my God from my mother's belly.”

Isaiah 44:2a—“Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee...”

By these texts it is very clear that God from the first moment of life gives His greatest attention and His most tender care to the life of a child. From the moment of conception, the child is a human being as well as is a full-grown person. Whoever realizes something of the

wonderful, miraculous work of our Creator at the beginning of life, must agree that even from the beginning the sixth commandment is in force, “Thou shalt not kill.” In Psalm 51 we sing:

*Behold, in evil I was formed,
And I was born in sin.*

Does that not indicate life in the unborn child? ◻



For Young and Old

Public Library Pitfalls

(Submitted by the Grand Rapids Modern Media Committee)

Growing up forty years ago, my brothers, sisters, and I would often visit our local public library—especially during the summer months when we were not attending school. Usually, our parents were not with us during these visits as we lived within biking distance of the library. At that time, many of the current methods of entertainment (streaming music and video, DVDs, etc.) were not available. In the 1980s, the Internet was in its infancy and not accessible to those outside of universities or the military.

At home we did not have a television set; instead, we relied primarily on books to take us on adventures and experience historical events in our imaginations. As we grew older, graduated from high school, and attended college, we had less time for leisure reading. Now, as middle-aged parents, we are taking our children to the library, but, unlike some things in life, public libraries have not improved with age.

Public libraries have changed significantly over the last forty years. Books promoting immorality have been part of libraries for decades; however, now these themes are showing up in books for young people. Many books speak about “free love” and describe sexual acts without consequences; committing adultery seems quite normal. Books with LGBTQ characters are featured conspicuously for curious, young readers. Our local library featured a book about a little girl with “two mommies.” It was placed on a shelf in plain view, easily accessible by its target audience—children. The children and young adult departments of our local libraries now contain large numbers of books dealing with horror themes as well as magic and fantasy motifs. Biographies and stories relating important historical events are now written from a left-wing “social justice” inspired point of view. They focus on marginalized persons, on “social justice” for the underrepresented and oppressed in society. When such books refer to religion, they give the impression that God’s Word deals solely with “social justice”—which can then become a religion of its own.

Some public libraries have a section dubbed “Christian fiction” or something similar. This might cause one to automatically believe that these books could be considered “good books.” However, the religion in those books is mostly a cheap, superficial religion consisting of “thanking God” and “always trusting God” during times of trouble. These books breathe Arminian thoughts and ideas which we should avoid. It is rare, in these types of books, to read about a sinner who becomes guilty before God and men. We do not hear how the Lord leads His people and begins His work in their life. Instead, these books generally speak of a religion where the characters begin immediately to “trust in God.” These types of books begin to sow the seeds of doubt about experiential truth as taught in the Scriptures. The question can then come to mind: Is it really necessary for us to be converted according to what we hear preached in our churches? Are we the only church denomination which teaches the truth and necessity of conversion according to God’s Word? Are all of the other churches and denominations wrong? Do we become jealous of those people who can trust in God so easily despite their circumstances and difficulties? Dear friends, do we see the danger of slowly but surely getting more detached from the experiential truth and being drawn into an Arminian lie?

In addition to lending books, many libraries have for many years made DVDs and Blu-Ray discs available for borrowing by patrons. Over the last decade libraries have added iPads, Chromebooks (with an included Wi-Fi hotspot for Internet access), and video game consoles (for playing video games at home). One very popular item is the take-home Internet hotspot devices which allow a library user to get Internet access wherever he or she takes the device. These items are either available for free or for a low rental fee.

Computers with Internet access are often freely available in libraries for children as well as adults. Even though the “Children’s Internet Protection Act” in the United States requires computers used by library visitors to have filtered

Internet access, children are still able to access a multitude of topics and information which we would not allow into our homes. Canadian parents should be aware that their local libraries are not governed by a similar “Protection Act.” It might be wise to allow computer access at home only where computer and mobile devices can be electronically and visually monitored.

As can be imagined when considering how libraries have evolved in the past forty years, giving children, especially teenagers, unsupervised access to all of these materials (and possibly more, depending on the library) would be a huge mistake. Think twice before allowing your younger children to visit the library unaccompanied by a parent or a responsible brother or sister. If parents allow their children to get books from the public library, they should monitor that material being checked out are based on the Ten Commandments. The question should be asked, “How do the contents of this book hold up against the standard of God’s Word and His commandments?” Make some effort to help your children find good, solid literature they will enjoy. True to their sinful nature, and left to themselves, children are often drawn to books and other media that invite them into worlds of fantasy and magic. Moving to books dealing with dark fantasy and the occult is a possible next step. It is of great importance that parents talk with their children about why we must not read certain books, and why the contents of many books are sinful in the eyes of the Lord. If the Israelites were warned to “Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God” (Leviticus 19:31), certainly we should take care in avoiding books and other materials dealing with these evils.

If you have them nearby, visit several local libraries—you may find that one could have less of the problematic materials described above. Some libraries are not so quick to get rid of older books which will generally have fewer objectionable themes and topics.

Seeing that many items in the public library cannot stand the test of portraying a morality according to God’s Word and the Ten Commandments, the question might be asked: “Are there alternatives to using the public library?” Yes—one option might be for parents to consider acquiring their own “family” library. Over time, begin buying good books from library book sales, thrift stores, and garage sales that might be selling books cheaply. This is something to begin as soon as children are born as it takes time and money to acquire good reading material. It is quite satisfying as a parent, however, to see your children enjoying good books, bought with them in mind before they were even able to hold a book.

If your church has a library, visit it with your children and help them select books appropriate for their age and reading level. We encourage consistories to support the creation and development of a library for their congregation. As family budgets tighten due to rising costs, having a freely accessible supply of sound reading material for children and young people is so essential for developing the next generation of readers who, we hope, will progress as they grow older to reading the treasures left to us in the English language by many “old writers.”

We had to bike along busy roads when we visited our local library as children. Our parents expressed some worry when we asked to visit the library—mostly concerned about our physical safety. Today, our children’s physical wellbeing is still important; however, we and our children also need to be protected from the moral and spiritual dangers lurking at the library. We need the Lord’s help and strength to “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). □

¹Internet filtering is required in all libraries receiving funding from the United States federal government. Public libraries not receiving federal funds are not required to have Internet filters installed.

²Science Students and Early Career Professionals, 1(2), 36-50. <https://doi.org/10.29173/pathfinder23> Schulz, K. (2020). Internet filters in Canadian libraries. *Pathfinder: A Canadian Journal for Information*

The Fruits of Our Life

Rev. F. Bakker (1919-1965)

When the Lord starts to work in our hearts, it becomes evident to others. We must be very clear here that people often do not clearly notice this fruit in their own lives. The more God works in our heart the more we are aware of our sinfulness and can often question fruit in our own life.

This was also the case with the Roman centurion. The people saw the fruit of God’s work in his life and said that the centurion was worthy of God’s grace. It would not hurt us to ask ourselves: what impression do we give to other people. If the fruits of God’s dealings in our life are to be noticed, they must first be present. If they do not exist, they will not show. Only a proper root will yield fruit. Certainly, we see that the gospel is not according to man; we are not dependent on the opinions people have about us. Nevertheless, people’s opinions of us are something we cannot avoid. The people testified that the centurion was worthy. This was a beautiful testimony he demonstrated to the people of his day. In like manner, God’s people make an impression upon their surroundings. What impression do you make on those around you?



