

the Banner of Truth

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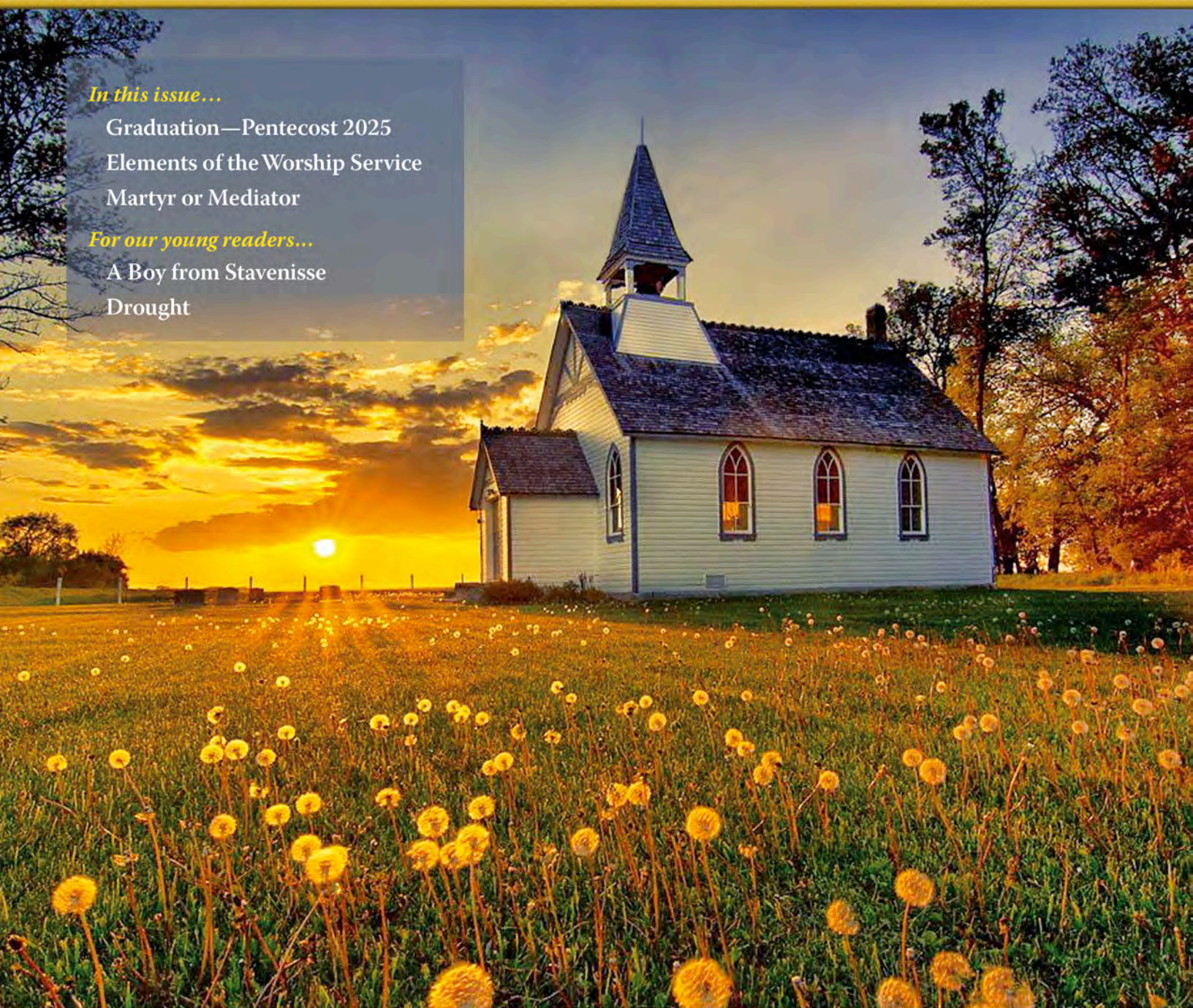
The Official Periodical
of the Netherlands Reformed
Congregations of the
United States and Canada

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Martyr or Mediator

For our young readers...

A Boy from Stavenisse
Drought



*"For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God,
than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." PSALM 84:10*



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Meditation

Graduation—Pentecost 2025

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

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams”
(Acts 2:17).

Dear Readers,

This year Pentecost and many commencement exercises will take place in the same week. Therefore, we wish to write a few lines with respect to both and also address the many graduates from our Christian schools. May the Lord crown all the labors bestowed upon our children and grandchildren from early childhood until their graduation this year. The Lord has given us the gift of having our own schools. May our teachers feel supported as they look back upon another year in which they were helped.

Reflecting for a moment now upon Pentecost, we take note of Peter’s quote from the prophet Joel about the great day of the Lord: *“And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions...”* (Acts 2:17a). Notice that the Lord, by the mouths of both Joel and Peter, had a special message for young people living in the latter days.

Young people are mentioned separately! May the same God who spared and kept you all these years be the first in your future plans, whatever they may be. Acknowledge Him in all your ways, and He has promised to direct your paths. Nonetheless, pay attention for a moment to something far more important than your graduation!

In the midst of an announcement of fear and dread, wonders in heaven, signs in the earth below—blood, fire, and vapor of smoke—the sun being turned into darkness, etc., something so beautiful, powerful, and encouraging is to take place! The solemn day of the Lord is preceded by the opening of heaven, showers of blessings, gifts for men, whereby especially young people are mentioned. Scripture speaks of a pouring out; that points to abundance. Think of water or oil—it spreads, becomes wider, greater. Parents, sons and daughters, the offspring is mentioned... No, not you or they, but the Lord Himself shall take care of the promised blessing. The word “flesh” ought to be a sober reminder here for parents and grandparents alike—all

flesh that is as grass... How many times are we reminded of this? Here, flesh also refers to *sinful* flesh, spiritually *dead* flesh, *dry*, *hard* flesh. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. Yet, the prophet mentions such wondrous things referring to the young and rising generation. They shall prophesy, see visions, and dream dreams. This does not refer to a literal fulfillment but a spiritual one.

There is no lack or want of dreamers and prophets in today’s world. They can be found in the church as well as in the world, in colleges and universities. Everywhere is heard—here is the Christ or there is the Christ. However, the salvation that is of the Lord will be revealed and made known in a saving way by the Lord *Himself*, also to young people. That is the message here. The Holy Spirit will take care of it. The Spirit of Pentecost will do its work—despite all opposition and apostasy. Is that not encouraging?

The Highest Himself shall establish them (Psalm 87). God’s Spirit shall confirm upon and lead to the firm ground of the Lord’s own work. May we not apply this also to future

office bearers from among them? There once was a minister of another denomination in the Netherlands, very similar to ours, who said, “When the Lord thrusts out laborers it can happen that they sprout as mushrooms out of the ground.”

Let us pray for such wonders

also in our days! There is a great need in the day in which we live with our children. This work, or this foundation of which Psalm 87 speaks, the Lord ever gives out of hand. He will take care of it, and all this will be done before that great and notable day of the LORD shall come.

Considering this and the time we live in—and your graduation—we cannot but conclude that this is an opportune moment to encourage you to continue in the things which you have heard and learned. Now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation. It is the “*kairos*” which is Greek word for the *most opportune time*—high time, that is! It is the time to seek the Lord. The best time is now; do not postpone it. Let the last dispensation the world has entered not go by unnoticed or unused. “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, while the evil days come not.” Can we say that still? The evil days are here, my friends, we are already living in them—all the more reason to seek the Lord while He can be found and to call upon Him while He is near. □

However, the salvation that is of the Lord will be revealed and made known in a saving way by the Lord Himself, also to young people. That is the message here. The Holy Spirit will take care of it. The Spirit of Pentecost will do its work—despite all opposition and apostasy. Is that not encouraging?



Bible Study

The Names of the Mediator (18)

Rev. C. Neele (1962-2022) & Rev. A. Schot, Nunspeet, the Netherlands
(Translated from the 2010 issues of *De Saambinder*)

Nazarene

“And He came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene” (Matthew 2:23).

Scripture must be read carefully. We easily miss important matters. Those who may study the Word will find old and new treasures in it. Nor should we err when we read the name Nazarene. It is often thought that here we are dealing with being a Nazarite, as we find it in the Old Testament. Samson was a Nazarite. He was consecrated to the Lord. Strong drink was not to be drunk by a Nazarite nor was hair to be cut or a dead person to be touched. Samson was certainly a type of Christ. Yet, the name Nazarene does not point to being a Nazarite. There is a difference between the two names: Nazarite and Nazarene. The latter name is used by Matthew in the above text. The evangelist simply means that the Lord Jesus was a resident of the place Nazareth.

Now a problem does arise. Matthew writes that what was said by the prophets might be fulfilled, that He might be called a Nazarene. However, we find no foretelling of the name Nazarene in the prophets. The annotator has recognized this problem and writes, “This has respect...to Isaiah 11:1 and 60:21, where Christ is called Netzer, that is, a Branch, from which word the city Nazareth has its name. It was God’s will that, by occasion of this, His dwelling place, Christ would be called a Nazarene, as a Branch that grows up before His Father out of His place.”

The church father Hieronymus was the first to suggest this idea. Later expositors have adopted this statement, including the annotators. However, it is also possible that Matthew is referring to something else. The place Nazareth does not appear in the Old Testament. It does in the New, but then the name had a bad connotation. Nathanael said to Philip, “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” He could not imagine that. Someone who came from Nazareth was presupposed a despised one. The name Nazarene points most of all to Christ’s being despised, and of this the prophets spoke. Isaiah testified, “He is despised and rejected of men” (Isaiah 53:3a). This is the glory of a humbled Saviour. He wanted to be called a Nazarene in order to reveal His glory to an unworthy people. Listen to the counsel of Philip: “Come and see!”

—August 5, 2010, Rev. C.Neele

Offering

“And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour” (Ephesians 5:2).

After Paul has written in this letter about being made alive and being saved by grace through the merit of Christ, in the last part of his letter, he deals with the conduct of God’s children. We, too, should not lose sight of this practice of godliness. This, sadly, happens all too often. In this chapter, the apostle speaks at length about a walk in love. In it he sets Christ as an example. After all, Christ fulfilled the Law, and the sum of the Law is love. He perfectly walked in love. As proof of His love, Paul mentions His offering for His own. This sacrificing love should also be present in the life of the Ephesians. This can only be a fruit of the application of His love in the lives of His own. God’s children should also be expected to be His followers.

