

the Banner

of Sovereign Grace Truth

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Christ's School

How to View Children
in the Church

Parental Resolutions

A Periodical for Young and Old

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Publication Number (USPS 010584)

Official Publication of the Heritage Reformed denomination. Typeset at Grand Rapids, Michigan (Gardner Graphics); printed at Grand Rapids, Michigan (Grandville Printing).

Subscription price for ten issues per year: \$20.00 in the United States. \$30.00 in Canada, payable in U.S. funds. To foreign countries \$35.00 (surface mail) or \$65.00 (air mail), payable in U.S. funds. Rates listed are for one year subscriptions.

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Copy for the *Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth* is due the 5th of the month prior to publication. All copy (including announcements, obituaries, anniversary notices, and ads) should be sent to the editor. All announcements submitted for publication should be typed, and are subject to editorial policy. Communications relating to subscriptions should be addressed to the subscription manager. Change of address should be forwarded to the subscription manager one month in advance of moving date. Please provide both new and old address.

PERIODICAL Postage is Paid at Grand Rapids, Michigan.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to "The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth," 540 Crescent Street NE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503.

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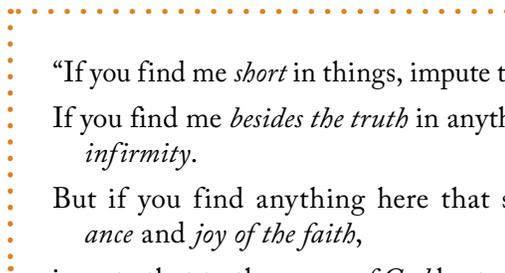
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"If you find me *short* in things, impute that to my *love of brevity*.
If you find me *besides the truth* in anything, impute that to my
infirmity.
But if you find anything here that serves to your *further-*
ance and *joy of the faith*,
impute that to the *mercy of God* bestowed on you and me.
Yours to serve you with what little I have."

—John Bunyan (*Works*, 1:336)

Christ's School

With the new academic year now properly launched, many young people have headed off to various colleges and universities, some of them for the first time.

Many months ago they received numerous prospectuses and brochures and weighed the various options. Many factors entered into their decisions about where to study, not least of which were the content of the courses and the characters of the teachers.

But, whatever school they chose, I'm sure every Christian pastor and parent wants their young people enrolled in Christ's school before any other.

Why Christ's school? Well, consider the content of the course, its motivation, and the character of the teacher.

Meditation > Dr. David Murray



Content

The content of the course is easy. In Matthew 11:28–30, Christ was prospecting for pupils. He said, “Take my yoke upon you and learn of me...for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

The yoke was an agricultural implement, frequently used as a metaphor for submission—sometimes political, sometimes religious, and sometimes educational (as here). So Jesus is saying, “Put on this yoke of my teaching and learn in my school.”

Jesus' school has many classrooms. In the history classroom we learn about momentous redemptive events. In the geography class, the wonders of the world and the capitals of great nations fade in importance as Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Gethsemane, and Golgotha take center stage.

In fact the geography of the next world—heaven and hell—is the most important module. In psychology, we study human nature and how the Holy Spirit regenerates and sanctifies it. In the music department we learn how to praise God with new songs. In language class, we learn the language of prayer.

In arithmetic, we find out how uncountable God's mercies are. In physical education, we run the way of God's commandments. In the law class, we are repeatedly taught two vital lessons: the law cannot save, but those who love God keep His commandments out of gratitude for salvation.

There is also a discipline department, where our loving Father faithfully chastises His erring pupils. This is one of the busiest classes, but also one of the most effective. And how does Jesus sum up this course? “Easy.”

Motivation

Easy? How can Jesus say that such a course is easy?

Well, obviously, it's not easy because it's a shallow course of study. Far from it! Neither is it easy to the unsaved. To those outside looking in, it usually looks extremely difficult and unappealing.