Church History

The Spread of Christianity (6)

J.N. Mouthaan, Veenendaal, the Netherlands

(Translated from *De Saambinder*)

Christians in the Early Church

Assembling together on Sunday (continued)

Since the earliest days, Sunday was the day whereupon the congregation gathered together.

Paul's command to gather money for the poor on the first day of the week presupposes that the Sunday was already well known (1 Corinthians 16:2). John's reference to the Day of the Lord can properly be explained only when this day refers to Sunday.

This is also apparent in other documents. In the "Didache," a manuscript from the first century, it is spoken about gathering together on the "Day of the Lord" (Chapter 14, paragraph 1). About the reason for the gathering on Sunday, Justin Martyr (± 100 - ± 165) writes, "We come together on Sunday because it is the first day of Creation where God created light from darkness and created the world from unorganized matter. It is also because on this day Christ arose from the dead ("First Apology," paragraph 67).

Preview

The high esteem that Christians had for the first day of the week is further apparent in the time of Irenaeus and Tertullian in that they did not kneel while praying but stood. It was a very significant pointing to the resurrection (Irenaeus, "About the Passover"; Tertullian, "About Prayer" 23). It is stirring to read what Basilus the Great writes about this practice of prayer on Sunday. "Upon the day of the resurrection, we recall the grace which has been granted unto us by standing while praying, not only in that we have been risen with Christ, and are obliged to 'seek the things which are above' (Colossians 3:1) but also because in a certain sense it is a preview of the coming ages which we await" (*About the Holy Spirit*, Chapter 27, paragraph 66).

Therefore, Sunday is, in the deepest sense of the word, a day of rest which already looks forward via the resurrection of Christ to the glory which God has laid away for those who fear Him.

Justin Martyr also writes about these matters which took place during the church services. In "First Apology," paragraphs 65-67, he writes how during the services words were first read aloud out of the apostolic books of the New Testament or out of the prophets. Thereafter, the leader would speak some words of admonishment or encouragement. Subsequently, they went over to the celebration of the Lord's Supper. While they were standing, they would first offer a prayer for themselves, for fellow Christians,

and for all mankind over the entire world. Thereafter, they would greet one another with a kiss.

We regularly come across the giving of a kiss in the New Testament (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14). In order to properly understand this, it is necessary to provide some background.

In past ages the kiss was first of all a token of love and respect, and only in the second place did it have a romantic connotation. In addition, such a kiss was generally given upon the hand. The reciprocal kiss was especially a seal and token of forgiving one another and served to prepare oneself to celebrate the Lord's Supper in the proper manner.

Lord's (Holy) Supper

After the greeting and salutation, the bread and wine are brought to the leader who subsequently leads in prayer, giving thanks for the heavenly gifts, whereupon the congregation answers with "Amen." Thereupon, the deacons distribute the bread and the wine. The well-to-do in the congregation then give what they are willing to contribute for the poor. The leader distributed these gifts to the orphans, widows, sick, prisoners, and strangers. The free will offering taken at the Lord's Supper table in our congregations is based on long tradition. It is to be given after the celebration of the sacrament according as men have been blessed. In one of his letters, the church father Cyprian allows us to look into his heart regarding the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Even after so many centuries, the recall is unmistakable. "As common wine makes someone's spirit freer and looser, and takes away all sorrow, so also by means of the drinking of the "blood of the Lord" and the cup of salvation all recollection of the old man is driven away, and the earlier sojourning in the world is forgotten, and the sorrowing and mournful heart that was first oppressed because of the anxiety of sin, can breathe again because of the joy which God's grace gives" ("Letters", #63, paragraph 11). For Cyprian, the Lord's Supper is, therefore, the place where the recollection of his former life is seen in the proper light.

The Sunday gatherings in the early church recall for us what is important in the church services. Men did not come together in beautiful buildings; neither did they have the freedom to come together at a convenient time. They sought each other in living rooms and small rooms, early in the morning and late at night. When we read of how they came together, something is tasted of the joy and simplicity of heart. □

(This installment marks the end of this series.)



Commentary

The Man Born Blind⁽⁴⁾

Rev. H. de Leeuw, Franklin Lakes, NJ

“And He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay” (John 9:6b).

The means that are spoken of here are such as we would bypass for healing blind eyes. The eye, where this clay is applied, is the most sensitive part of the body. The clay has no nice smell like the anointing oil prescribed in Exodus 30:23-25. Yet, if we notice the hands that the clay is in, and the purpose for which this clay is used, then something is illuminated—the glorious power of the Lord when He accompanies insignificant means.

Christ has spoken. What was spoken we considered in the previous articles. The words spoken were answers to questions, answers the disciples had not expected. In the answer Christ has revealed a purpose, namely, “that the works of God should be made manifest.” Now, He who has spoken becomes silent. The talkers are many; they have much to say. Yet what of the performance? Notice here in John 9 what has been spoken is going to happen. There is a striving inheritance throughout the ages that require the performance of the words which have been spoken. How is this in our life? Do we belong to those people? When God converts you, He speaks to you through His Word, and what He has spoken needs to come to pass. The lesson will then be taught that the performance cannot come from us but needs to happen by One who is qualified. See, here, the wonder—He has spoken and now He performs.

Dear reader, have you been made busy at the throne of grace with what He has spoken? Then you will be praying for the performance: “Remember the word spoken unto thy servant, upon which Thou has caused me to hope.” Here Christ is standing by the consequences of sin; the blind man cannot make himself to see. Words have been spoken, but the way to perform it is an impossibility from his side. The performance of the words is above human comprehension; it is a matter of faith. Do you see how the Lord makes room for Christ? He is the qualified Performer sent by the Father to the blind and the helpless to execute a divine work. Dear people of the Lord, the Lord Jesus has come to fulfill God’s Word!

Look at the performance. It goes against all human prediction and expectation. Many are strangers to the performance in which God is exalted and the sinner abased. Multitudes speak of taking God at His Word. They exclaim with loud voices to believe. The command is true, but the performance? With all the talk and human reasoning, the God-given Performer is not necessary. The necessity in which God performs the wonder of making the blind to see

remains obscure. In our day many say that the life of grace has become complicated. Christ is not hidden. Christ does not need to be revealed. God does not lead in steps. The voices are increasing where they loudly say “Preach Christ.” Every minister and child of God has the desire to do that, but the performance of it is a gift which he cannot achieve himself. The performance makes one dependent upon the Lord. The wonder is that the Lord begins His work and will perform His work.

He spits—this action of the Performer is a remarkable one. It has a deep meaning. He has to spit. He does not ask for water, nor does He ask His disciples to make clay. In this case the spitting of the Lord Jesus is the means to make clay. To make clay one needs two ingredients: dust and water. There is dust by handfuls, but where is the moisture for that dust? Christ, the Performer, spits! He has to moisten the dry dust to make clay. The means the Lord uses are remarkable. They always need to be moistened by Christ Himself. The offices of elder, minister, and deacon represent the three offices of Christ. The men who serve in these offices are but dust. May the Lord bless our office bearers as dust who need to be moistened and made into clay, fit for the Master to use to perform the works of God. Then an office bearer, before he performs his labors, may ask to be moistened. How necessary and profitable for churches to have “moistened” office bearers.