Christ brought an offering. We usually think only of His suffering and death on the cross. Certainly, there, Christ brought the greatest offering of all. His offering was a Self-offering. For Isaac, in God’s providence, there was a ram to be offered in his place, but Christ was both the High Priest and the Lamb. For that offering the Old Testament Church waited. The blood of bulls and goats did not make atonement. The entire sacrificial service was fulfilled in Him. He was the burnt offering, the sacrifice, the sin offering, the paschal offering.... This shows that His offering was much greater than the last hours of His suffering. His entire life on earth was an offering. The true offerings are, for example, obedience (1 Samuel 15:22); mercy (Hosea 6:6); a broken spirit (Psalm 51:17); obeying God’s voice (Jeremiah 7:23), etc. These offerings are required of us humans. Has it already become your desire to be allowed to offer such offerings? All these offerings Christ made substitutionary for His children. He came to minister. Every thought that came into His mind, every word He spoke, every step He took, was an offering. All these offerings were “to God for a sweetsmelling savour.”

What an unspeakable wealth of comfort lies here. Christ not only offered an offering for guilt, but He has also acquired everything that must serve for sanctification. Were His name not “Offering,” there would be no forgiveness nor sanctification possible. This name teaches us that the command “walk in love” can only be fulfilled in communion with Him. Outside of Him, all our

offerings are a stench. This is what God's children are going to learn experientially but in true communion with Him: what is impossible by nature becomes practice:

*I choose Thy truth to be my guide,
And sinful ways abhor.*

—Psalter 69:2

—August 12, 2010, Rev. A. Schot

(To be continued)



A Word in Season

Pentecost

Rev. H. Hofman, Sr. (1931-2007)

(Taken from the May 1991 issue of *The Banner of Truth*)

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place” (Acts 2:1).

It is remarkable that the gospel message of Pentecost begins with the words, “They were all with one accord in one place.” This refers to about one hundred twenty persons who were met together in an upper room in the temple at Jerusalem. In Acts 1:14 we read, “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren.” They were all together in prayer and supplication, waiting for the Father’s promise.

Jesus had told them that they should remain in Jerusalem until they received the fulfillment of that promise. Therefore, they must wait. They must wait for God’s time. They knew and felt in their hearts that the promise is not the same as its fulfillment. They knew what they were missing, but they also knew from where to expect fulfillment.

For what were they waiting? What was it which brought them together at the throne of grace? It did not concern the past, but it concerned the future. Jesus had promised them the Holy Spirit. They were waiting for the Comforter who would remain with them forever. That was what they were missing and for which they were waiting.

Our text reads, “When the day of Pentecost was fully come.” It points to a determined time. Pentecost literally means the fiftieth day. Counting from after Easter, seven weeks of seven days had gone by and the fiftieth day dawned. Pentecost is also called the day of harvest. Seven weeks earlier two loaves of bread were designated for the Lord which were to be made of the first sheaves. Then counting fifty days the full harvest was reached, and the breads were made with the grain of the full harvest. Then the time of hard work, of toiling and sweating in the field was over. The harvest was gathered.

What a rich instruction we have here for the life of faith! In this historical background we see the connection between the feast of the first fruits and that of the full harvest. Certainly, the people were happy with the first fruits, and the first fruits made them yearn for the full harvest.

How can this be put into words in regard to the life of faith in the heart of God’s children? When the eyes of sinners are opened, they see their sins through the mirror of the law. They begin to work to make themselves acceptable before God. They become beggars at the throne of grace. The Holy Spirit makes room for Christ in their hearts by teaching them that they are incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil. They become lost sinners.

What a wonder it is when Christ in the darkness of their lives is revealed to them, so they may see that in Him there is salvation and that it is His work to save sinners! Then they may hear, “Unto you is born the Saviour.” Oh, these first fruits are so precious, but there is more. They have also to learn that God’s justice must be satisfied and that Jesus is not only King and Prophet but also Priest. Then they experience that with all that has taken place, they cannot stand before God. They have nothing with which to pay for their guilt.

What a wonder when it pleases the Lord to bring them to Golgotha where they may see that Christ was wounded for their transgressions and is their Substitute! They may see that He has paid all the requirements of God, that they are justified in the resurrection of Christ, and that Christ’s righteousness is imputed to them. They have learned to live by faith and not by sight in the ascension of Jesus. Christ, who has departed from them and entered into His heavenly glory, is their Intercessor in heaven before the Father.

Christ has also promised them that He will send the Comforter who shall remain with them. With all that they have received and experienced, we see here still a missing and waiting people, praying and supplicating for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Here are children of God waiting and wrestling for the fulfillment of the Father’s promise. Jesus had told them to remain at Jerusalem until they had received that promise not long after these days. Therefore, they must wait—wait for God’s time.

Dear readers, are you one of their company? Are you a companion of all those who seek the Lord? Or do you belong to those who have crucified the Lord of glory?

Are you seeking the things of this world, or are you seeking the kingdom of God? Are you building the house of your salvation upon the sandy ground of your own works, or are your eyes upon the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ? He is the only Saviour, and if we miss Him, we miss everything.

Have you been waiting a long time already? Sometimes you may think that it will never happen that the Lord will answer His promise in your life, and you say, "I am ashamed because of all my doubts.

I fear that I have deceived myself." The day of Pentecost must be fulfilled. The fiftieth day is the day which the Lord has made. His time is the best time. Maybe forty-five days have passed by already. He is coming at His time.

How can you know that His time is near? The more God's promises bind us to the throne of grace, the closer is the fulfillment. The Spirit makes the heart more and more desirous and gives the Spirit of prayer, supplication, and liberty in prayer. Oh, then faith flies up with eagle's wings and says with Jacob, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." Do not then be discouraged even though it should take a long time. God's fiftieth day will come.

We read also that the Spirit makes room for His coming. They were together in one place with one accord. Here we see the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Sin is a

disruptive force. Sin always divides; it always separates and splinters. The spirit of Satan produces division and leads to enmity, war, and strife.

It is for this reason that unity is mentioned first. All of them had the same promise, longing, prayer, and need. They had a desire to be together. It was a spiritual unity of which Jesus Christ and the Father's promise were at the center. They were of one mind, and there were no divisions, no jealousy, no preferences, no suspect persons. The Spirit

looked upon them as one and treated them as one. They were all together in unity, for there the Lord commands the blessing, even life forevermore (Psalm 133).

Let us think of the way by which the Spirit came. Perhaps we are wondering why the Holy Spirit is so seldom seen. Maybe this is the answer. Where is

spiritual unity? How much do we quench and grieve the Spirit? Let us search our hearts and earnestly pray that the Spirit may bind us together in one place and with one accord. Then our eyes are not upon each other to criticize one another, but the eyes of all are upon heaven.

Then the fulfillment of the Father's promise came precisely from the place from which they were expecting it. "They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength." □

Let us think of the way by which the Spirit came. Perhaps we are wondering why the Holy Spirit is so seldom seen. Maybe this is the answer. Where is spiritual unity? How much do we quench and grieve the Spirit? Let us search our hearts and earnestly pray that the Spirit may bind us together in one place and with one accord. Then our eyes are not upon each other to criticize one another, but the eyes of all are upon heaven.

"Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into" (1 Peter 1:10-12).

You have here three sorts of students, or enquirers into the great affair of man's salvation by Jesus Christ:
1. The prophets, who searched diligently into it. 2. The apostles, who consulted all the prophecies, and were witnesses of the accomplishment of them, and so reported what they knew to others in the preaching of the gospel.
3. The angels, who most attentively pry into these matters.

Learn that a diligent endeavor after the knowledge of Christ and our duty will certainly be answered with good success. The prophets are answered with a revelation. Daniel studies, and receives information. The Bereans search the scriptures, and are confirmed. The holiest and best of men sometimes have their lawful and pious requests denied. It was both lawful and pious for these prophets to desire to know more than they were permitted to know about the time of the appearance of Christ in the world, but they were denied. It is lawful and pious for good parents to pray for their wicked children, for the poor to pray against poverty, for a good man to pray against death; yet, in these honest requests, they often are denied. God is pleased to answer our necessities rather than our requests.... The revelations of God to His Church, though gradual, and given by parcels, are all perfectly consistent. The doctrine of the prophets and that of the apostles exactly agree, as coming from the same Spirit of God. The efficacy of the evangelical ministry depends upon the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

—Matthew Henry



From Our Inheritance

Martyr or Mediator

Rev. A. Moerkerken (1947-2024)

(Translated from the February 29, 2024 issue of *De Saambinder*)

Someone once asked how it can be explained that many martyrs entered death silently and sometimes even singing, while we read of the Lord Jesus that He cried out so fearfully on the cross, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” We want to ponder this question somewhat.

The history of God’s struggling Church on earth has not been one of an uninterrupted set of persecutions. It is more akin to a woman’s contractions; they come, and they go. However, there is often a definite pattern. It is like the congregation of Smyrna in Revelation 2: first we read of blasphemy, then of tribulation. Speaking of Smyrna, one of the most famous martyrs was put to death there. The history of his death is worth recalling. We can read about it in the “Martyrium Polycarpi,” a writing from the second century.

Gentiles and...Jews

On Saturday, February 23, of the year 156, a raging crowd was gathered in the enormous stadium of Smyrna. The crowd of people was wonderfully composed; it consisted of Gentiles and...Jews! On this day, both of these populations, which were often quite cross with each other, were one in their hatred of a ninety-year-old man, Polycarp, the “angel of the church of Smyrna.” Polycarp had to die.

The old man had hidden somewhere in a manor. A Christian boy was tortured in order to find out where the old bishop was staying, and the boy talked. Polycarp was seized and taken to the stadium. At first the proconsul, who was to question him on behalf of the Roman government, was friendly. “Come,” said the Roman, “swear by the happiness of the emperor and cry: ‘Away with the wicked!’” Of course, by those wicked the Christians were meant... but the old bishop looked wrathfully at the raging crowd in the stadium and shook his fist at them. He sighed and looked to heaven. Then he said, “Away with the wicked!” That was not what the proconsul had meant!

The proconsul tried to persuade the bishop to curse Christ. After twenty centuries, the old man’s answer has not yet been forgotten: “Eighty-six years I served Him and He did me no harm. How can I curse my King who saved me?”

Then the judge tried to frighten Polycarp—first with lions, then with fire. The old man did not give way. In the end, the old “angel” of the church of Smyrna died a martyr’s death.

Mediator

The question was how it can be explained that so many martyrs passed away in silence or even singing, while the Lord Jesus expressed His anguish in such a moving way. The answer to that question must be that there is a fundamental difference between the suffering of a martyr and the suffering of the Mediator. This has not always been well understood. Very early on in the Church there was the idea that the death of a martyr could be an atoning sacrifice. Thereby, we have lost the scriptural track. Yet, even among us there can be wrong thoughts about the suffering of Christ. I have often heard people express, “I may have to suffer much, but then I remember that the Lord Jesus had to suffer much more...” Such words are usually meant well, yet, we should not say them. Why not?