But even for those who do enroll, it's not easy at the beginning. At first, Christ's yoke usually feels a bit uncomfortable. We have a lot of rough edges to be smoothed down and we have quite a few adjustments to make until Christ's teaching feels more fitting and comfortable.

When Jesus says His course is easy, He is not promising a life of health, wealth, and prosperity. He is not saying that if you become a Christian, life is going to get a lot easier. His use of “easy” is mainly true in comparison with other yokes.

Jesus looked out on the world and saw people under the painful yoke of sin, the monotonous yoke of Old Testament rituals, and the unbearably heavy yoke of thousands of man-made laws.

Seeing all this agony He cried, “Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me...for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

But Christ's yoke was not just comparatively easy. It was also easy because of new motivation in His pupils. When sinners join His school, they are no longer motivated by fear of punishment, but by love.

There is also a new power in them, the power of the Holy Spirit. And there is new help. Christ does not offer a single yoke and say, “Learn on your own.” He hands us a double yoke, puts His neck under one side and says, “Come learn with Me.”

(continued on page 200)



HOW TO VIEW CHILDREN IN THE CHURCH

EDITORIAL • DR. JOEL R. BEEKE

Few subjects are as important as children in the church, for they represent her future. Matthew Henry (1663–1714) said God has “appointed that parents should train up their children in the knowledge of his law...that, as one generation of God’s servants and worshippers passes away, another generation may come, and the church, as the earth, may abide forever, and thus God’s name among men may be as the days of heaven.”¹ Very soon everyone you see today will be gone. Who then will praise God on the earth? Who will be His salt and light in our cities, towns, and nations? Christ has guaranteed the church will continue by His divine power and faithfulness; yet He accomplishes this by human means, often through our ministry to children.

Our topic is also of critical significance for the future of our children. Henry wrote to Christian parents, “Consider especially what they [the children] are designed for in another world: they are made for eternity. Every child hath a precious and immortal soul, that must be for ever either in heaven or hell, according as it is prepared in this present state,—and perhaps it must remove to that world of spirits very shortly.”² This is true not only of our own dear children, but also of the children in our neighborhood and non-Christian friends whom we invite to church with us. They too have souls; they too need the Savior. Do our churches care for these tender and impressionable souls whom God has entrusted to us?

How can we deal with this responsibility in a Christ-honoring way? Let’s begin first in this article with how we view children in the church. In the next two editorials, the Lord willing, I will offer some practical guidelines on how to minister to them.

TREMENDOUS PRIVILEGES

The children and young people who grow up in the fellowship of the church enjoy tremendous privileges through God’s covenant of grace. We may say of them, as Paul said of ancient Israel in Romans 3:2, “Unto them were committed the oracles of God.” They grow up reading the Word of the covenant, singing the Word of the covenant, absorbing the preaching of the Word of the covenant, praying the Word of the covenant back to God, and seeing the Word of the covenant made visible in the sacraments, the signs and seals of the covenant.

When all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: and that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.

—DEUTERONOMY 31:11–13

We might say that children growing up in a biblical church are embraced by the arms of the covenant Word of promise, nursed on the milk of the covenant Word of instruction, and buckled in by the covenant Word of command for safety as they begin their journey in life. What an amazing privilege it is for children to grow up in the church! While we grieve over her failings, let us never forget the unspeakable blessings that belong to children in a true church of Christ, as opposed to the lot of those who grow up “having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 7:14, “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.” Never begrudge a child his place in the meetings of the church. God calls your children holy because when God saves a parent, He puts His hand of blessing and consecration on the family.³

TREMENDOUS NEEDS

But covenant privileges do not negate or diminish the need each child has for God’s particular grace to make him a living, spiritual member of the church. We have every reason to believe that David was circumcised on the eighth day and raised in a pious home. Boaz and Ruth were his godly great-grandparents (Ruth 4:21–22). His father, Jesse, participated in daily sacrifices, honored God’s prophet, and sent his sons to fight for God’s anointed king (1 Sam. 16:5; 17:13). Nevertheless David confessed in Psalm 51:5, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” Since the fall of man, sin and its doleful effects have been a plague upon every child born into the world (Rom. 5:12). As the Belgic Confession of Faith (art. 15) says:

Through the disobedience of Adam original sin is extended to all mankind, which is a corruption of the whole nature and a hereditary disease, wherewith infants themselves are infected even in their mother’s womb, and which produceth in man all sorts of sin, being in him as a root thereof; and therefore is so vile and abominable in the sight of God that it is sufficient to condemn all mankind. Nor is it by any means abolished or done away with in baptism, since sin always issues forth from this woeful source as water from a fountain.⁴

Covenant children must be born again. Our Lord Jesus Christ said in John 3:3, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” He said this to a man who had participated in all the external forms of the covenant in force at the time. He was a renowned teacher of Israel (John 3:10). But in order to “enter the kingdom of God” (3:5), this teacher still needed to be “born of the Spirit” (3:8). In faithfulness to Scripture, we must view our children as “heirs of the kingdom of God and of His covenant,”⁵ who nonetheless were born in sin and need a supernatural rebirth from God in order to come into full personal possession of their inheritance.

We must therefore view our children as sinners who need to hear the gospel and respond to it with the gift of faith. God’s usual way of saving the seed of His church is through the call of the gospel. Certainly God may regenerate a soul in the womb, as He did with John the Baptist (Luke 1:15, 41–44), but God’s ordinary manner of working faith in our hearts is through the preaching of the Word, as well as by the faith, example, nurture, and prayers of believing parents.

Peter described true Christians in 1 Peter 1:23 and 25 as “being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.... And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” So Paul writes in Romans 10:17, “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

The Westminster Confession of Faith (7.3) says that in the covenant of grace, God “freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved.”⁶ Reformed Christianity is evangelistic Christianity, and Reformed evangelism begins with our own children.

Reformed Christians sometimes fall into the trap of thinking that we may presume that covenant children, being members of the church by baptism, are regenerated by the Holy Spirit unless they openly reject the covenant.⁷ The promise and the sign of the covenant become poor substitutes for its requirement of saving faith in Jesus Christ as the only ground of justification and salvation. When the covenant is abused in such a way, parents and children alike are lulled into a false sense of security and any serious effort to lead little ones to Christ is given up.

TREMENDOUS RESPONSIBILITIES

The covenant demands the conversion of all to whom its promises are made, parents and children alike. “Therefore are we by God through baptism admonished of, and obliged unto new obedience,” the Reformed Liturgy says, “namely, that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that we trust in Him, and love Him with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our mind, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk a new and holy life.”⁸ How then can we assume that a child is born again without these evidences of that life?

So it is necessary to affirm the blessings and privileges of covenant children while insisting on the need to respond to the covenant with faith in Christ and repentance from sin, gifts God the Father has provided in His beloved Son (Acts 5:31; 11:18). On the one hand, we must not treat our children as if they were so many “little heathens” who have no rightful place in our well-ordered church services. They belong there. On the other hand, we must not assume they are saved simply because they have been born into Christian homes, have been received into the church by baptism, and are being instructed in the doctrine of salvation. With faith in God’s promises, we must use all the means of grace, seeking the regeneration, justification, and sanctification of our covenant children. In particular, we must pray for the conversion of our children.

Listen to how Alexander Whyte (1836–1921), a Scottish divine, prayed for children:

O Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, give us a seed right with Thee! Smite us and our house with everlasting barrenness rather than that our seed should not be right with Thee. O God, give us our children. Give us our children. A second time, and by a far better birth, give us our children to be beside us in Thy holy covenant. For it had been better we had never been betrothed; it had been better we had sat all our days solitary unless our children are to be right with Thee.... But Thou, O God, art Thyself a Father, and thus hast in Thyself a Father’s heart. Hear us, then, for our children, O our Father.... In season and out of season, we shall not go up into our bed, we shall not give sleep to our eyes nor slumber to our eyelids till we and all our seed are right with Thee.⁹

May God teach us to pray like this for our precious children while they are young, pleading for His promised covenantal blessings to rain down upon them by His gracious Spirit, for Christ’s sake.