The Lord makes the clay that is used by Him to anoint the eyes of the blind. Herein is a clear, scriptural lesson; the clay the Lord makes He uses. We would say that it is most unfit to use clay as ointment for the eyes. That will make it impossible to see. The eyes that are already closed have now been sealed by clay to remain closed. The Lord Jesus made the clay and anointed the blind eyes with the clay because He will perform the wonder. The way will be through impossibility. It will go beyond human comprehension and understanding; it will exalt the only remedy, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We just pointed to the clay as being a means. We referred to the office bearers. It can broaden to include teachers and parents. When the Lord uses the clay that He has made, then such persons are only instruments to eventually be washed off in the pool of Siloam. May our churches, schools, and homes be filled with such instruments— instruments of divinely-made clay (moistened dust) used as ointment by the Lord to make the eyes of the blind to see. Then He maintains the truth of the psalter line, “Weakest means fulfill Thy will.” □

(To be continued)



Questions & Answers

Questions from Our Readers

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

What does “honey on the rod” mean?

“Honey on the rod” is an expression often heard in public prayer and preaching. Is it biblical? Strictly speaking, yes, but the scriptural reference I am about to share does not reflect or explain the meaning of this expression.

In 1 Samuel 14:27 we read that Jonathan “put forth the end of the rod that was in his hand, and dipped it in an honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened.” It was upon this action that Saul wanted to go as far as to kill his own son because of a foolish oath! Saul had sworn that any man would be cursed who would eat any food until after the battle. However, after intervention of the people this terrible threat was averted (1 Samuel 14:45). Now, to refer the expression in question to these texts would clearly be an example of taking a text out of context.

Hence, it is obvious that the expression “honey on the rod” must mean something different. When Jonathan used a rod, it was only a means to bring the honey to his mouth, but the rod in Scripture often refers (though not always) to a means of divine chastisement. “Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it” (Micah 6:9b). Think also of Psalm 89:32 “Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.” In Hebrews 12:6 we read: “For whom the LORD loveth, He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.”

The following is an excerpt from a sermon of Rev. Ledebor, which explains what “honey at the end of the rod” means. “Thy rod is lifted up, but Thou doth change the judicial (rod—HH) into a fatherly, trying, chastising, blessed, almond-bearing, honey producing rod for Thy people, O most precious King, compassionate and merciful High-priest, who bore the judicial part for Thy people, in order to grant that fatherly part to them.”

It means that the Lord can use afflictions and trials in the life of His children in such a fashion that it becomes a blessing or that the affliction is sanctified. Just like the poet of Psalm 119:71 expressed it: “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes.” I once read of a man who was severely and deeply tried both physically and spiritually. He was paralyzed from his head down for many years. Then in God’s incomprehensible wisdom and

providence he had a heart attack in addition. We need not try to imagine what a trial this was for both his body and his poor soul. It was also related what he had said to his wife shortly before this heart attack happened. He had said that there are three ways one may react to the rod with which the Lord chastises someone. “You can try to bite that rod; you can seek to acquiesce and say: it is not sent by people, but then there are also people who kiss the rod.” Thinking about the paralyzed condition from which he suffered, he said: ‘I don’t bite the rod, but to kiss the rod I cannot do either—I only seek to bow under it. This changed when he came home from the hospital after his heart attack. He told his wife, “Now I learned to kiss the rod!”’

Dear reader, then the rod of affliction affords a special blessing. Then the affliction is blessed and brings that peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby. A rod and the use of it hurts, but honey is soothing, sweet, and has healing properties. It is clear that such an exercise requires sovereign grace. How good is the Lord when that is given.

Given, yes, indeed! I will never forget what I once experienced in a hospital in the Netherlands. I was visiting a member of the congregation, laid up in a room with five other patients. Obviously, there was little privacy for anyone to visit. At the end of the visit, it was customary to close with prayer for all those in the same hospital ward, which I tried to do. In my prayer I mentioned toward the end that none of the blessings we implored of the Lord we deserved. No sooner after I said amen, an angry woman across from the bed where I sat burst out and snarled at me, “What do you mean, don’t deserve? Are you saying that I deserve to lie here?” My friends, here you have an example of the opposite of “honey on the rod.” May the Lord remember all those who bear a cross and are afflicted—also among our readers—and grant a taste of the Lord’s honey in all that is hurting and painful, both physically and spiritually. Only Christ’s yoke is easy and only His burden is light. □

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

Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God’s wise and fatherly disposal in every condition.

—Jeremiah Burroughs



Current Events

Needs in Ukraine (A Barnabas Fund Report)

Words of thanks came from Ukraine after the quick and generous response of our supporters to our appeals on behalf those suffering. We are thrilled, grateful to God, and thankful for your donations of money and supplies. People remaining in Ukraine are suffering. There are many thousands of our Christian brothers and sisters amongst them. Hundreds of thousands are without gas and electricity. Supplies of food and drinking water are also diminished. Barnabas Fund immediately launched urgent appeals for Christians in desperate need of food, blankets, warm clothes, and other basic humanitarian aid. Within days of our appeals, more than six tons of food and five tons of blankets, coats, and other clothes were delivered to Barnabas Fund. More donations continued to arrive each day. The first 40-foot truck carrying thirty tons of aid from our warehouse reached Romania on March 16 followed by others, approximately one each week. Aid was distributed not only to refugees in Romania but also to the needy in Ukraine itself. Further shipments from the U.S. and Canada are planned in the coming months—for as long as they are needed. As well as sending supplies we have sent funds—some into Ukraine itself and some to Poland and Moldova for churches and other partners near the Ukrainian border to use to care for refugees. Food and heating fuel were the main costs. One partner in Moldova was able to accommodate over one hundred people from Ukraine in a hotel normally used for hosting conference attendees.

—BarnabasFund.org

Pakistan's blasphemy laws misused

For the past ten months a mother has been waiting for trial in Pakistan. In July 2021 she was arrested for forwarding a WhatsApp message that allegedly contained blasphemous content. Armed police raided her home and arrested her and her two sons (ages 10 and 12) accusing them of violating Pakistan's blasphemy laws. Later they freed the sons. She had joined several interfaith WhatsApp groups where she preached and defended her Christian faith. It was in one of these groups that she was accused of forwarding blasphemous content. She was charged with insulting Islam (Section 295-A of Pakistan's blasphemy statutes, punishable by up to ten years in prison), insulting Muhammad (295-C, carrying the death penalty) and more. The family has had to flee from Islamabad because of threats. Her eldest son was upset that he was not allowed to hold his mother's hand when he went to visit her in prison. Her daughter said: "...we feel no excitement about celebrating any feast without our mother. We are worried about her fate, and pray that the court frees her and that she can come back to us."

—ChurchInChains.ie

Unrest in Nigeria escalates

Rioters upset over the arrest of two Muslims in connection with the killing of a Christian college student in Nigeria attacked three church buildings and looted and damaged Christian-owned shops in May. The Christian student had been beaten, stoned to death, and her body set on fire after she was falsely accused of blaspheming the prophet of Islam because she had refused to date a Muslim. Area Muslims demanding the release of the two suspects assembled in strategic areas of the city and then marched to the palace of the sultan, leader of Nigeria's Muslims, demanding the release of the two Muslims. The sultan has condemned the killing. An area resident, said, "In spite of efforts by the police and other security agencies to prevent them from

becoming violent in their protest, these Muslims still succeeded in attacking and destroying two churches." General secretary of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), said in a statement that the inability of the Nigerian government to prosecute Muslims who have killed Christians over false claims of blasphemy has fueled such criminal acts.