It is not that we have to suffer and so did the Lord Jesus, only much *more*. Oh no! Christ not only suffered much more, but He suffered very *differently*! Our suffering happens to us because of our sins. In our suffering there is always something tempering: either we may fear the Lord and then our suffering is nothing but God’s fatherly chastisement, or we do not fear the Lord and then in our suffering there is always something of God’s longsuffering.

Christ’s suffering was completely different from our suffering. Why? Because He suffered as Surety, that is, substitutionary, taking on guilt. More than that, He also suffered innocently; and even much more, in Christ’s suffering there was nothing of God’s longsuffering. He bore the full, unspeakable, indescribable burden of God’s wrath against the sin of the entire human race. That *alone* is why the martyrs on the scaffolds and the stakes were sometimes able to sing, but why did Christ have to cry out so fearfully, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”

Thus, there is not a gradual but a *fundamental* difference between the suffering of martyrs and the suffering of Zion’s precious Surety. Does the painful suffering of the martyrs awaken our pity? Christ has no need of our compassionate tears. He only seeks the guilty, those guilty unto death. He seeks the lost, the completely lost ones. He becomes unspeakably precious to people who have become worthy of hell. They know themselves to be so guilty that they must righteously perish.

Do we know about that from experience? I will never forget the words of our old minister from my childhood. He used to say quite often, “How deep should our knowledge of sin really be?” His answer always was, “So deep that Christ fits in it.” □



Commentary

The Distinction Between the Offer of Grace and the Covenant Promises (5)

Rev. A. Moerkerken (1947-2024)

(Taken from the April 1987 issue of *The Banner of Truth*)

Westminster

We were writing about the distinction between the offer of grace and the promises of the covenant. Many deem it foolish to speak of such a distinction. Without quarreling about the term “offer of grace,” we still wish to strongly plead for the preservation of the above-mentioned distinction. Nowhere have we read this distinction so soundly and clearly as in the passage of the well-known Westminster Confession. The Confession of Faith (not to be confused with the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms) was composed by the Synod of Westminster (1643-1647), and obtained great authority in England and the Netherlands, but especially in Scotland.

The passage we have in mind is found in Chapter 7, paragraph 3. The seventh chapter concerns God’s covenant with man. The theologians of Westminster speak about the Covenant of Grace in the third paragraph, and state that, in this covenant, God “freely **offereth unto sinners life** and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved; and **promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life**, His Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.” The distinction between the offer of grace and the promises of the covenant is clearly described here. It is also completely clear here, that according to the Synod of Westminster, the offering (Latin: “offerre”) concerns the sinner, while the promising (Latin: “promit-tere”) concerns the elect. Therefore, the maintaining of this distinction is thoroughly “Reformed.”

In the “conclusion” to the Canons of Dort, our own Synod of Dort declared that we should “judge of the faith of the Reformed churches, not from the calumnies which, on every side, are heaped upon it; nor from the private expressions of a few among ancient and modern teachers, often dishonestly quoted, or corrupted, and wrested to a meaning quite foreign to their intention; but from the public confessions of the churches themselves...” This is indeed the King’s highway. For, however useful it may be to quote our Reformed theologians (we also did that in the preceding articles), there is a real danger that quotations can be selected very subjectively. Others glean from the same theologians what suits them best, and so an unprofitable “quoting conflict” ensues, with which church life is sometimes filled. In the Westminster Confession, however, we are not concerned with a statement of one or another theologian but with a confessional statement.

The offer

When we will now try to describe what is to be understood by the offer of grace, we wish to note that there need be no argument about the word “offer.” Although it is not a word found in Scripture (which prefers the use of “preaching” or “proclaiming”), its use has been confessionally accepted in the Reformed Doctrinal Standards and later statements. Just think of the above quotation from the Westminster Confession, and the Canons of Dort— (third and fourth heads of doctrine, Article 9: “It is not the fault of the gospel, nor of Christ offered therein”). Think also of the sixth statement of our 1931 General Synod where the “serious offer of Christ and the covenant-benefits in the gospel,” are spoken of.

To argue about the precise interpretation of the Latin word “offerre,” which in the Canons of Dort is translated as “to offer” does not seem an issue to me. The translators of our Canons certainly knew what they were doing. Thus, we have no objection to the use of the term “offer of grace” as long as it is not interpreted to mean that fallen man is presumed to have some ability to do good and is able to accept this offer and believe of his own accord. We do not preach such a “remonstrant” offer of Christ.

It is distorting the facts if we suggest that the maintaining of the term “offer of grace” must necessarily lead to Remonstrantism. This would then also implicitly accuse the Synod of Dort and our Synod of 1931. We would also be distorting the facts if we supposed that the old “Cross-congregations” of the last century had an aversion to the offer of grace as maintained by us. This they did not oppose. I again wish to refer to the book by the “Cross-minister,” Rev. Engelberts, mentioned in our first article.

In this book, Rev. Engelberts expressed in words the objections, as we previously saw, that existed among the “cross-congregations,” against the Seceders’ favoring of the term “sincere offer of God’s grace.” When he begins, however, to explain what his objections are, it appears that his objections are directed against such a preaching that was unfortunately creeping in by the Seceders, where knowledge of misery by the law is denied, and faith is presented as an act of man, without any further mention of a divine gift of grace. We are also opposed to such an offer of salvation where man’s state of death is neglected, faith in the promises is imposed, and the necessity of regeneration is denied. Do not say, however, that we have left the path of the “Cross-congregations” in 1931 by adhering to the offer of Christ in the gospel. □

(To be continued)



Instructive Gleanings

Onesimus, a Runaway Slave (3)

Rev. P. Kleijer, Lethbridge, AB

“I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers” (Philemon 1:4).

Introduction

Last time we considered the salutation. How rich is the word *grace*—grace for a guilty sinner but, also, the increase of grace! What flows forth from this grace? It is peace—peace, where before there was war. Everywhere around us we see much unrest—in the world, in our families, in the churches, and in our hearts. This is a fruit of sin, “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isaiah 57:20-21). Do we not see this already when our children are still very young? Paul could speak of a peace received through Christ alone. What will that work out? We will see this in the continuation of this epistle.

A continual prayer

What does Paul say in verse 4? “I thank my God.” What does it mean to be thankful? We take this word upon our lips or write it down so easily. Thankfulness is to be grateful for what we have received or may have. True thankfulness is a fruit of grace. The Pharisee praying in the temple said he was thankful, but this was nothing more than a focusing on self. To be truly thankful is to acknowledge the Lord for what is received. Saying it is easier than experiencing it. Dear reader, are there times that you can say from the bottom of your heart, “What shall I render unto the LORD for all His benefits toward me” (Psalm 116:12)? Are there times that you sink away in wonderment before the Lord? I so often hear God’s people complaining that they cannot come at the place where they long to be. They need not only a praying but, also, a thanking High Priest. Do you have work for Him to do?

Paul could say, “My God.” By grace he knew who the Lord was for him. He could say with the bride, “My beloved is mine, and I am His” (Song of Solomon 2:16a). When we may say this, we receive an eye for others, too. When Paul was in prayer, he thought of Philemon and his house; he thought of Onesimus. He saw the need of both of them. How good is it to lay one another’s needs before the Lord, but then we also need to know one another’s needs! Do we dare to open our hearts before one another? Then there must also be a trust in each other.

This “making mention” in prayer is twofold. In the first place we will mention the souls of our fellow travelers. If our own soul begins to weigh, the soul of others will weigh, also.

It is said, at times, then you have a wife, husband, and/or children—the people with whom you have a natural bond as well as those in your community and the wider community. Their need becomes your need. In the second place, you will mention those with whom you have a close bond spiritually. We read in God’s Word, “I am a companion of all them that fear Thee, and of them that keep Thy precepts” (Psalm 119:63). David said of his love for Jonathan, “Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.” The marginal notes of the Dutch Bible state that this is a love kindled and preserved by the Holy Spirit. It is not only natural but also spiritual.

Paul and Philemon experienced the communion of saints. This is a fruit of grace. A well-known poem in Dutch says, “Zoete banden die mij binden, aan des Heeren lieve volk” (Sweet ties that bind me to the dear people of God). This made Rev. J. Fraanje say to his wife when she attended the Lord’s Supper for the first time, “*Now you are not only my wife, but also my sister.*” By nature, we are so focused on self. People of God, are the needs of others sometimes bound upon you? Solomon says, “A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Proverb 17:17). It is so true; when you have received a friend from God, treasure this. We do not need many; neither can we do without.

From the Apostle Paul’s writings, we know that he was a man of much prayer. The question comes to you and me: Do you have a place at God’s throne of grace, for yourself and for others? He also asked for prayer as we hope to see later in this chapter. Paul bore the churches upon his heart. We see his love for the church. We may be critical with all that takes place in the church—and, sadly, too often there are reasons for it—but do we also know of a wrestling for the church and for those who labor in it? Then guilt remains on our side. Oh, that the inner room would be occupied more often! God’s servants and all who labor in the vineyard need it.

There are many reasons why we should acknowledge the Lord for what He gives us. David sings of it, “Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah” (Psalm 68:19). We are privileged above so many others in this world. We may still live in peace and freely attend church and school. In how many places throughout this world is this no longer possible?

Young and old, when the Lord begins the work of grace in our heart, we begin to pray. A clear example of this is Paul on the way to Damascus. The Lord said to Ananias, “For, behold, he prayeth” (Acts 9:11b).

To conclude this portion, I would like to mention one more thing. I believe there are among our readers those for whom many prayers have been sent up. Perhaps this was done by your parents or grandparents. These prayers are lying before God's throne. We may not despise that, for the Lord hears and answers prayer. The greatest blessing is if

(To be continued)

we may be included in the prayers of the Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the duty of all of God's servants to pray for you, but they cannot keep you. Hear what Christ says, "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:32a). This will become the greatest wonder for the Church of God. □



Among All Nations

What Did John Owen Say About Israel?

Rev. J.M.D. de Heer, Rotterdam-IJsselmonde, the Netherlands

*(Taken from the book *What Our Fathers Said About Israel*, Chapter 2)*

The English theologian, Dr. John Owen (1616-1683), was a man who had been taught from above. For that reason, he was highly respected by many although he had a low view of himself. He once remarked that he would love to exchange all his learning for the fear of God displayed in the life of the humble tinker John Bunyan.

John Owen wrote numerous books, including an extensive explanation of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In 1740, Part One of this explanation was published in Dutch. This part contains a very interesting chapter entitled "Jewish Objections to the Christian Religion Answered." Owen particularly addresses the objections of Jews to the Christian expectation of the Messiah.

Jews do not believe that the Messiah has already come. According to them, the Old Testament promises concerning Him have not yet been fulfilled. Owen counters that these promises have indeed been fulfilled but in a way that differs from the way that the Jews would wish them to be fulfilled. The Jews expect a kingdom of earthly happiness, glory, and power.