1. *Matthew Henry’s Commentary* (reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 3:434 [Ps. 78:1–8].

2. “A Church in the House, A Sermon concerning Family Religion” in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Matthew Henry* (1855; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 1:253.

3. The word “sanctified” does not refer to moral purification but the fact that the family is already set apart or claimed by God for Himself. W. Harold Mare, “1 Corinthians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 10:230.

4. *Doctrinal Standards, Liturgy, and Church Order*, ed. Joel R. Beeke (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2003), 12.

5. *Ibid.*, “Form for the Administration of Baptism to Infants of Believers,” 127.

6. *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1994), 42.

7. This view is associated with Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920), Dutch theologian, journalist, and statesman.

8. “Form for the Administration of Baptism,” *Doctrinal Standards*, 126.

9. Alexander Whyte, *Bunyan Characters* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1902), 3:289–90.

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Dr. Gerald Bilkes
Read: John 15:1–17



the *Vine*
and its *Branches*

This section of John 15 holds a rather unusual parable. Other parables involve a vineyard (Matt. 20:1; 21:33), but this is the only one about a vine, its branches, and a husbandman. Moreover, Christ doesn't first tell the parable and then give the interpretation. Instead, He begins with Himself ("I am the vine") and then unfolds who He is under the emblem of a vine.

Scenery

The parable of the vine falls within what is often referred to as the "Farewell Address of Christ" (John 14–17). Christ knew what was coming (see 13:21); He knew that He would be betrayed and handed over to death. Several times throughout the Gospel of John we hear that Christ's hour had not yet come (2:4; 7:30; 8:20). But, in the farewell discourse, Christ notes, "The hour is come" (17:1). The time of His earthly ministry had finally come to a close. The moment all history pointed towards had arrived.

Throughout this farewell address, Christ furnishes His church with comforts, exhortations, promises, and warnings to enable His people to be what they are called to be after He returns to His Father. In chapter 15, Christ's chief instruction to His people is to *abide in Him*. This phrase occurs ten times in verse 4–10. As an example of this concept, Christ paints the picture of a vine and its branches.

In Mediterranean life, the fig tree, the olive tree, and the vine were the most widely planted. The vine was known to be the most difficult plant to care for; pruning had to be done carefully and intentionally to protect the vine and help it to produce fruit. So the vine was a familiar picture to use among John's readers.¹

Vines were a common theme throughout the Old and New Testaments (see Isa. 5; Ps. 80; Jer. 2; Ezek. 17). Notably, every time the Lord uses the comparison of His people to a vine or vineyard in the Old Testament, it is to accuse them of failing to be what He had reason to expect them to be. Yet Christ makes clear here in John how His people bring forth fruit: through communion with Christ, the true Vine.

Substance

Christ is instructing His people how they can and will bear fruit. The way He works out the parable suggests various points:

First, fruit bearing takes place because of the vitality of the vine. Christ states the principle this way: "Without me ye can do nothing" (v. 5). God's people need to draw life and strength from Him, just like a branch would from a vine. The Vine is the mainspring of every blessing and fruit in God's people's lives. They are neither vines by themselves nor branches of some institution or organization. They belong to Christ as branches do to the vine. Notice how Christ emphasizes that He is the true or genuine Vine. Certain people or entities might be known as vines, look like vines; yet they are ultimately not worthy of the name "vine."

Second, fruit bearing is the work of the triune God. Christ doesn't mention the Spirit directly in this passage, but the surrounding chapters reveal that the Father and the Son send Him to work His grace in believers (14:17; 15:26; 16:13). Christ does explicitly point to the Father: "My Father is the husbandman" (15:1). The Father oversees it all, ensuring that fruit is born to His glory (see 15:8).