—MorningStarNews

United Methodist Church split

Dozens of Georgia churches split from United Methodist Church (UMC) in May over LGBTQ issues. Seventy churches in Georgia split from the UMC last week largely marking the latest in this growing LGBTQ divide within the third largest Protestant denomination in the U.S. The UMC's change toward leniency relating to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination of marriage of homosexuals caused this split. A 2019 agreement is allowing churches to leave the denomination through the end of 2023 for reasons of conscience regarding this change. The Methodists trace their roots to 18th-century English evangelist John Wesley, whose followers split from the Church of England following his death

—FoxNews.com

Physician-assisted suicide (MAiD) is problematic in Canada

Clergy, chaplains, spiritual care professionals and entire denominations across Canada find dealing with MAiD very hard. When physician-assisted suicide—popularly known as Medical Assistance in Dying or MAiD—first became legal, much of the public's attention was focused on those individuals who had won the right to have their lives end at a time of their choosing, but it takes a community to take a life legally. Some of those who compose the community that surrounds MAiD deaths find the practice ethically immoral and philosophically reprehensible, and experience participation—even from a distance—to be excruciating. A pastor at a congregation in Ontario is one of them. The bishop of his church instructed clergy not to participate in MAiD, but caring for someone pastorally can mean being involved in one way or another, even when you are deeply uncomfortable. The first time he personally encountered MAiD, he was walking into a hospital and he spoke to a man who was visiting his wife. The man said something leaving the pastor speechless. He said, "I was thinking of putting her down, but my kids are uncomfortable with that. Plus, she's in a state where she can't make a decision." This brief exchange was evidence that culture swings very quickly. The pastor said MAiD has become "more and more normalized...once a door opens, it never closes again." Not long after that experience, someone he knew chose MAiD. The man, having recently lost his wife, was diagnosed with cancer and wound up in hospital where he discussed MAiD with his physician. "He was sick. He was vulnerable. He was depressed. He'd just sold his house. There was huge change coming in his life, but more could have been done." With permissibility has come popularity. MAiD has become "more and more normalized." Throughout the two weeks it took for the MAiD team to arrive to end the man's life, the pastor visited him on several occasions. "I was trying to talk him out of it," he says, but he was determined. Three days later the pastor received a text message from the man which concluded with, "Thank you for everything you've done for us. Love you." It was his final goodbye. The cause of death listed on the death certificate was not the lethal drug overdose he had been given, but cancer.

—FaithToday.ca



Timothy FOR THE YOUNG

The Confession of Faith (31)

Article XXIX: Of the Marks of the True Church, and Wherein She Differs from the False Church *(continued)*

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

Last month we published something about the marks of the true church. In the churches around us, we found so much lacking that we must say of many of these that they have departed from the Word of God. This is a very serious offense, for the Lord Himself has said, “And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

However, when we are busy with others, there is a danger that we forget ourselves. The question must be asked, “How is it with the marks of the true church in our midst?” I dare not say that we are the only church where the truth is yet taught, nor do we deny that the Lord is yet in our midst, and the work of the Holy Spirit is yet found here and there, but there is a big difference from former days. In our days we hear so little of the experience of God’s people who, by the grace of God, may speak about that which the Lord has done for them and in them. It is a privilege when persons may know what the Lord has done for them, but before comfort and strength is received of it the application of it cannot be missing. Because so little is expressed by God’s people, nobody becomes jealous of them. In this way the authority of true religion is undermined, and the world is given our attention, causing world conformity to come into our midst. This can be seen in our homes, in our pursuit of fashion, of hair styles, etc., but can also be seen in our churches. Where is the simplicity of former times?

Does this have something to do with the marks of the true church? We may not deny that these are great dangers. Usually, the changes in the church are gradual so that, step by step, the marks of the true church become vaguer and more indiscernible. Notwithstanding these concerns, we may believe that

the pure preaching is still among us, namely, death in Adam and life in Christ. Paul expressed it in this way: “But we preach Christ crucified.” To this pure preaching also belongs the maintaining of the forms of unity. These are not the same as God’s Word, but they are according to the Truth.

Another concern is the pure administration of the sacraments. We must be careful that the administration of the Lord’s Supper does not become the same as in other churches where an historical faith is held for the true saving faith. This is then a ground used to partake at the Lord’s table. The knowledge is often so little of the Lord and ourselves, and it is then incomprehensible how the people dare to take the bread of the children.

The third mark of the true church was discipline. It is yet found in the preaching and in practice but not as strictly as in former times. This is also a handwriting on the wall. All these things together show us the need for carefulness in our midst and an asking of the Lord for the presence of His Spirit so that we may not be left to ourselves.

The marks of the true church are to be known, but it is so necessary that we come to the assurance that you and I, each personally, are living members of this church. Although it is often forgotten, how necessary it is to examine ourselves. Our fathers not only gave the marks of the true church but also of the true Christian since they added: “With respect to those who are members of the Church, they may be known by the marks of Christians, namely, by faith; and when they have received Jesus Christ the only Saviour, they avoid sin, follow after righteousness, love the true God and their neighbor, neither turn aside to the right or to the left, and crucify the flesh with the works thereof.” These words of the confession include the practice of true religion in personal experience.

With historical faith we are left outside of Christ, but living faith becomes visible. When the Lord begins, He gives faith and we are implanted in Christ. At God's time such speak of what the Lord has done. The true and living members of the Church receive faith as a gift of God, and they begin to hate sin and to ask for the Lord and His service. However, this obedience is only in a small beginning. The struggle between the old and the new man continues to the end of their life. In us there is no strength in that warfare, but the Lord promises in John 16:33 to be of good courage, for He has overcome the world and all enemies.

Under the administration of the Holy Spirit, we not only learn our misery, but at God's time He will make room in our heart for Christ so that we may flee to Him. Christ Himself has said, "I am the resurrection, and the life", "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." It will remain a church militant, but they will receive the victory at the end, for the Lord will not forsake the work of His hands.

Just as the true church and the true Christian have their marks, likewise the false church does also. She takes power and authority to herself. All churches which give more power and authority to men than to God are false churches. Another mark of this false church is that the sacraments are not administered according to God's Word but rather according to their own insight. Neither is church discipline administered. Besides all this, they persecute the true church, those who want to live according to God's will. You can understand that in this the authors of the confession speak especially of Rome.

In the 146th session of the Synod of Dort, the representatives of the foreign churches unanimously testified that in the confession not one dogma was found which was against the Word of God. They urged their hearers to stay with this doctrine. It is my desire, and I hope also yours, to live and die in accordance with this doctrine of free grace.



Bible Stories for Little Ones

Gideon (2)

(Based on Judges 6&7)

Did you ever have to get up early in the morning? Maybe you had to go on a trip or you could not sleep anymore, and you got up before most other people were awake. When you went outdoors, you noticed that everything was wet. No, it had not rained during the night, but there was a misty feeling in the air, and there was water on the grass, trees, and cars. Maybe you know that this moisture is called dew. Dew forms during the warm nights from the water in the air. Next time you go outdoors early in the morning, remember to look for it.

Gideon laid out a piece of animal skin, called a fleece, during the night to see if the dew would fall on it. You might say, "What a strange thing to do! Of course, the dew will fall on it; it falls on everything." Listen, Gideon wanted the dew to fall only on the fleece but not on anything else. That is impossible, is it not? Why did Gideon want that?