Owen responds to that by asking whether this is really the highest benefit of man. Already in the Old Testament, God's children expected a spiritual Redeemer to deliver them from sin, Satan, and death. This Redeemer was promised as the One who would obtain God's favor for them and lead them to the enjoyment of God.

Considering all these promises, the question should be asked, "Have they not been fulfilled in Christ?" This fulfillment is the portion of those who are joined unto Christ by a true and living faith. Thus, the heirs of the promise are not those who are "the carnal seed of Abraham" (as the Jews would like it to be) but "the children of Abraham's faith." Owen continues by pointing out that there are promises not only with respect to the Messiah but also concerning His "grace and kingdom." These promises have been only partially fulfilled. The remaining shall yet be fulfilled "in the way and at the time appointed in God's purpose and counsel."

The English theologian expresses his expectation that a time will come "in which huge multitudes of Jews throughout the world shall be called and powerfully be brought to the knowledge of the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, a benefit that will be accompanied with deliverance from their captivity, restoration into their own land, and a blessed, flourishing, and joyful state therein."

While writing about this, John Owen wants to emphasize two matters. First, he does not want to speak about "the time, the occasion, and the manner of their calling, and about their subsequent state and condition." Since there is considerable difference of opinion about these issues, this would take up too much space in his book. Moreover, the outcome itself will be the best and infallible interpretation of the prophecy. What, then, is the use of speculating at this time about how these things will be?

This, however, does not nullify the fact that the matter itself is believed by everyone "who has some knowledge of these things." Dr. John Owen states that this matter is founded on "ever so many clear, certain, and undoubtable testimonies of Scripture." For that reason, Christians throughout all the ages have confirmed that there shall be a period in which the Jewish people will flourish. They also look forward to that time with anticipation and pray for it.

The other point emphasized by Owen is that the Jews shall first be led to believe in the Messiah before they are restored to a glorious state. At this point he notices a great difference with the viewpoint of the Jews. Whereas they believe that the Messiah will come to the Jews, we believe that the Jews will come to the Messiah. That is how Owen summarizes the differing viewpoints. Nonetheless, he immediately goes on to express a deep longing. It is a longing that should function as a mirror for us. "Who can tell whether this difference will shortly be settled by His appearance to them, thus calling them to faith and obedience!" □

(To be continued)



Church Life

Elements of the Worship Service (1)

Rev. J. de Kok, Sint Annaland, the Netherlands

(Translated from the April 22, 2021 issue of *De Saambinder*)

(Dear readers, this series was written during the COVID outbreak which is the reason you will read herein of certain restrictions that were still in place. —Ed.)

Introduction

Still, we can hardly go up to God's house as a congregation. We look forward to being able to do so again. Meanwhile, we ask ourselves the question: What happens during the worship service? In eight installments we will ponder this with a heartfelt anticipation of whether the God of all grace will again open doors.

Diligent Frequenting

It has become Sunday. The church doors are opened. Masked ushers are ready to receive churchgoers and seat them. How different this is from more than a year ago. Then people would crowd in to take their seats; they had to search for a seat but now...? Does this hurt you, too?

Time for the church service: three scenarios

It has become Sunday. Mother gets out of bed first. A sumptuous breakfast is prepared. Fifteen minutes before the church service begins, she calls her husband and children, who are still dozing in bed. Quickly they slip on some clothes and take their seats at the table. The laptop is flipped open; the congregation's website is found. Just a little too late...

they are already singing. While enjoying the carefully prepared breakfast, the sermon sounds like background music. No, they do not shop on Sunday. They faithfully listen in with their own congregation even if it is a reading service.

It has become Sunday. The family gets out of bed on time. Together they eat breakfast. God's Word has been opened. It is time for the church service. "Who are we watching today?" asks one of the children. Father, engrossed in *De Saambinder*, looks up. He has the church periodical open at the list of church services. Yes, who shall they look at? Too bad, in precisely that congregation is the minister he likes so much, but he knows you need a code to watch the services in that congregation. And that minister, where is he? Oh, nice. He is home. Then they will watch him. No, they are not listening to the reading service in their own congregation. They would have if their consistory had installed a camera. Yes, "the lively preaching" of the Word appeals much more to the children.

It has become Sunday. Early on, a child of the Lord gets out of bed. How eagerly she would have gone to God's house today. Oh true, she can listen in at home, and it is a blessing that she is able to, but she so much misses the joy of going up to God's house. She knows that the Lord is not bound by a time and a place; He can also give a blessing at home. Still...she bends her knees. She begs God for an undeserved blessing. She prays for the coming of God's Spirit in the proclamation of the Word. She also honestly lays before the Lord that she cannot go up.

Lord's Day 38

Reader(s), I purposely presented three scenarios although a bit black and white. May I ask: in which of these persons outlined is your life marked most? How is it in your personal life with diligently (zealously) frequenting the church of God (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 38)? The diligent frequenting of God's church is something that is getting out of the habit. Yet, even though you cannot always attend church, there may be something of the "diligent frequenting." I read in Psalm 122, the psalm in which the tribes of Israel prepare themselves to go up to the temple to give thanks unto the name of the LORD (verse 4), in which the cry

sounds: "Let us go into the house of the LORD. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem!"

This psalm speaks of the joyful going into God's house.

Note: If you read this psalm carefully, you will see that David says in verse 1, "I was glad when they said unto me..." May this be to our comfort in these times when we so often cannot go up to God's house. We should listen more to those who say to us that they are going to God's house. Where can you find these people? You find them in God's Word. You find them in the writings of our forefathers. How richly they sometimes spoke of the joy they found in the service of the Lord, and of what did that joy consist? The center of that joy was Christ Himself, He who had to go outside the camp to bear reproaches.

Being deprived

Church of the Lord, are we not experiencing this in our time? Going outside the camp with Christ to bear His reproach? Then we may often be deprived of a going up joyfully, but let us then be glad with those who say to us, "Let us go into the house of the LORD."

(To be continued)

How is it in your personal life with diligently (zealously) frequenting the church of God (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 38)?



Reflections

Evening Twilight (18)

Rev. P. Blok (1920-2019)

(Translated from the book *Avondschemering* [Evening Twilight])

The Judgment Accepted

“A Psalm of David, Maschil. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered” (Psalm 32:1).

There was a reflection after a meeting in the inner room which was a result of a conversation about the state of man—how the fallen state is experienced and how man is restored to his original state. “Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.”

“But God is the judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another.”

A judgment that is not issued by a judge holds no validity. A sentence cannot be pronounced if there is no defendant.

Without the glory of the miracle of Creation, the crown jewel—man—would not exist. The miracle of Creation has its origin in a perfect creation decree. “And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.” The purpose of Creation is clear. “And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”

In Lord’s Day 3 of the Heidelberg Catechism (or Method of Instruction in the Christian Religion as the Same is Taught in the Reformed Churches and Schools in Holland and in America), the glory of Creation is taught:

“Did God then create man so wicked and perverse?

By no means; but God created man good, and after His own image, in true righteousness and holiness, that he might rightly know God his Creator, heartily love Him and live with Him in eternal happiness to glorify and praise Him.”

The Fall and its consequences are described in Holy Scripture. Fallen man cannot and will not accept this. He sets himself a life goal and thereby gives clear evidence of his life as being alienated from God. Lacking true knowledge of God his Creator, he seeks refuge in self-devised idols and the idolatry associated with it. We listen to the confession of true, Christian doctrine with the words of the Canons of Dordt: “But revolting from God by the instigation of the devil, and by his free will, he deprived himself of these excellent gifts; and on the contrary entailed on himself blindness of mind, horrible darkness, vanity and perverseness of judgment, became wicked, rebellious, and obdurate in heart and will, and impure in all his affections.”

Therefore, the knowledge of our state and of our being lost is necessary.

“Are we then so corrupt that we are wholly incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all wickedness?

Indeed, we are, except we are regenerated by the Spirit of God.”

The renewal of man is a sovereign act of God.

There is a clear distinction between a general conviction and a saving conviction.

How far does conviction go? It gives knowledge of sin. “And the eyes of them both were opened.” Sin, shame, guilt, and disgrace were experienced. “They knew that they were naked” which meant owning that they cannot exist before God, making their own covering before God, experiencing the breach made between God and their soul, hiding themselves from God. “What are the consequences of the Fall? The loss of God’s image, sensibility of nakedness, horror of conscience, expulsion out of Paradise, death itself” (Question book, A. Hellenbroek).

With this experience, the new life is not acquired. Man, in maintaining self, remains without God in the world. Saving conviction is the particular work of the Holy Spirit. The glory of God and His virtues reveal to fallen man God’s righteousness, holiness, omniscience, and omnipresence. God’s voice penetrates the heart with majesty. Before such majesty, man has no existence. God calls him out of his self-chosen covering. He must appear before God. He is made a debtor and accepts that he is worthy of punishment. “I did eat.”

“For before the sinner’s mind inclines to repentance, it must first be spurred on by the thought of divine judgment. Once the thought has penetrated deeply into the sinner that God will one day sit on the judgment seat to hold him accountable for all that he has said and done, it will leave the unhappy man no peace and will not give him a moment’s opportunity to catch his breath but will continually drive him to turn his thoughts to some other way of organizing his life, in order to be able to appear before that judgment seat without fear” (Quote from John Calvin, here translated from Dutch).

Since conversion begins with abhorring and hating sin, Paul makes the sorrow that complies with God a cause of repentance. He calls this sorrow “a godly sorrow” because we then not only shudder at the punishment but hate and detest sin, because we recognize that we thereby incur God’s displeasure. The gift of grace is necessary. The sufficiency of Christ’s merits was clearly established by the National Synod in Dordrecht. “God is not only supremely merciful, but also supremely just. And His justice requires (as He hath revealed Himself in His Word), that our sins committed against His infinite majesty should be punished, not only

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Questions & Answers

Questions from Our Readers

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

When you approach someone from outside church, which doctrinal subject should we speak about so that they may understand and develop an interest, hopefully?