Third, fruit bearing takes place through abiding in Christ. Abiding in Christ requires a living relationship with Him. Through this relationship, life flows from Christ to His people. The very idea that spiritually dead sinners can be put into vital union with Christ is a great mystery! This way of saving sinners could only have originated within the Godhead.

Christ expands on what it means to abide in Him. First, it involves an intricate and revolving process where Christ communicates His love to His people (vv. 7, 9) and they petition Him in return (v. 7), which He answers in love. Second, it includes receiving His love and showing it forth in accord with His commands (vv. 9–13). The love He is speaking of is self-sacrificing (v. 13); the vine is not there for its own sake, and neither are the branches. The vine bestows its energy and life to the branches, and the branches

in turn receive this life for the sake of fruit, which relates to our next main point.

Fourth, fruit bearing is increased through pruning. Grape farmers attest to the fact that a wild-growing vine will at best produce small and sparse clusters. A rich harvest depends greatly on the skill of the pruner. The pruner is not concerned about the “comfort” of the vine, but the abundance of the harvest. He of course aims at dead or diseased sections of the vine, but also at healthy canes and beautiful foliage; the natural tendency of the branches is to use the sap of the vine to grow an ostentatious bush-like canopy. The farmer, however, is after fruit. So he cuts as much as is necessary to produce the greatest harvest over the longest period of time, channeling the photosynthesis, sap production, and whatever energies the vine exerts into fruit production. Christ Himself says, “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit” (v. 8).

Fifth, the absence of fruit-bearing results in removal from the vine. Christ says, “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away” (v. 2). Christ is not teaching that believers can lose their salvation. However, someone can seem externally to be united to Christ without being genuinely so. Though the branches seem to be joined to Christ, the absence of fruit proves that the life of Christ is not flowing in these branches. God, the husbandman, perfectly discerns this and cuts even the external connection with Christ and casts such a nominal Christian into hell. Christ explains it this way: “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned” (v. 6).

Savior

It is no surprise that we have already covered quite a bit concerning the Savior, since Christ is the very substance of this parable. But two more aspects in this parable need to be mentioned.

First, Christ purifies His people through His Word. “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you” (v. 3). Matthew Henry points out an allusion here to the Levitical law that the Israelites were to consider the fruit of their first three years in Canaan unclean (Lev. 19:23–24). Exactly three years had passed since the Lord had called these disciples and had instructed them, and Christ’s Word still remains the agent where He washes and cleanses His people (Eph. 5:26).

Second, Christ mediates between His Father and His people. The parable of the vine and the branches still needs to be kept in view. Not without reason Christ said that His Father is the Husbandman (v. 1). The picture is this: the husbandman bestows much labor for the sake of the vine. He loves it, and the vine loves its branches. The vine actually offers its vitality to the branches, and those branches in turn circulate the vitality in a way that brings glory to the vine—and ultimately to the husbandman. Christ is the center on which

it all turns as He, the Vine, mediates between His Father and His people.

Searchlight

This parable of Jesus is as convicting as it is enlightening. Jesus’ words are both compassionate and soul searching. One cannot help but read this passage and be convicted by its many applications.

1. *Do we trace all good back to the strength and life of Christ, the Vine?* Do we realize that without Him we can do nothing?
2. *Have we been truly united to Christ, not just formally?* Does our union with Christ extend beyond the surface connection—beyond church membership or outwardly keeping up appearances? Have we given up on all false vines, and are we clinging by faith to the only true Vine? What does the Husbandman see when He looks at our branch?
3. *Do we submit to the pruning knife of the Lord in our life?* Or are we too invested in our sense of comfort? Do we prefer leaves that soak up the sun rather than God-glorifying fruit?
4. *If we are truly His, do we abide in Christ, in His Word, and in His love?* Communion with Christ is a reality, but also a calling. Do we exercise constant dependency upon Him? Does our heart go after Him in prayer in order to receive from Him in provision?