Gideon was still not sure that God wanted him to save Israel because he thought himself to be unim-

portant. He asked God to show him that this really was the right way by making the fleece wet with dew but having everything else remain dry. The next morning Gideon got up early and went to check the fleece. Look what had happened. Only the fleece had dew on it! There was so much water on it that he could squeeze out enough to fill a bowl.

Gideon still was not sure. He had to know for certain. Again, he asked God humbly, "Let not Thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray Thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew." The next morning that was exactly what happened. The dew, which should be on everything, had fallen on the ground but not on the fleece.

Maybe you are thinking, I am going to try that. I am going to ask God for a sign like this, but we must not do such a thing. We may not tempt God. That is like playing games with a holy, powerful God.

Even Gideon was afraid and humble when he asked for his signs. God tells us everything we need to know in the Bible, through our conscience, and through His ministers. Gideon did not have a Bible to tell him what to do, but he had been shown two signs, and he knew for sure that he was the one to go against the Midianites.

Gideon then assembled a huge army, and the men set their tents near the camp of the Midianites. Gideon wanted a huge army because surely he would need all the men he could get to fight the Midianites' large army. God said to Gideon, "The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, mine own hand hath saved me. Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early." So, Gideon told the soldiers that those who were afraid could go home, and thousands of them did.

God said the army was still too large. He told Gideon to bring the men down to the water to drink.

The Lord would show Gideon which soldiers to keep and which ones to send home. Think for a minute. Suppose you went down to a clean river to drink. How would you drink? Some of us would drink like dogs lapping up the water with our tongues. Some of us would use our hands as cups bringing the water up to our mouths. As it was with these men; most went on their knees to lap the water, but some cupped their hands to drink. Gideon watched the men. Then God told him, "By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place." So, Gideon sent thousands more soldiers home.

Then all he had left was the very, very small army of only three hundred men. Can you imagine that? How could such a tiny army win against an army of hundreds of thousands of men? It *would* happen. Gideon had not only three hundred men, he had the Maker of heaven and earth fighting for him as well!



Bible Quiz

Thirst

Dear Boys and Girls,

Kadin pulled his hat further down over his ears and braced himself against the stinging wind. He peered over the fence into the water buckets. Each one was filled with a hard chunk of ice. Not a drop of water was to be seen anywhere. In the pen, the ducks set up a racket at the sight of Kadin. Kadin always let them out so they could roam all day, digging their bills in mud and dead leaves, dunking and splashing in the duck pool, sipping water and gobbling corn. At night, before the foxes and raccoons came out, Kadin herded the ducks back inside again.

Kadin knocked the ice out of the buckets and filled each one with fresh, clean water. Then he opened the duck pen. The ducks had been waiting for him, watching every move. Their quacking had grown moment by moment as they waited anxiously. Now, they almost ran over each other in their haste. Waddling as fast as they could they hurried over the frozen ground. Their bright eyes focused on the

buckets; they had only one thought in mind—water!

"B-a-a-a." The sheep added to the chorus of ducks, sounding forlorn.

Kadin glanced around. He didn't see the sheep. Where was she? Quickly clambering over the fence, he hurried to the sheep shed. What he saw made him gasp. There was his little sheep, but what was wrong? She lay on her side, her eyes staring unseeingly into the distance. Kadin knelt down and gingerly stroked her woolly head. "B-a-a-a." Her voice was raspy and much quieter than usual. Kadin quickly fetched one of the buckets he had just filled. Tucking it under the sheep's chin, he watched her slurp the water eagerly. Then she sagged to the floor again, exhausted from the effort. Kadin bit his lip. Had his sheep been so in need of water that she had lost all her strength? He made up his mind to go outdoors once every hour the rest of the day to knock the ice out of the buckets. Poor little sheep!

Water is essential—for people, plants, and animals.

Plants will not grow without water, animals will die when they lack it, and people need to be refreshed by it. There are also hearts which thirst for water. This is not regular water, but it is a thirst for the things of God—in the Bible, it is called “living water.” Just as animals are sometimes very anxiously searching for water, so these hearts very earnestly look for and desire to have communion with God. They need Him and long to hear His voice and feel His nearness. They need His righteousness. What does that mean, His righteousness? This means that they know it can never be right between them and the Lord UNLESS they receive the righteousness of Jesus Christ. If Jesus, the Son of God, will stand between them and the Judge of heaven and earth, with His righteousness, only THEN will they be able to be reconciled with God.

By nature, our hearts are dead; we are dead in sin, which means there is no spiritual life in us. If we had spiritual life, we would love God and wish to serve Him. Is there a way to obtain this spiritual life, despite our sinful heart and sinful existence? The Lord Jesus spoke of this to the Samaritan woman by the well. “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.” He speaks of living water which He is able to give. This means He is able to give life to a dead soul. When that soul becomes alive, it will never run completely dry; it will never be dead again. That soul will no longer thirst insatiably for satisfaction; it will no longer constantly try to find happiness in all the wrong ways and all the wrong places.

The Lord always cares for these souls. They can become weak from lack of hearing His voice; they can become anxious because they seem to be waiting so long for a word from His mouth. They can become afraid that they have been forgotten. Will they ever receive a sip of living water again? Their strength is all gone; they are tired of sin, of themselves, and they wonder if it was their own imagination that they ever received something from Him. Then the Lord comes again. He comforts and upholds them; He does not let them die of thirst.

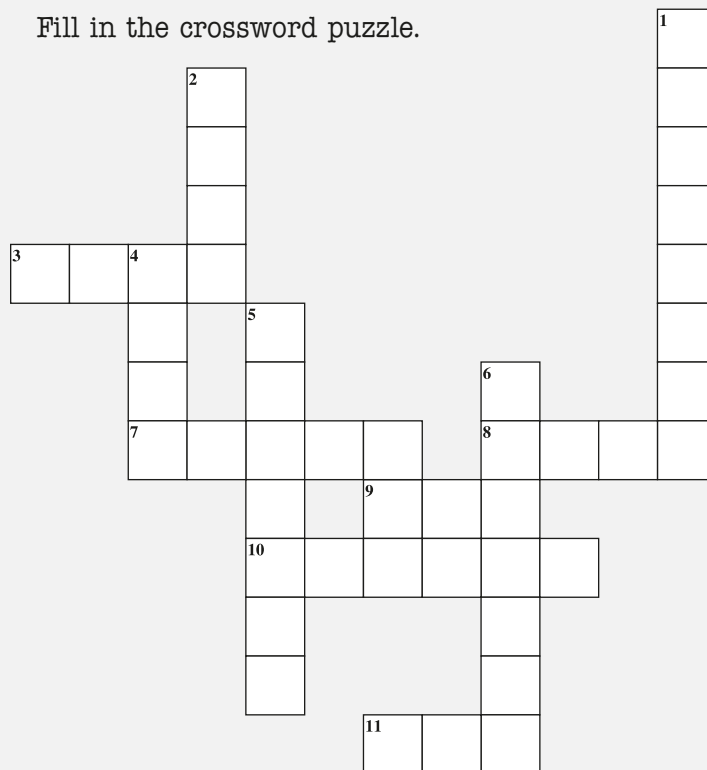
Where do you look for happiness? Do you think that you will be satisfied if you are able to buy all the things you wish to have? Do you think that you will be satisfied if you are everyone’s favorite friend, if you have perfect grades in school, or if you can go on vacation to a place you have always wanted to go? Perhaps you think that you would be satisfied if you could help others, especially those who are poor or sick. Perhaps you think time for your favorite hobbies would satisfy you, or maybe you try to find

your joy in nature. None of these things will bring true happiness. Those who seek their happiness in the world will continue to thirst because nothing will truly satisfy. The living water which Jesus speaks of—mercy from Him—is the only true satisfaction.