This question is asked more often and shows how especially our young people sometimes struggle where to start and what to bring up when it comes to a religious conversation with peers or co-workers who want to know who we are and what we believe. Here are some thoughts that come to mind:

1. All doctrine is precious. So, we should not—as it were—pick and choose our favorite subject or simply dwell on what seems most appealing to us personally. Having said this, some wisdom and discretion as to which subject to talk about is advised. To give an extreme example: do not begin with the subject of explaining the difference between supralapsarianism and infralapsarianism...
2. Always speak *the language of Scripture* when explaining a doctrinal point. Use the Bible to point the matter out, if possible, with the examples of a history, miracle, or parable. Do not assume that the person is also familiar with the example. Remember, the Word is the doctrine and the seed, not our well-worded explanation. When we lived in Bolivia, I remember that I would sometimes say: “like Paul says in Romans...” Well, I soon had to learn that no one knew what Paul said in Romans, so even that had to be simplified... It is easy to end up speaking over the head of a person rather than speaking to the person with simple words.
3. If circumstances permit, study the subject a bit beforehand and come prepared. We did not receive our doctrinal standards without great purpose. Take time and do not approach a conversation with a multitude of words which only betray lack of knowledge or nervousness. Ask your minister or an elder, teacher or catechism instructor for advice if needed. They may be able to point you to a specific and trusted resource.
4. Seek for *plain truths* to explain what we believe. It simply may not be wise or conducive to a profitable understanding to begin with a lengthy outline of the entire “Ordo Salutis,” the order of salvation. The Lord Jesus did not do that either in dealing with the woman at the well in John 4. He simply spoke about **water**. Neither did He begin by saying: “Go, call thy husband.” No, seek for simple biblical concepts such as man’s deepest needs, troubles, questions...from where do they come? Why are they there? From where must any true comfort come? What does it entail? Recently, I read a statement that was made at the occasion of a retirement gathering of one of our evangelists in the Netherlands. “Evangelizing is nothing else than one beggar saying to another beggar where the bread can be found.”
5. If the conversation leads inadvertently to specific difficult doctrinal discussions such as one about predestination, the nature of atonement, (presumptive) regeneration, or other matters which may be controversial, be careful not to begin by “criticizing” others’ beliefs. Simply state why we believe what we believe. We need not prove the Bible. The Bible proves itself. For this the Lord gave a weapon, namely a sword, and the only weapon of attack listed in the armor of God in Ephesians 6: the Word of God. “*That therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak*” (Ephesians 6:20b).
6. In matters when confronted with challenging questions or accusatory statements (as easily happens) seek to always speak well of the Lord and not to answer in the spirit of “I don’t know it either” or give the impression that we are ashamed of what we believe and confess.
7. Finally, there are many matters which do not lend themselves to an intellectual approach or explanation. Not all questions in our Heidelberg Catechism ask: “what dost thou *understand* by...” No, several questions are: “what *believest* thou...” It is not our task or calling to have an explanation for everything. When Luther was asked about matters he did not understand, he would take off the hat or cap he wore (as a sign of reverence) and continue (as a man continues on in a walk) ... If the Lord gives an opportunity, sow the seed and cast thy bread upon the water. The Lord will take care of His own cause, by His precious Word which is the seed. ■

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

Great grace and small gifts are better than great gifts and no grace. —John Bunyan



Current Events

Bangladesh Persecution

After the ouster of the Bangladesh Prime Minister in August 2024, Christians were repeatedly targeted by extremist groups, creating a nationwide wave of violence that forced many believers into hiding. It is reported that over the last few months, as more Christians have come out of hiding, there has been a resurgence in targeted attacks. The most severely affected Christians are those who converted from Islam or tribal beliefs. Experts say that believers are still vulnerable to attacks because there have been no consequences for those sending threats or carrying out attacks. Many Christians who have suffered attacks have been refused legal assistance from local authorities. The outcome of the upcoming elections scheduled between December 2025 and June 2026 could affect believers significantly. Radical Muslim leaders could continue to portray Christians as enemies and promote the idea of establishing a 100% Islamic state. "If Islamic religious-based political parties assume power," an Open Doors partner said, "it is thought that the situation is likely to deteriorate. Conversely, if [more open] political parties take the reins, there is a possibility of improvement, although nothing is certain." He adds, "We urge you to pray faithfully for the safety of persecuted Christians in Bangladesh. We seek an end to the attacks on Christians and to stop any attempt to amend the constitution in a way that would negatively impact the rights of religious minority groups."

—OpenDoorsUS.org

Christian Activists at Chinese Embassy in Ireland

In May, an Ireland senator presented a petition to the Chinese Embassy in Ireland, calling for an end to the repression of Christians in China and for the release of Chinese pastors. The Chinese Embassy did not admit the senator to present the petition in person, nor did it respond to the gate intercom, so the petition was placed in the Embassy letterbox. The petition presentation was the culmination of a vigil by supporters outside the Embassy. Participants stood outside the Embassy wall holding placards bearing the name, photograph, and prison sentence details of twenty-four of the most prominent Christian prisoners in China. The senator addressed the participants, saying: "Today I stand in solidarity, not in silence. I am deeply concerned about the brutal reality facing our Christian brothers and sisters in China. The censorship of the Bible, closure of churches, and imprisonment of pastors is not religious policy, it is repression..." The petition was signed by over five thousand people.

—ChurchInChains.ie

No Improvement in Nigeria

At least six people were brutally killed and several others injured in a recent attack on the predominantly Christian communities in Plateau state, Nigeria. The attackers, believed to be part of a suspected Fulani militant network, descended on the villages under the cover of darkness, catching residents off guard and leaving devastation in their wake. The chairman of the county described the incident as a heartbreaking tragedy and condemned the killings. He praised the courage of local vigilantes and security personnel while calling for stronger, proactive measures to prevent further violence. He said: "The recent resurgence of violence in our communities is a painful setback... This is a time we are working hard to stabilize and rebuild. We must not allow these attacks to destroy our unity." This tragic incident comes amid a troubling

trend. In March and April of 2025, coordinated attacks across areas in the state claimed the lives of more than 150 Christians, including women and children. Human rights groups and international observers have long warned of a slow-burning genocide against Nigeria's Christian farming communities. Some suspect Fulani Ethnic Militia (FEM) fighters are regrouping and possibly planning coordinated offensives across the state. This latest killing included a baby and is seen as a chilling indicator of what may lie ahead.

—Persecution.org

Excerpts from the National Prayer Breakfast

President Trump made a speech at the annual national Prayer Breakfast. The following are some encouraging remarks from that speech. *"From the earliest days of our republic, faith in God has always been the ultimate source of the strength that beats in the hearts of our nation. We have to bring religion back. We have to bring it back much stronger. It's one of the biggest problems that we've had over the last fairly long period of time. We have to bring it back. Thomas Jefferson himself once attended Sunday services held in the old House Chamber on the very ground where I stand today, so there could be nothing more beautiful than for us to gather in this majestic place and reaffirm that America is and will always be 'one nation under God.' At every stage of the American story, our country has drawn hope and courage and inspiration from our trust in the Almighty..."* The president spoke further about issues in America and about the parties working together. He ended the speech by saying: *"I really believe you can't be happy without religion, without that belief. I really believe it. I just don't see how you can be. So, let's bring religion back. Let's bring God back into our lives."*

—WhiteHouse.gov

Pastor Kidnapped Enabled to Return

A thirty-four-year-old Baptist pastor and missionary working in South Africa was kidnapped by several armed, masked men who broke into his church on the evening of April 10, took cellphones from parishioners, and drove away with the pastor in his own truck. The pastor, who comes from Tennessee, feared they might kidnap his wife, too. One of the kidnappers told him, "So I know who you are. I know you're American. I know you have money, and we're going to kidnap you, and we're going to get five million Rand" (about \$260,000). Two men were with him the entire time, one would say evil things to him, but the other offered him food. After he was rescued, the pastor said: "I was able to tell them about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ... giving them the gospel. They had never heard that message before. The one individual was very interested... at least I had the opportunity to do that." The pastor was rescued by police, but the police were surprised they had found him. He later discovered that the police received an unrelated tip about a suspicious vehicle, and they headed to a different location. They took a wrong turn and while attempting to turn around ended up in the driveway of the house where the pastor was being held captive. It was then that the kidnapping suspects began firing at the police. "It was the sovereign hand of God. It was a miracle. It was a complete miracle," the pastor said. His children were horrified because of the kidnapping, but his wife said: "They got to see that faith isn't just something that mom and dad talk about. They got to experience it, because they saw God work a miracle in their own lives. They prayed, and God answered their prayer."

—FoxNews.com



Timothy FOR THE YOUNG

A Boy from Stavenisse (1)

C. Visser-Sluis

(Reprinted with permission from the book, *Leen Potappel, A Boy from Stavenisse*)

Forward

Boys and Girls,

This story begins in the spring of 1886. The boy, Leen Potappel, lived in Stavenisse until his death. He wrote many letters, especially while he was a soldier. He sometimes wrote four letters a month to his father, brother, and two sisters. He also regularly wrote to the friends he had among God's people in and around Stavenisse to tell them how good the Lord was for him and how much he loved Him. Thereby we come to know him as someone who lived close to the Lord. In this respect we can learn much from him, but these letters would be too difficult for you.

Everything that you read in this book has really happened. However, to make the story simple, you will also read of things that could have happened in this way. If you would like to know how the Lord began working in the life of Leen, then you should read this book.

Perhaps you will become somewhat jealous of his happiness so that you will also begin calling upon the Lord. The Lord does not change. He is the same God as in 1886 and also wants children to come to Him.

This story is not written for you because Leen was such a wonderful or special boy. When Leen had grown up, he once said, "There are no special people, but there is special grace."

The Lord doesn't convert a single sinner in the same way. Thus, it doesn't have to go the same way with you as it did with Leen. As long as you end up at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ as a poor lost sinner...

The clockmaker

Swift clogs clatter over the street of shiny paving stones. A little four-year-old boy runs over the Achterweg. A reed basket filled with vegetables dangles on one arm. He is bringing it to his grandmother.

"Careful, Leen," his mother calls after him. She looks over the lower part of the door and waves to him.

Leen waves back. Of course, he will be careful. He loves going to Grandma. He is allowed to go to her every morning. He is standing on top of the dike in a flash.

When his mother tells him to be careful, she means that he must not break the waffles. She has put them on top of the vegetables. Maybe Grandma will break a piece off for him. He didn't get any from his mother.

"For Saturday," she said abruptly, and then he had not dared to beg anymore.

It is quiet on the street. There are no children playing. They are all at school. Leen doesn't know if it is nice at school. He doesn't have any older brothers or sisters that can tell him. He walks by sometimes, but the doors are always closed. The children are not allowed to come out anymore. What do they think of that?

It is probably nicer to go to Grandma and Grandpa. Grandma is a dear, and Grandpa is, too, but he grumbles, and grumbling makes you sad.

He softly swings the reed basket to and fro with every step. Maybe a waffle will fall out of it. He can't do anything about that. You can't eat a waffle that falls on the ground. At least, grown-ups don't, but children will eat them, of course. Leen holds the basket a little slanted. The vegetables stay in; the paper bag of waffles shifts closer and closer to the edge. Then the little bag flips out of the basket. Leen looks at it. The brown paper contrasts with the lightcolored sand along the road. What will mother say? Quick, the bag has to go back into the basket. There is a small corner of the golden yellow waffle, a delicious corner of pastry. It is already in his mouth before he realizes it. He closes the little bag and puts it into the basket. Leen chews on the soft piece. It is delicious.