Questions

1. Whenever Christ speaks about Himself, as He does in this parable, He always seems to bring in the Father. Why do you think He does that?
2. This parable does not refer to being grafted into Him as we find it elsewhere (e.g., Rom. 11). Yet it is clear that not every branch is in Christ the same way. Explain the significance of this truth.
3. What binds Christ and believers together (see especially John 15:7–12)?
4. Does the picture of the Vine and its branches also carry over in terms of the seasons in the life of the vine—spring, summer, fall, winter?
5. Explain verse 11 in terms of the picture of the Vine and the branches. What is this joy of which Christ is speaking?

1. See Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, vol. II (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003), 988–89, and 994–96.

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Cotton Mather (1663–1728) was the grandson of John Cotton and Richard Mather, both founding ministers of Puritan New England. He lived at the end of the Puritan era, inheriting a rich, Reformed, experiential approach to Christianity from his predecessors. He had a big heart for evangelism, going door-to-door in Boston and organizing Bible studies, and was a philanthropist who both advocated and practiced caring for orphans and homeless people. Most of all he gave himself to preaching and writing, publishing 469 works.

Mather knew both profound sorrows and great joys in his family life. His first wife, Abigail, died from a miscarriage after sixteen years of marriage. He then married Elizabeth Clark, who bore six children. One of their children died in infancy. Then Elizabeth and three more children died from measles and smallpox. A couple of years later Mather married a third time. But this woman, Lydia, suffered psychological problems. Her wild mood swings caused Mather much grief for the rest of his life. Of his fifteen children, only two outlived him—Hannah (“Nancy”) and Samuel. It is not surprising that his resolutions on parenting often have eternity in view.

Mather was a typical Puritan in making personal resolutions for his life. This reflected the Puritan concept of living in covenant with God, a covenant which called for definite, personal commitment. We can learn much today from his resolutions on parenting his children.

—JRB



Parents, Oh! how much ought you to be continually devising for the good of your children! Often devise how to make them “wise children”; how to give them a desirable education, an education that may render them desirable; how to render them lovely and polite, and serviceable in their generation. Often devise how to enrich their minds with valuable knowledge; how to instill generous, gracious, and heavenly principles into their minds; how to restrain and rescue them from the paths of the destroyer, and fortify them against their peculiar temptations. There is a world of good that you have to do for them. You are without the natural feelings of humanity if you are not in a continual agony to do for them all the good that ever you can. It was no mistake of an ancient writer to say, “Nature teaches us to love our children as ourselves.”

—COTTON MATHER

RESOLUTIONS

1) At the birth of my children, I will resolve to do all I can that they may be the Lord’s. I will now actually give them up by faith to God; entreating that each child may be a child of God the Father, a subject of God the Son, a temple of God the Spirit—and be rescued from the condition of a child of wrath, and be possessed and employed by the Lord as an everlasting instrument of His glory.

2) As soon as my children are capable of minding my admonitions, I will often, often admonish them, saying, “Child, God has sent His son to die, to save sinners from death and hell. You must not sin against Him. You must every day cry to God that He would be your Father, and your Saviour, and your Leader. You must renounce the service of Satan, you must not follow the vanities of this world, you must lead a life of serious religion.

3) Let me daily pray for my children with constancy, with fervency, with agony. Yea, by name let me mention each one of them every day before the Lord. I will importunately beg for all suitable blessings to be bestowed upon them: that God would give them grace, and give them glory, and withhold no good thing from them; that God would smile on their education, and give His good angels the charge over them, and keep them from evil, that it may not grieve them; that when their father and mother shall forsake them, the Lord may take them up. With importunity I will plead that promise on their behalf: “The Heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit unto them that

ask Him.” Oh, happy children, if by asking I may obtain the Holy Spirit for them!