Jesus spoke when He was hanging on the cross, “I thirst.” He was thirsty for a drink of water, but no one gave Him water to satisfy this thirst. He suffered thirst so that He could obtain living water for His people. He once cried, “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink.” He means that “whoever you are, rich or poor, young or old, if you desire to be truly and eternally happy, come to Me and be ruled by Me, and I will undertake to make you happy.” We would rather run the other way and seek our happiness elsewhere. How foolish we are. Ask the Lord to draw you by His Word and Spirit; ask Him to give you that true spiritual thirst which can only be satisfied by Him.

* * * * *

Fill in the crossword puzzle.



Across

- 3. (Nehemiah 9) Nehemiah speaks of how God supplied water for the Israelites out of a _____.
- 7. (Romans 12) If an enemy is thirsty, give him _____.
- 8. In Psalm 143:6, what is thirsty? _____
- 9. (Judges 15) Samson was afraid he would _____ of thirst.
- 10. (Revelation 7) In heaven, they shall not _____ any more.
- 11. (Psalm 42) The Psalmist thirsted for _____.

Down

- 1. (Exodus 17) When the people were thirsty, they _____.
- 2. What type of drink was given for thirst in Judges 4:19? _____
- 4. (Proverbs 25) Good news from far is as _____ water to a thirsty soul.
- 5. In Psalm 107:5, when they were thirsty their soul _____
- 6. (Matthew 5) Those that thirst after righteousness are _____.

For the Older Children

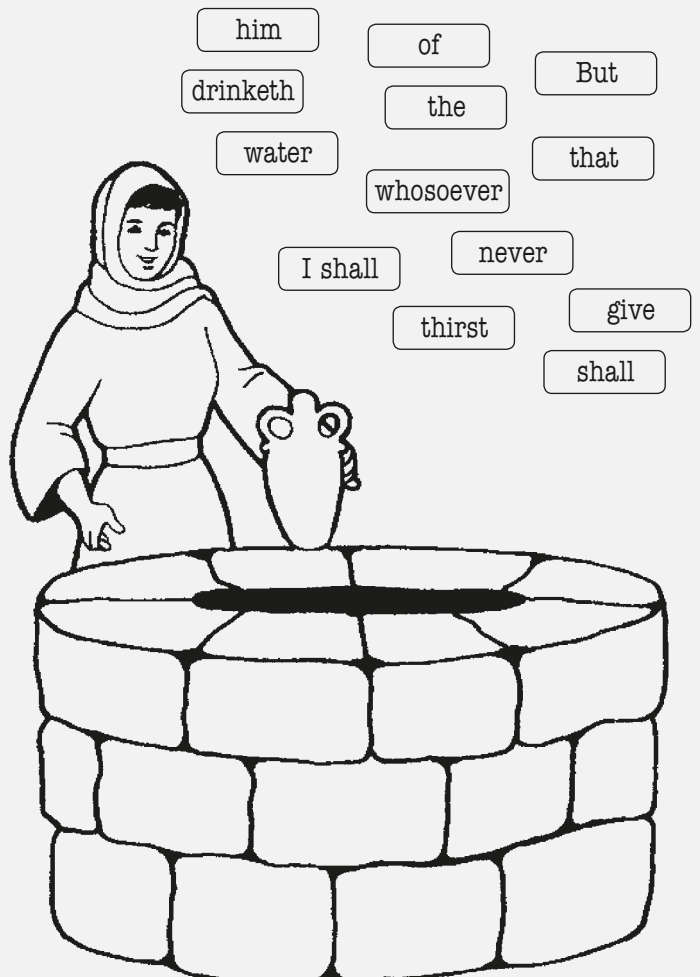
- 12. "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty _____, where no water is;" (Psalms)
- 13. "And they thirsted not when He led them through the deserts: He caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: He clave the rock also, and the waters _____ out." (Isaiah)
- 14. "They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for He that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the _____ of water shall He guide them." (Isaiah)
- 15. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy _____ and milk without money and without price." (Isaiah)

For the Younger Children

- 16. Cut out the word bricks at right and paste them in the correct order onto the well to create the first part of John 4:14.
- 17. In each of the following verses, find what Jesus said about thirst.
 - A. John 6:35 _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - B. John 7:37 _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - C. John 19:28 _____
 - _____
 - _____
- 18. Read Revelation 7:16—who will never thirst any more? _____
- _____
- _____

Answers to June's "Search" quiz:

- 1. Thus
- 2. Hide
- 3. Esau
- 4. Good
- 5. Our
- 6. Out
- 7. Diligently
- 8. Scriptures
- 9. Hearts
- 10. Eternal
- 11. Parts
- 12. Heaven
- 13. Everlasting
- 14. Reins
- 15. Deep
- 16. The Good Shepherd seeks His lost sheep
God's searching: 17,20,21
Man's searching: 18,19,21,22
- 23. Jacob
- 24. Benjamin
- 25. Jericho
- 26. David
- 27. Hanun



Answers to previous quizzes were received in May from:

Andrew Baum 9
Britni Blom 32
Marissa Blom **30**
Martena Blom 35
Tiffany Blom **6**
Carly Brouwer 13
Derek Brouwer 32
Thomas Brouwer 31
Sarina Den Bok **24**
Weston Ekema (3) **24**
Kari Groen **24**
Kurtis Groen 25
Kate Hoogendoorn (2) **18**
Weston Hoogendoorn (2) **12**
Evan Kaat (2) 16
Logan Kaat 5
Shane Kaat (2) 7
Anthony Knibbe **12**
Ashley Knibbe 25
Lindsey Knibbe 25
Whitney Knibbe 25
Joey Koenen **6**
Lydia Koenen 8
Abraham Mol (2) 2
Madeline Mol 17
Olivia Mol 21
Teddy Mol (2) 27
John Murphy **24**
Andrew Murphy 4
Blake Pannekoek 15
Lauren Pannekoek 26
Jillian Rozeboom 3

Lincoln Rozeboom 1
Logan Rozeboom 23
Nevaeh Rozeboom 7
Colin Ten Hove **24**
Hannah-Jo Ten Hove 11
Gerard Van Deuveren 3
Maurice Van Garderen 29
Emmalyn Van Garderen **30**
Jasmine Van Liere 2
Kaiven Van Middendorp (2) 32
Konner Van Middendorp (2) 32
Brett Van Velthuisen 11
Kenna Van Velthuisen 4
Kason Van Velthuisen 14
Trent Van Velthuisen 11
Alivia Vande Hoef 33
Micah Vande Hoef 28
Raelene Vande Stroet 13
Adalyn Vande Waerd 3
Sophia Vande Waerd 3
Wyatt Vande Waerd **18**
Aubrey Vanden Berg **12**
Heidi Vandenberg 27
Kristen Vandenberg 14
Nathan Wesdyk 25
Rebekah Wesdyk 29


14 Bibles were sent to Bolivia this month. The total is now 558—thank you, boys and girls!

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.



Letters to My Young Readers



Welcome to our new member:
Lincoln Rozeboom.
Love,
Aunt LenaBeth

Please send your answers to the address shown below:
Aunt LenaBeth
180 Jacobs Road, Newfoundland, NJ 07435
E-mail: auntlenabeth@gmail.com

Valuable Catechism Instruction

(Taken from a recent St. Catharines NRC bulletin.)