Grandma has company. On the sidewalk in front of the door stands a pair of clogs. Leen puts his one clog beside them and suddenly has to laugh about the difference. It is a funny sight. He takes off his other clog, too.

"You can wait for me beside your big boss," he says.

Curiously, he stumbles inside through the laundry room. He breathes in the aroma of a pipe. It is different from Grandpa's pipe. Pipes never smell the same. He pushes the door open a crack and peeks inside. They are not sitting in the kitchen but in the front room! He sneaks farther, dragging the basket behind him. Grandma and a man are sitting at the round table with the soft red cloth. Leen immediately sees that it is the clockmaker. Grandma didn't hear him coming in, but she does see his blond head of hair come around the corner. "Come in, my boy, just come and sit with us a while," she says. She pulls a chair close to hers and softly draws him against her. He thinks that is nice. Grandma is so big and nice and soft. She puts her arm around him. The clockmaker looks at him and winks. Then the two of them continue their conversation.

Leen understands. They are talking about the Lord. With a reverent voice, the clockmaker tells Grandma how good the Lord is to all that fear and love Him. "If you know the Lord, you are happy, but if you do not know Him, you are unhappy. Then you will go eternally lost, but those that have come to know Him during their life may come to Him in heaven later on." They talk about that difference.

Leen thinks the clockmaker knows a lot about it. He himself only understands a little of it, but he does understand the most important part; it is necessary to know the Lord. He suddenly thinks

about the fallen waffles again and about the little piece he had secretly eaten.

"The Lord doesn't wink at sin," he hears the man sitting across from him at the table saying: "The Lord is righteous."

Leen looks at him in fright. He knows for sure that the Lord also knows him and knows that Leen has a sinful heart, does wicked things, and that he doesn't think about the Lord.

The two continue talking.

Leen doesn't hear it anymore. Something starts burning within him. He feels as if the Lord is looking at him very severely because he is unconverted. He presses himself even tighter against Grandma's arm.

The clockmaker stands up to go home. Grandma walks along to the door. When she returns, she suddenly sees Leen's ashen face. She strokes his hair and thinks that he was put to bed too late yesterday. "My, my," she sighs, "that man is so happy. Do you know, Leen, my boy, do you know that this man is happy? The Lord has forgiven all his sins, just as if he has never done them. If he dies now, Leen, do you know where he will go forever? Exactly, then he will go to heaven, to the Lord. That will be quite something, for then he will never have to sin anymore; there is no pain and no sorrow. There, you are always with the Lord." Tears run down her cheeks, and her voice trembles.

Leen feels like comfortably wrapping his arms around her to console her. "I surely believe that you will come there, also. You love the Lord, too, don't you?" He can't say anything. It seems as if his tongue is glued tight, and what about him? He is without a new heart. How will it be with him?

(To be continued)



Bible Stories for Little Ones

Solomon Builds the Temple

(Based on 1 Kings 5-9; 2 Chronicles 2-8)

One day Solomon had visitors. They had been sent from his friend, King Hiram, to give good wishes to Solomon as the new king.

Hiram was the king of Tyre, one of the very few places that did not cause Israel any trouble. Tyre was right by the sea and did a lot of trading and shipping. King Hiram had been a good friend of David. In fact,

he had even sent David supplies for his palace. Now he was glad to see such a wonderful person, Solomon, as the new king. Solomon was happy to get Hiram's friendly message.

Solomon had been thinking of something. For four hundred years the children of Israel had only a tent in which the ark of God could dwell. David had wanted

to build a temple, but God would not allow him to do so because David had been in so many battles. However, God promised that Solomon was to build it since he was not a man of war. Now this was a good time to do the work because there was no fighting either inside his country or with Israel's neighbors.

So, Solomon sent a message back with Hiram's men, saying, "I am hoping to build a temple for God, as my father David wanted to do. Could you send some men to Lebanon to cut down some trees for us? Everyone knows how well your people can cut trees."

King Hiram was very happy to get Solomon's message. He told Solomon, "I will send you the timber from cedar or firs as you wish! I will ship them by sea down to whatever place you choose." In exchange, Hiram had a request—to be repaid with food, and that is what Solomon did. He sent all kinds of oil, corn, and wheat of which Israel grew so much.

Tyre was near the forests of Lebanon, which were very famous for their cedar trees. Solomon asked for cedar because he wanted only the best for God's house. The common people of Israel had houses built with stone or plaster, and most had only one room, but the house of God was going to be very, very special. It would use cedar wood, expensive white limestone, and bronze, and everything would be covered with gold.

God told Solomon how He wanted the temple built. For seven years Solomon's men worked and worked on it, and then it was finished. What a beautiful temple! It was as grand as a palace! Really, was it not a palace? It was a palace for the King of the whole earth. It had to be the most beautiful place possible.

King Solomon gathered the important men from each of the tribes of Israel to celebrate the bringing of the ark to the new temple. The priests carried the ark into the Holy of Holies. When they came out, a bright, glorious cloud filled the temple! The light was so powerful, so bright, that the priests had to stop what they were doing. This cloud was a sign of the holy glory of the Lord, and it showed that He was pleased with what was happening.

Then Solomon blessed the people and spoke. "O Lord God of Israel," he said, "there is no God like unto Thee. Therefore, please keep the promise that Thou gavest to my father David, that there would always be a God-fearing king over Israel. O, to think that the God of the whole heaven and earth would dwell in this small house made by men!"

Then Solomon prayed, "O God, if there ever is a time when there

is no rain, or there is no food, or there is a pestilence, or caterpillars on the crops, or if there are enemies at war with this people—if anything like that ever happens, and Thy people lift their hands and pray for help to Thee, please hear from heaven and answer their prayer."

When Solomon was finished praying, suddenly fire came down from heaven and burned up the offering he had made. The glory of the Lord filled the house once again. This meant that God accepted what Solomon had said.

The people were afraid when they saw that God was really with them, and they bowed to the ground in fear. Then Solomon and all the people offered many sacrifices to the Lord. Solomon also gave the people a great feast that lasted a whole week. This was a time of great joy and happiness.

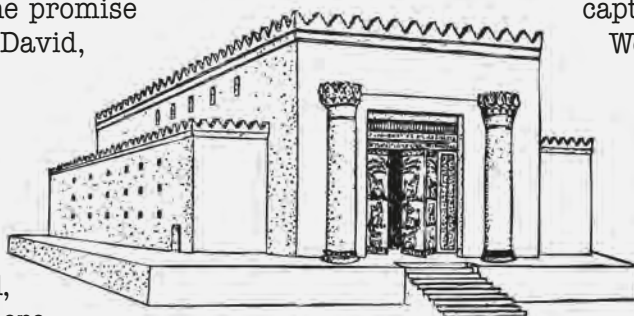
After the temple had been built, one night God spoke to Solomon. He told him that He had heard his prayer and was pleased to live in the house they had made for Him. Then He spoke some words we should never forget: "If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; THEN will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

Do we ever think of that? We pray to God to ask for this or for that, but do we ever realize that we are filthy and wretched in God's sight and that we must turn from our wicked ways before He will want to hear us?

Then God said something that later Solomon and the children of Israel forgot. God told Solomon that if they ever turned away from God and followed other gods, then He would turn away from His people. Their temple would be destroyed, and other nations would go by and laugh at the Israelites because of what had happened to them.

God always does what He says. Four hundred years later, what God had warned about really came to pass. The people of Israel forgot their God and all that He had done for them, and God let their enemies come and conquer them. The enemies destroyed their beautiful temple and carried the people away captive to Assyria and Babylon.

We must learn to "humble ourselves and pray, and seek His face, and turn from our wicked ways." We can only do that by God's grace, through Jesus Christ, and by the work of the Holy Spirit.



Drawing of Solomon's Temple



Bible Quiz

Drought

Dear Boys and Girls,

In addition to my cow, goat, and chickens, I have two geese. They have different personalities, different sounds, but they both make a lot of noise. As soon as they see me, they begin to “talk.” It is as if they are saying, “I know you. Are you bringing us food?” One of the two begs me for a good long petting session as soon as I am close by. When they see others walk by the fence—those that in their mind do not belong here—they scream and honk and sometimes even attack the fence. All in all, they are not quiet creatures when anyone is in sight.

However, one day as I was in the kitchen, the sound of the geese suddenly made me stop what I was doing and go look at them from the window. Why were the geese “talking?” They had been quiet a moment ago. Was someone here? Did they see danger? They were not screeching, nor did they sound angry or upset. Something was different about the way they were chattering. I looked. Both geese were looking up at the sky, then at each other, and they seemed to be having a conversation all of their own. It was a happy sound; their gentle but busy little honks and squeaks certainly meant something, but we humans could not understand them.

Then I saw it. A raindrop splashed against the window. A few seconds later, another one followed. The geese were excited...It had not rained in two whole months. We had been wondering if it would ever rain again. Everything was bone dry, forest fires raged, and everyone was wishing desperately for a good rainfall. No rain...for two months...but now....The geese had noticed it first, and they were very excited. They normally do not react to rain other than to stand in it unconcerned and allow themselves to get wet, but that day, they were so happy with those first drops of rain! The rain did not last long, and it remained just a scattered shower, but it was SOMETHING...

Rain drops! How thankful we felt...Perhaps the drought would be over now...Do you know what a drought is, boys and girls? That is when there is no rain, and plants die, crops do not grow, water reservoirs become empty, and the government makes rules so that people do not use too much water around

their homes. In Bible times, there were also times of drought. Sometimes rain was withheld for years! Cattle died, and the food did not grow in the fields. In this quiz, we will learn about some of those times.

When it has not rained for a long time, we sometimes suddenly begin to realize a few things. Rain usually comes regularly, and when it does, we take it for granted. We do not stop to think about the fact that each raindrop is a blessing. All things come from Him—every rain cloud, torrential downpour, gentle shower, damp mist, and smallest rain drop. Suddenly, when all this moisture stops, and when the vegetation becomes dry, we begin to realize that God alone can GIVE the rain. It is not automatic. God can give rain, and He can also withhold it.

When we look at both rain and drought mentioned in the Bible, two more things come to mind. One is that we should be thankful for the smallest mercies. The geese noticed those first rain drops, and so did we, but if it had rained a few days before this, would anyone even have noticed? Would anyone have been thankful? Does anyone think, “God does not deal with us according to our sins...”?