4) I will early entertain the children with delightful stories out of the Bible. In the talk of the table, I will go through the Bible, when the olive-plants about my table are capable of being so watered. But I will always conclude the stories with some lessons of piety to be inferred from them.

5) I will single out some scriptural sentences of the greatest importance; and some also that have special antidotes in them against the common errors and vices of children. They shall quickly get those golden sayings by heart, and be rewarded with silver or gold, or some good thing, when they do it. Such as,

- Psalm 11:10—“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”
- Matthew 16:26—“What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”
- 1 Timothy 1:15—“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”
- Matthew 6:6—“When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret.”
- Ephesians 4:25—“Putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour.”
- Romans 12:17, 19—“Recompense to no man evil for evil.... Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves.”

6) A Jewish treatise tells us that among the Jews, when a child began to speak, the father was bound to teach him Deuteronomy 33:4—“Moses commanded us a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob.” Oh, let me early make my children acquainted with the law which our blessed Jesus has commanded us! ’Tis the best inheritance I can give them.

7) I will cause my children to learn the Catechism. In catechizing them, I will break the answers into many lesser and proper questions; and by their answer to them, observe and quicken their understandings. I will bring every truth into some duty and practice, and expect them to confess it, and consent unto it, and resolve upon it. As we go on in our catechizing, they shall, when they are able, turn to the proofs and read them, and say to me what they prove and how. Then, I will take my times, to put harder questions to them; and improve the times of conversation with my family (which every man ordinarily has or may have) for conferences on matters of religion.

8) Restless will I be till I may be able to say of my children, “Behold, they pray!” I will therefore teach them to pray. But after they have learnt a form of prayer, I will press them to proceed unto points that are not in their form. I will charge them with all possible cogency to pray in secret; and often call upon them, “Child, I hope you don’t forget my charge to you, about secret prayer: your crime is very great if you do!”

9) I will do what I can very early to beget a temper of kindness in my children, both toward one another and toward all other people. I will instruct them how ready they should be to share with others a part of what they have; and they shall see my encouragements when they discover a loving, a courteous, an helpful disposition. I will give them now and then a piece of money, so that with their own little hands they may dispense unto the poor. Yea, if any one has hurt them, or vexed them, I will not only forbid them all revenge, but also oblige them to do a kindness as soon as may be to the vexatious person. All coarseness of language or carriage in them, I will discountenance.

10) I will be solicitous to have my children expert, not only at reading handsomely, but also at writing a fair hand. I will then assign them such books to read as I may judge most agreeable and profitable; obliging them to give me some account of what they read; but keep a strict eye upon them, that they don’t stumble on the Devil’s library, and poison themselves with foolish romances, or novels, or plays, or songs, or jests that are not convenient. I will set them also, to write out such things as may be of the greatest benefit unto them; and they shall have their blank books, neatly kept on purpose, to enter such passages as I advise them to. I will particularly require them now and then to write a prayer of their own composing, and bring it unto me; that so I may discern what sense they have of their own everlasting interests.

11) I wish that my children may as soon as may be, feel the principles of reason and honor working in them—and that I