Now that the catechism classes are beginning again, we wish to pass on what happened more than one hundred twenty years ago in the village of Opheusden, the Netherlands. Exhorter H. Roelofsen had come from Lunteren to serve the Congregation under the Cross. After a few years he was ordained as minister and served there for ten years with much fruit.

He used the question book of Rev. Ledeboer, which is suitable for young children. In addition to having his students memorize the questions and answers, he also required the boys and girls to learn a text. For one girl this became a blessing.

What happened? She had to learn Proverbs 6:18, “An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief.” When she had to recite the text in catechism class the next week, she burst into tears and said, “That is what I have done.” Where had she been in that week? She had gone to the fair in Wageningen. That was a place of sin. The Lord showed her by His own Word.

Catechism students—and others as well—do you see the value of catechism class and listening attentively? Do you see why you should learn your questions and answers along with the Bible texts? The Lord can use it for your conversion. Parents, be diligent and observe that your children learn what is required of them. In doing so, you may receive a blessing, also.

News & Announcements

■ Ministerial Calls

Extended:

To Rev. A.T. Huijser of Sliedrecht, the Netherlands, by the congregation of Brant County, Ontario.

To Candidate J. Slingerland by the congregations of Corsica, South Dakota; Grand Rapids–Covell Avenue, Michigan; Kalamazoo, Michigan; Lethbridge, Alberta; Markam, Ontario; Sheboygan, Wisconsin; Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Sunnyside, Washington.

■ Obituaries

BOUMA, Edith May (nee Hollo) – Age 79, May 27, 2022; Fairfield, Montana; Husband – John (deceased); Children – Les & Ginger, Loralee & Bryan Schwanke, Raylene & Mark Casson, Janelle & Scott Teunissen, Judy & Glenn Rosenbaum, Doug & Kelcy, Mauricio Morales; 22 grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren; Siblings – Ingaborg Dickhoff, Karen & Charles Bauman, Ed & Jerri Hollo, Jeanette Hollo; predeceased by son Stanley Ray and several siblings.

KEISLING, Florence (nee Hoogmoed) – Age 93, June 2, 2022; Clifton, New Jersey; Husband – Lester (deceased); survived by several nieces and nephews, especially Jacob Papalia with whom she resided; predeceased by daughter Dorothy Paszek, and several brothers and sisters. (Rev. H. de Leeuw, Hebrews 9:27&28.)

SLINGERLAND, Brian Lee – Age 47, April 14, 2022; Lethbridge, Alberta; Wife – Sue; Children – Jared & Cobi, Kaitlyn & Andrew, Ashley, Brandon; 3 granddaughters; Mother – Anneke; Parents-in-law – Martin & Jeanette Slingerland; Siblings – Jane & Bart-Jan Velthuizen, Anton & Tammy, Carol & Kees VanderVlist, Clarence & Kristy, Ivan & Ariette, Angela & Casey Neels, Lorraine & Rein Loedeman, Tammy & Leendert Vander Kooij, Trevor & Andrea; In-laws – Martin John & Amanda Slingerland; predeceased by father Cornelis (Kees). (Rev. G.M. de Leeuw, Hebrews 9:27&28.)

VANDER STAD, Shirley – Age 85, June 6, 2022; Pequannock, New Jersey; Husband – Cornelius (Neil); Children – John & Mary, Sue & Allan Rose, Brenda and Steven Vander Valk, Lisa and Michael Sniegocki, Ada & Rev. Henry den Hollander, Ruth & William Tanis; 27 grandchildren, 62 great-grandchildren. (Rev. C. Vogelaar, Hebrews 13:14.)

■ Classis Far West Youth Conference July 9, 2022

The Classis Far West Youth Conference, for our young people sixteen years or older, is scheduled to be held on July 9, 2022, in Fort Macleod, Alberta, D.V. If sufficient interest is shown, we hope to arrange separate activities for older young adults. Registration can be sent to nrcfortmacleod@gmail.com. May the Lord incline the hearts of our young people to attend, and may these means be blessed.

■ Classis East Youth Conference July 15&16, 2022

The Classis East Youth Conference is scheduled for July 15&16 and will be hosted by the Franklin Lakes and Clifton, New Jersey, churches. All young people ages sixteen and older are welcome. Topics will be presented by Rev. H. de Leeuw and Rev. C. Vogelaar. We extend a special invitation to our older young adults. Separate activities are being planned for them. All who wish to participate in the conference are asked to register. To do so, please visit www.njyouthconference.org (password: july2022), or contact Corné Vogelaar at Corne@RBFangus.com or 908-234-1377. We look forward to sharing a profitable time together with our youth and young adults.

■ Young Adult/Post High School Youth Camp, Northern Michigan August 18-20, 2022

A three-day/two-night trip to northern Michigan is being planned, the Lord willing, by a Grand Rapids' committee under the oversight of the Beckwith consistory. We are planning to stay in a beautiful lodge located in Boyne Falls, Michigan. On Friday we plan to drive to Mackinaw City and take the ferry across to scenic Mackinac Island. Rev. H. Hofman and Elder Bill Greendyk hope to provide meaningful topics and discussions. For further information please call or text 616-329-0705 or email NRCMackinawTrip@gmail.com.

■ The Banner of Truth in Audio Format

Monthly copies of the articles appearing in *The Banner of Truth* are available on MP3s and CDs for those who have reading difficulties such as poor vision. These MP3s are produced by a committee in Norwich, with the support of the Norwich consistory, who make the MP3s available to your consistory. Consistories distribute the MP3s and CDs which are provided at no cost. You may contact Mrs. Tillie Lamain at 616-242-0291 or blamain@netscape.net to arrange for a free subscription or to discontinue receiving *The Banner of Truth* on CD.

60th Wedding Anniversary

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

Dr. Edward & Lois Nieuwenhuis

hope to commemorate their 60th wedding anniversary.

“Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever” (Psalm 106:1).

9119 Warrens Way
Wanaque, NJ 07465

55th Wedding Anniversary

On June 15, 2022, our dear parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents,

Jaap & Magda Groeneweg

commemorated their 55th wedding anniversary.

“Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee” (Job 22:21).

35 Main St. E, Unit 16
Norwich, ON N0J 1P0

To our readers:

Due to a busy schedule Rev. J. den Hoed has been unable to continue the series “The Song of a New Heart.” He hopes to resume it next month, D.V. (Ed.)

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.**

Minutes of Classis Midwest Spring 2022 Meeting

An Office Bearers' Conference was held on April 5 at 3:30 P.M. in the sanctuary of the Grand Rapids–Covell Avenue Church. The meeting was opened by Rev. H. Hofman with the singing of Psalter 348:4,5,6. He then read 1 Corinthians 14:26-40 and opened with prayer. The topic was by request and had as the title "What are the duties of the moderator?" It focused on what our Church Order instructs, and some practical instruction was given.

On the evening of April 5, 2022, Rev. J.J. Witvoet of Rock Valley, Iowa, led the prayer service at the calling church of Grand Rapids–Covell Avenue for the Classis meeting to be held the following day. The service was opened with singing Psalter 365:1-4, reading Psalm 90, and with prayer. The text was from Psalm 90:13-17, the theme: Moses' Prayer for the Return of the Lord's Favor: 1. His humble contrition, 2. His fervent intercession, and 3. His closing petition.