When reading the biblical histories about drought, we should also realize that sin will be punished. The Lord often has patience for a very long time and grants blessings and mercies—such as rain—which we do not deserve. However, there comes a time when the Lord’s patience and longsuffering come to an end. Then He will punish sin. Perhaps this is with a drought in nature, where rain is withheld, or perhaps it is something else that is taken from us. It can also be that the Lord gives a spiritual drought where the rain of God’s Word dries up, and He no longer speaks to us through the preaching and teaching as He did before. How afraid we should be of this! Pray often, that the Lord will help you to listen in church. Ask Him if He will rain with His Word and Spirit into your heart.

When I was in kindergarten, one of our favorite songs to sing was worded like this:

*Lord, I hear of showers of blessing
Thou art scattering, full and free;
Showers, the thirsty land refreshing,
Let some drops now fall on me.*

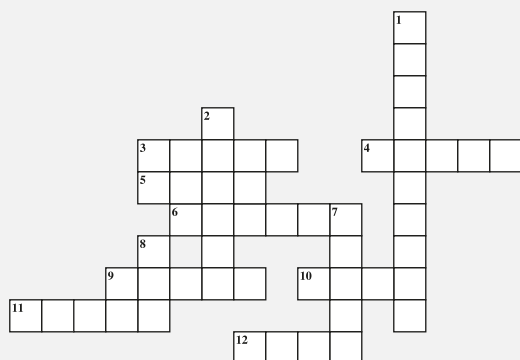
*Even me, even me,
Let some drops now fall on me.*

*Pass me not, O gracious Lord,
Sinful though my heart may be;
Thou might'st curse me, but the rather
Let Thy mercy light on me.
Even me, even me,
Let Thy mercy light on me.*

This would be a good prayer to pray for each one of us, morning and evening.

* * * * *

Read Jeremiah 14:1-7. Then complete the crossword.



Across

3. How did the ground look?
4. Who was mourning because of the dearth?
5. Where did the little ones find no water?
6. What is another word for drought?
9. The hind had to leave her calf behind because there was no _____.
10. Jeremiah asks if the Lord will give rain for His _____'s sake.
11. How did the vessels return from the water pits?
12. When the wild asses stood on high rocks, their _____ failed, for lack of grass.

Down

1. Jeremiah recognizes the drought as a punishment for the _____ that testify against them.
2. Where did the nobles send their little ones?
7. How did the plowmen react to the lack of water? They covered their _____.
8. What went up from Jerusalem?

For the Older Children

13. Find the word "drought" in the following passages:

- a. Genesis 31:_____
- b. Deuteronomy 8:_____
- c. Job 24:_____
- d. Psalm 32:_____
- e. Isaiah 58:_____

14. What is the wilderness called in Hosea 13?

15. "Neither said they, Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man _____ through, and where no man dwelt?" (Jeremiah 2)

16. "For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be _____; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." (Jeremiah 17)

17. "A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their _____" (Jeremiah 50).

18. "And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the _____ bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands" (Haggai 1).

19. "If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send _____ among my people" (2 Chronicles 7).

20. What causes the heaven to be shut up?

- a. Deuteronomy 11:17: The Lord's _____.
- b. 1 Kings 8:35/2 Chronicles 6:26: They have _____.

For the Younger Children

Fill these answers into the correct blanks (1 Kings 17):

the brook Cherith dew or rain meal every day

21. Ahab's punishment was that there would be no _____.

22. When there was a drought, God took care of Elijah by sending him to _____.

23. When the brook dried up, God took care of Elijah by sending him on to a widow and her son where there was just enough _____.

Please send your answers to the address shown below:

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

Answers to May's "New Life" quiz:

1. Light Psalm 112:4
2. Shadow Isaiah 9:2
3. Blind Isaiah 42:16
4. Peace Luke 1:79
5. Darkness John 12:46
6. Night 1 Thessalonians 5:5
7. People 1 Peter 2:9
8. Message 1 John 1:5
9. Spirit Ezekiel 36:26
10. Masters Matthew 6:24
11. Vain Psalm 119:113
12. Jesus John 17:3
13. Perish John 3:15
14. Lord John 6:68
15. Hand John 10:28
16. World John 12:25
17. Power John 17:2
18. Life John 17:3
19. Glad Acts 13:48
20. Life
21. Eternal life
22. Hope
23. 1 John 2:25
24. 1 John 5:11
25. 1 John 5:13
26. Jude 1:21b

Answers to previous quizzes were received in April from:

Clay Bakker
Paige Bakker
Josina Baum
GaryJon Blom (4)
Jairus Blom (4)
Joseph Blom (4)
Lydia Blom
Martena Blom (4)
Willem Blom (4)
Carly Brouwer (2)
Thomas Brouwer (2)
Janae DeKorne
Lynnette DeKorne
Madeline DeKorne
Melanie DeKorne
Nathaniel DeKorne

Eva den Bok
Hudson den Bok
Zoey den Bok
Cody Driesen (2)
Ethan Driesen (2)
Jordan Driesse
Kailyn Driesse
Lindsey Driesse
Allison Ekema
Kaylynn Ekema
Bereket Engelsma
Samantha Grishich
Sienna Klop
Anthony Knibbe
Carissa Mans

Travis Mans
Abe Mol
Teddy Mol
Madeline Mol
Zachary Mol
Andrew Murphy
John Murphy
Blake Pannekoek
Cassadee Pannekoek
Lauren Pannekoek
Andrew Remijn
Daniel Remijn
Lauren Remijn
Kenzie Romeyn
Lynee Ruissen
Lydia Ruissen
Brogan Spaans
Jacob Spaans
Tessa Spaans
Almonzo Timmer
Hunter Timmer
Kadin Timmer
Laurencia Timmer
Sierra Timmer
Sofia Timmer
Alana Van Manen
Kaiven Van Middendorp
Konner Van Middendorp
Caleb Vogelaar
Matthew Vogelaar
Victoria Vossebelt
Keegan Weeda
Jayden Weeda
Nathan Wesdyk
Nathan Wesdyk (3)
No Name (2)



The Duty of Christian Children

"Know thou the God of thy father" (1 Chronicles 28:9).
"My father's God, and I will exalt Him" (Exodus 15:2).

Every parent who has the knowledge of God desires that his or her children would obtain that knowledge too. You are here called upon by the Word of God to seek to know your father's God. You know what God your father worships, but you do not know Him. You are here commanded to come to know God for yourself. It is not enough to believe that your father knew God and that God did many things for him. "Acquaint now thyself with Him and be at peace." This knowledge is life eternal.

How are you to obtain this knowledge? See how Solomon came to know Him. Solomon continued to worship in the way that his father had taught him to worship, and it was while thus engaged, that God appeared to him and spoke to him. The Holy Spirit of God uses the written and spoken Word of God to speak to us, and you are to use

these means to find the God of your father. It is a big thing to claim to know God. Beware of easy ways to the obtaining of this knowledge. There are many religious teachers who will make it very easy for you to come to the knowledge of God, but you are to wait for the Spirit of God to reveal Him unto you. Conversion is God's work. When I say you are to wait for God, I do not mean that you are to sit back and do nothing, but what I mean is that you are to wait at the Word and prayer until you know that God is speaking to your soul. God makes Himself known in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit alone can show this Person to the soul. "Know thou the God of thy father," and not God as you or someone else imagines Him to be. And when you come to that knowledge, seek to say with Moses, "My father's God, and I will exalt Him."

—Rev. A.E.W. MacDonald, Young People's Magazine

with temporal, but with eternal punishment both in body and soul; which we cannot escape unless satisfaction be made to the justice of God." They argued that against the sentiments of the Remonstrants.

The soul, accepting judgment and knowing itself worthy of punishment before God, is taught that God will have His justice satisfied. Room for the Mediator is made in the heart through the labor of the Holy Spirit. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

(To be continued)

*While I kept guilty silence
My strength was spent with grief,
Thy hand was heavy on me,
My soul found no relief;
But when I owned my trespass,
My sin hid not from Thee,
When I confessed transgression,
Then Thou forgavest me.*

—Psalter 83:2 □

Do We Know Our Soul's Leprosy?

*"And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.
And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean.
And immediately his leprosy was cleansed"* (Matthew 8:2&3).

Beloved, the important question for all of us on our journey to the great eternity is whether we have learned to know our soul's leprosy. That is necessary in order to be able to be cleansed. By nature, in our covenant head Adam, we are unclean in the eyes of the Lord. We all are as an unclean thing and our iniquities have taken us away. Isaiah says that we are full of bruises and putrifying sores that have not been closed neither bound up. Yet, the worst of it is that we are so little concerned about it. We are banished from the communion of God, without realizing what our end shall be, that one day, in our uncleanness, we cannot stand before a holy and righteous God. May the Lord acquaint us with our inability but also with our unwillingness.

It is the work of Jesus not only to cleanse unclean ones but also to help and save impotent and unwilling ones. There is no sin too great for Him and no sinner too unclean who could not be helped and cleansed from his leprosy. We have no right to it. The Lord is righteous if He leaves us in the state in which we have deliberately and voluntarily brought ourselves, but as long as it is still the time of grace, it is yet possible for the most miserable. The Lord bless His Word to that end, that we may have need of Him to be cleansed of our leprosy. Oh, cry and supplicate unto the Lord for opened eyes to perceive your uncleanness before it is too late. He still calls, "Repent ye, repent ye." Surely, it cannot be expressed what it will be if we must miss that, but it is also inexpressible what it is, if through discovering grace, we receive a loathing of ourselves. He has come for such, to seek and to save them. For such lepers a fountain is opened for all their uncleanness. Christ is the blood fountain for those who are completely leprous and unclean.

My unconverted fellowtravelers, the Lord discover this fountain unto you and teach you to flee unto Him to be cleansed. Of ourselves it is a fruitless work; then it is a lost case. By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in God's sight. From our side all is insufficient, notwithstanding the great privilege that we may yet live under the truth. If it shall be well with us, then the wonder must take place that we, as this leper, come at the feet of Jesus with the prayer, "If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." For such it will exceed expectation. The word of Christ was, "I will, be thou clean." There would be no happier hour in your life than that moment. May the Lord bring you there and glorify His grace.

—Rev. M. Heerschap

Anniversary and other announcements will be placed upon request. A donation for their placement would be appreciated. Please follow directions for check payment, shown in gray area at bottom of inside front cover. For consistency, copy size is limited. Send requests to James Okken, managing editor (see contact information at bottom of inside front cover.) Requests should be made **by the first of the month prior to the month of publication.**

■ The Banner of Truth in Audio Format

Monthly copies of the articles 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.

News & Announcements

■ Ministerial Calls

Extended:

To Rev. H.A. van Zetten of Nieuw-Beijerland, the Netherlands, by the congregation of Grand Rapids—Covell Avenue, Michigan.

To Rev. P.C. Vlot of Krabbendijke, the Netherlands, by the congregation of Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Declined:

By Rev. H. Hofman of Grand Rapids—Beckwith, Michigan, to the congregation of Chilliwack, British Columbia.