The Classis meeting convened on Wednesday, April 6, at 8:30 A.M. in the Grand Rapids–Covell Avenue Church. On behalf of the calling church of Grand Rapids–Covell Avenue, Rev. H. Hofman opened the meeting with the singing of Psalter 428:5&10, the reading of John 17:1-10 and with prayer. A warm welcome was extended to all delegates, office bearers, theological students, and friends present. Then Rev. Hofman mentioned a few special memories from within our Classis since our last meeting held in April 2021—many joyful occasions, but also many sad occasions. May the Lord remember each one, also the mourning ones. Rev. Hofman then opened with a few thoughts regarding the High Priestly Prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ and opened the meeting for business. The credentials of the delegates were submitted and accepted. The following officers were to lead the meeting:

<i>President</i>	Rev. J.J. Witvoet	by rotation
<i>Vice President</i>	Rev. H. Hofman	by rotation
<i>Clerk</i>	Elder L. Teunissen	by appointment
<i>Treasurer</i>	Elder T. Fluit	by majority vote

The minutes of our last meeting held in Corsica, South Dakota, on April 14, 2021, were approved and signed. The final minutes of the Continuing Meeting of October 14, 2020, also were formally approved and signed.

Letters received from the calling church for the next Synod, Grand Rapids–Beckwith, dated February 2, 2022 and March 26, 2022 were discussed. These letters pertained to setting a date for the next Synod which had been set to be January 11&12, 2023. As much as there are many difficulties which stand in the way, Classis Midwest voted in support of the calling church moving forward with their plans.

The Committee for Incoming and Outgoing Ministers met on March 1, 2022, regarding the examination of Rev. H. Hofman pertaining to taking up his labors in the Grand Rapids–Beckwith Congregation. All documents were found in good order, and the necessary copies of documents were given to him.

All Moderatorships remained the same except that Rev. J.J. Witvoet was assigned to be Moderator of Grand Rapids–Beckwith and Rev. H. Hofman to be Moderator of Kalamazoo.

Regarding points submitted, the consistory of the Grand Rapids–Covell Avenue congregation asked advice regarding a discipline case which was discussed in closed session. Advice was given by Classis as to how to proceed. The consistory of Sheboygan inquired into the status of the revisions of certain catechism books which were discussed at this Classis in 2018 and at Synod 2018. Representatives of the Book and Publishing Committee were in our meeting who confirmed that the Catechism booklet by Rev. P. Dyksterhuis was currently in printing, and the booklet by Rev. J. Borstius was currently in the review process.

Rev. H. Hofman and Rev. J.J. Witvoet agreed to develop a schedule for Church Visitation to be conducted before our spring meeting.

Voting took place to select delegates and alternates for the next Synod, planned for January 11&12, 2023.

If a fall Classis meeting is needed it was agreed that the date would be October 12, 2022. However, in the case a candidate for minister would accept a call to one of the churches in our Classis, we agreed to set July 20, 2022, as an earlier alternate date for a fall Classis meeting. The next spring Classis Midwest meeting is scheduled for March 29, 2023. The next calling church is the congregation of Rock Valley, Iowa.

Rev. Witvoet gave a few closing remarks. He thanked all the delegates for a unified and peaceful meeting. He acknowledged the efforts of the calling church, the women who set up coffee and refreshments for both days, the delicious meal that we received, and the Treasurer and the Clerk for their efforts. He also acknowledged all the delegates for their contributions. He acknowledged Rev. Hofman for opening our meeting and for the Office Bearers' Conference held a day earlier. May the Lord help with all the labors that are placed upon our shoulders. May what we have heard regarding Moses, the High Priestly prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ and, especially, Christ's announcement on the Cross, "It is finished," give courage in all our labors. May the Lord add His blessing. He then asked Rev. Hofman to close the meeting.

Rev. Hofman, on behalf of all present, thanked Rev. Witvoet for his leading of the meeting. It is truly remarkable that we may be together in this meeting. The other Classes have not been able to meet, but what would it be, if left to ourselves? May the Lord grant traveling mercies and bless our labors in each of our congregations. May we also receive more laborers into the harvest, for the harvest truly is great. May we be given to storm the throne of grace in this regard, and may the souls of all those under our care weigh heavily upon us. He closed with the singing of Psalter 174:3&4 and with prayer.

All the Lord willing.

—Submitted by Elder Larry Teunissen, *Classis Clerk*

True Religion

J.C. Philpot (1802-1869)

True religion is a solemn thing. And I firmly believe, that when God lays eternal realities with weight and power upon the conscience, He will make His people to know it to be a solemn thing. I do not mean to say that there are not many times and seasons when it does not lie with weight and power upon the conscience. I am sure there are times with me when I seem to have no more religion, no more spiritual feeling, and can no more trace the work of God upon my conscience, than if there were no God, no heaven, no hell, no judgment, no eternity. But, through mercy, there are times and seasons when my heart is solemnized by the things of God; when they lie with that weight and power upon my soul, that I must feel them, whether I will or not.

Dear reader, the need is great. If you have an education background, please take a moment to consider the many positions available across our congregations.

Administrators Needed

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, POMPTON PLAINS, NEW JERSEY. 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 nrcs_office@nrcsnj.org.

TRINITY REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, SUNNYSIDE, WASHINGTON, welcomes applications for an administrator/teacher 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 Maaïke Van Wingerden at 509-840-0437 or email trinityrcs@embarqmail.com.

Teachers Needed

CALVIN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, COAL-HURST, ALBERTA, invites applications from middle and/or high school teachers for the 2022-23 school year, D.V. We would be thankful to hear from versatile and dedicated applicants to enable continued provision of Christian education to our youth. All applicants must be members of the NRC or a closely-related denomination, and eligible for Alberta certification. For information about positions available, 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. For any questions regarding this position and all interested applicants, please contact Randal Teunissen at 920-828-0225 or e-mail rdteunissen@yahoo.com.

MOUNT CHEAM CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, CHILLIWACK, BRITISH COLUMBIA, anticipates an URGENT NEED for the next school year with multiple openings for teachers 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. 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.

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@pskzoo.com or 616-644-2661.

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

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, POMPTON PLAINS, NEW JERSEY. 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 must be a member in good standing of one of Netherlands Reformed congregations or a denomination with similar teachings. To apply, please see our school's contact information in the Administrators section.

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 resumé 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 information and/or an application form, please 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.

To All Candidates for Education 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!**

Gideon's Fleece

The signs which God to Gideon gave,
His holy Sovereignty made known,
That He alone has power to save,
And claims the glory as His own.

The dew which first the fleece had filled,
When all the earth was dry around,
Was from it afterwards withheld,
And only fell upon the ground.

To Israel thus the heavenly dew
Of saving truth was long restrained;
Of which the Gentiles nothing knew,
But dry and desolate remained.

But now the Gentiles have received
The balmy dew of gospel peace,
And Israel, who His Spirit grieved,
Is left a dry and empty fleece.

This dew still falls at His command,
To keep His chosen plants alive;
They shall, though in a thirsty land,
Like willows by the waters thrive.

But chiefly when His people meet
To hear His word and seek His face;
The gentle dew, with influence sweet,
Descends and nourishes their grace.

But ah! what numbers still are dead,
Though under means of grace they lie!
The dew still falling round their head,
And yet their heart untouched and dry.

Dear Saviour, hear us when we call,
To wrestling prayer an answer give;
Pour down Thy dew upon us all,
That all may feel, and all may live.

—John Newton