By Rev. P.C. Vlot of Krabbendijke, the Netherlands, to the congregation of Kalamazoo, Michigan.

■ Obituaries

KAMP, Richard – Age 95, April 23, 2025; Grand Rapids, Michigan; Wife – Ruth (deceased); Children – Barb & Steve Leestma, Richard & Ruth, Robert & Deb, Jon & Maureen, Daniel & Susan; 27 grandchildren, 57 great-grandchildren; Siblings – Gertrude Westrate, Henry & Lena, Emeline; predeceased by 6 siblings. (Rev. H. Hofman, Mark 8:35&36.)

VAN GINKEL, Jeanette (nee Van Voorst) – Age 90, April 30, 2025; Rock Valley, Iowa; Husband – John; Children – Henry, Rallyn & Deborah, James & Bonnie, Timothy & Kelly, Daniel & Michele, Ellen & Vern Van Beek, Jelaine & Kent Schelling, Laura & Harlen Van Beek, Karen & Randall Van Beek, LeAnn & Mark Wynia; 54 grandchildren, 99 great-grandchildren; Siblings – Teunis & Jacqi Van Voorst, Henry Van Voorst, Cynthia Amick, Mary Driesen, Joann Driesen, Ruth & Jake Anker; In-laws – Shirley Van Voorst, Joyce Van Voorst, John Van Beek Jr.; predeceased by infant daughter Leah, son Glenn, grandchildren Julie Van Ginkel and Marissa Wynia, great-grandson Levi Wynia, 4 brothers, and 13 in-laws. (Rev. J.J. Witvoet, Isaiah 50:10&11.)

■ 2025 Grand Rapids Young Adult Conference August 14-16, 2025

A three-day/two-night trip to northern Michigan is being organized by a committee under the oversight of the Grand Rapids Beckwith consistory. Rev. H. Hofman hopes to provide meaningful topics and discussions. For additional information and to register for the trip, text 616-729-9655 or email fnrcjoshuagroup@gmail.com

■ Classis Midwest Youth Conference

July 18-19, 2025

The Lord willing, Classis Midwest plans to hold a Youth Conference in Rock Valley, Iowa, on July 18&19. Registration, supper, and activities will begin Friday evening. Topics will be given by Rev. Witvoet and Student Rozeboom on Saturday at the school, followed by activities at Newton Hills State Park in the afternoon. There will be a sing-a-long Sunday evening. All young people, fifteen and older, are invited and encouraged to attend. To make arrangements, or for accommodations, text Elder Grant Post at 712-470-0029 or email grantjessicapost@gmail.com

■ Eventide Home

Eventide Home in Lethbridge, Alberta, is looking to hire nurses for full-time or part-time work. This is an exciting opportunity to build one's nursing career in Southern Alberta. In our home, care is provided for the seniors of our community in a way that reflects the shared traditions and doctrinal beliefs of the NRC and God's Word. We are willing to assist in finding housing arrangements and dealing with immigration challenges as needed. For more information, or to apply, please contact Paul Vanden Broek at 403-320-0655, or Manager@Eventidehome.ca

■ New Titles from Bible Truth Books

Select Works of William Gadsby—A remarkable collection of writings by William Gadsby (1773-1844), the well-known minister of the Strict Baptists. This book contains a wide array of writings including poems, dialogues, letters, an address to the youth, several sermons, and even a catechism for children and schools. Paperback, 316 pages, \$10.50.

"Go Ye Therefore..."—A limited number of extra copies of this recently-released book about the history of the North American General Mission are available **free of charge** upon request. (Donations to cover shipping costs are appreciated.)

Recommendation to reading "Collections of Letters"

As a general rule, we continue to see many more children's books sold than books for adults. With this in mind, we hope to try to mention a few books of interest for our adult readers from time to time.

This month, we wanted to mention the value of books containing collections of letters. For many, it is not always easy to find time to read (even when there is a desire to do so) and those brief moments are quickly interrupted. In general, books containing collections of letters lend themselves to those brief moments as the letters only require a few minutes to be read. Moreover, their contents are often not only engaging for the natural mind but also written from the heart about matters of the soul. May the Lord apply the truths contained in these letters to the hearts of our readers.

Here are a few suggestions from the "Collections of Letters" section of our 2025 catalog:

Letters from the Cabin by Rev. William Huntington—Hardcover, \$32.60.

Pastoral Letters by Rev. Lamain—Hardcover, \$14.20.

The Utterance of the Heart by Rev. J. Newton—Paperback, \$15.50.

The Letters of Samuel Rutherford—Paperback, \$8.00.

Several people have inquired recently about the Letters of J.C. Philpot. We are actively working with one of our publisher partners to bring this collection back into print.

The 2025 Bible Truth Books catalog is also available. Please contact us if you wish to receive a free copy.

Please note that the prices above do not include postage.

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Phone / Fax: 616-776-2593
BibleTruthBooks@igatweb.com
www.BibleTruthBooks.org

50th Wedding Anniversary

The Lord willing, on June 27, 2025, our dear parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents,

Cornie J. & Bev Blom

hope to commemorate their 50th wedding anniversary.

"But Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth"
(Psalm 86:15).

37885 275th St., Corsica, SD 57328

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

EBEN-EZER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, ST. CATHARINES, ONTARIO, is inviting applications to fill a full-time secondary teacher/administrator role. We would be gladdened by inquiries and applications of individuals who are qualified, versatile, and dedicated but who also love the doctrine according to godliness. For more information about this position, please contact the principal, Mr. Arthur Verhoef at 905-563-3077 or principal@ecs.school.ca. Please send applications to the secretary of the school board, Mr. G. Brouwer, 1372 Gregory Road N., St. Catharines, Ontario, L2R 6P9 or call 647-271-8984, or email gerry@ecs.school.ca.

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, POMPTON PLAINS, NEW JERSEY. *(Although this position has been filled on an interim basis, we are still in need of a permanent candidate.)* 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 Tom Van Vugt (education chairman) at 973-703-1511 or email tomv@plainviewgrowers.com, or John Van Der Brink (administrator) at 973-628-7400 or email nrcs_office@nrcsnj.org.

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!**

2025 NRCEA Conference

All those involved with Christian School education (all staff, board and consistory members, prospective teachers, etc.) are invited to attend the NRCEA Conference to be held July 30–August 1, the Lord willing, at the NRCS, Pompton Plains, NJ. More information is available at www.teachersconference2025.com or at www.nrcsnj.org. We look forward to seeing many of you.

■ Teachers/Assistants

CALVIN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, COAL-HURST, ALBERTA, invites applications for elementary or secondary teaching positions for the coming school year. High school English Language Arts & Literature and elementary generalist teachers are particularly needed, but all inquiries are welcome. Applicants must be members of the NRC or a closely-related denomination, and must be eligible for Alberta certification. Any inquiries should be directed to the principal, Mr. Marc Slingerland, at 403-381-3030 or inquiries@ccschool.ca. Should the Lord incline your heart to apply, please submit a cover letter and resumé with references to inquiries@ccschool.ca.

EBEN-EZER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, ST. CATHARINES, ONTARIO, is inviting applications for elementary and middle school teaching positions. We would be gladdened by an inquiry and application of someone who is versatile and dedicated, who also loves the doctrine according to godliness. For more information on this position, please contact Mr. Arthur Verhoef, at principal@ecs.school.ca or call 905-563-3077.

Please send applications to the secretary of the school board, Mr. G. Brouwer, 1372 Gregory Road N., St. Catharines, Ontario, L2R 6P9. Email: gerry@ecs.school.ca

EBENEZER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, SHEBOYGAN, WISCONSIN, is in urgent need of a teacher for the 2024-25 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 rteunissen@yahoo.com

NERIAH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, CALGARY, ALBERTA, has a unique opportunity for a full-time teacher to join our small school. While all applications are welcome, we are in most need of a teacher for our students in middle and high school. We are seeking an organized individual who is willing to learn, a team player, and able to transition between grade levels during a school day. While a certified teacher is preferred, we welcome all applicants who are passionate about teaching. For more information, please contact the principal, Darlene Dekker, at darlene.dekker@neriahcs.ca or school board president, Mr. Daniel Visser, at 403-554-1097 or by email visser.daniel@outlook.com

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, ROCK VALLEY/SIOUX CENTER, IOWA, is seeking to fill openings in grades 7-12: math, elementary, physical education, and secondary teaching. Some of these positions are part-time or full-time and can be combined depending upon qualifications and experience. For further information, please visit www.nrcsia.com or contact the principal, Mr. Daniel Breuer, at 712-476-2821 or dan.breuer@nrcsia.org

OBADIAH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, GIROUX, MANITOBA, has an extremely urgent need of teachers for our 2025-2026 school year. We have seventeen students and teach multigrade classrooms. We invite those who are versatile and dedicated to teaching to inquire about our elementary and middle school positions. Certification is an asset but is not required. For any questions regarding this position, please call Jonathan Barten at 204-408-4006, or Brad Barten at 204-905-4755, or email Ocschoolboard@gmail.com

PROVIDENCE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN invites qualified candidates to apply for elementary and middle school positions that may be open. For more information regarding possible openings or for application forms, please contact the administrator, Mr. Tom Kwekel, at tkwekel@pcskzoo.com or call 616-644-2661.

REHOBOTH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, NORWICH, ONTARIO, invites applications for middle school shop and high school, especially in math or science, but we are willing to be flexible. High school needs also include art, business, and woodshop. For more information about elementary and middle school opportunities, contact Mr. Andrew Korevaar, at elementaryprincipal@rcsnorwich.com or 519-495-6629. For information about secondary opportunities, contact Mr. Gerrit TenHove, at secondaryprincipal@rcsnorwich.com or 519-536-3689. We invite inquiries about our locally developed teaching training program which provides a blend of paid teaching, mentorship, and training, making it a great opportunity for those new to the profession or those seeking to transition into teaching. Cover letters and resumé should be submitted to hr@rcsnorwich.com. Applications will be reviewed. Applicants selected for interviews will be contacted by the school board.

A Finished Work

Did Christ finish His work for us?
Then there can be no doubt but
He will also finish His work in us.

—John Flavel

From **THE BANNER OF TRUTH**
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Awake, O North Wind

When Zion's sons, great God! appear
In Zion's courts for praise and prayer,
There, in Thy Spirit, deign to be
As one with those who worship Thee.

Without Thy sovereign power, O Lord,
No sweets the gospel can afford;
No drops of heavenly love will fall
To cheer the weary, thirsting soul.

Winds from the north and south, awake,
Take of the things of Jesus, take;
Diffuse Thy kind celestial dew,
Bring pardon, peace, and healing, too.

Then shall we count the season dear
To those who speak or those who hear;
And all conspire with sweet accord,
In hymns of joy, to praise the Lord.

—John Kent

the
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