may carry on their education, very much upon those principles. Therefore, first, I will wholly avoid that harsh, fierce, crabbed usage of the children that would make them tremble and abhor to come into my presence. I will treat them so that they shall fear to offend me, and yet mightily love to see me, and be glad of my coming home if I have been abroad at any time. I will have it looked upon as a severe and awful punishment to be forbidden for awhile to come into my presence. I will raise in them a high opinion of their father’s love to them, and of his being better able to judge what is good for them than they are for themselves. I will bring them to believe ’tis best for them to be and do as I will have them. Hereupon I will continually magnify the matter to them, what a brave thing ’tis to know the things that are excellent; and more brave to do the things that are virtuous. I will have them to propose it as a reward of their well-doing at any time, I will now go to my father, and he will teach me something that I was never taught before. I will have them afraid of doing any base thing, from an horror of the baseness in it. My first response to finding a lesser fault in them shall be a surprise, a wonder, vehemently expressed before them, that ever they should be guilty of doing so foolishly; a vehement belief that they will never do the like again; a weeping resolution in them, that they will not. I will never dispense a blow, except it be for an atrocious crime or for a lesser fault obstinately persisted in; either for an enormity, or for an obstinacy. I will always proportion the chastisements to the miscarriages; neither smiting bitterly for a very small piece of childishness nor frowning only a little for some real wickedness. Nor shall my chastisement ever be dispensed in a passion and a fury; but I will first show them the command of God, by transgressing whereof they have displeased me. The slavish, raving, fighting way of discipline is too commonly used. I look upon it as a considerable article in the wrath and curse of God upon a miserable world.

12) As soon as we can, we’ll get up to yet higher principles. I will often tell the children what cause they have to love a glorious Christ, who has died for them. And how much He will be well-pleased with their well-doing. And what a noble thing ’tis to follow His example; which example I will describe unto them. I will often tell them that the eye of God is upon them; the great God knows all they do and hears all they speak. I will often tell them that there will be a time when they must appear before the Judgment Seat of the holy Lord; and they must now do nothing that may then be a grief and shame unto them. I will set before them the delights of that Heaven that is prepared for pious children; and the torments of that hell that is prepared of old for naughty ones. I will inform them of the good things the good angels do for little ones that have the fear of God and are afraid of sin. And how the devils tempt them to do ill things; how they hearken to the devils, and are like them, when they do such things; and what mischiefs the devils may get leave to do them in this world, and what a sad thing ’twill be, to be

among the devils in the Place of Dragons. I will cry to God, that He will make them feel the power of these principles.

13) When the children are of a fit age for it, I will sometimes closet them; have them with me alone; talk with them about the state of their souls—their experiences, their proficiencies, their temptations; obtain their declared consent unto every jot and tittle of the gospel; and then pray with them, and weep unto the Lord for His grace, to be bestowed upon them, and make them witnesses of the agony with which I am travailing to see the image of Christ formed in them. Certainly, they'll never forget such actions!

14) I will be very watchful and cautious about the companions of my children. I will be very inquisitive what company they keep; if they are in hazard of being ensnared by any vicious company, I will earnestly pull them out of it, as brands out of the burning. I will find out, and procure, laudable companions for them.

15) As in catechizing the children, so in the repetition of the public sermons, I will use this method. I will put every truth into a question to be answered with *Yes* or *No*. By this method I hope to awaken their attention as well as enlighten their understanding. And thus I shall have an opportunity to ask, "Do you desire such or such a grace of God?" and the like. Yea, I may have opportunity to demand, and perhaps to obtain their early and frequent (and why not sincere?) consent unto the glorious gospel. The Spirit of grace may fall upon them in this action; and they may be seized by Him, and held as His temples, through eternal ages.

16) When a Day of Humiliation arrives, I will make them know the meaning of the day. And after time given them to consider of it, I will order them to tell me what special afflictions they have met with, and what good they hope to get by those afflictions. On a Day of Thanksgiving, they shall also be made to know the intent of the Day. And after consideration, they shall tell me what mercies of God unto them they take special notice of, and what duties to God they confess and resolve under such obligations. Indeed, for something of this importance to be pursued in my conversation with the children, I will not confine myself unto the solemn days, which may occur too seldom for it. Very particularly, on the birthdays of the children, I will take them aside, and mind them of the age which (by God's grace) they are come unto; how thankful they should be for the mercies of God which they have hitherto lived upon; how fruitful they should be in all goodness, that so they may still enjoy their mercies. And I will inquire of them whether they have ever yet begun to mind the work which God sent them into the world upon; how far they understand the work; and what good strokes they have struck at it; and, how they design to spend the rest of their time, if God still continue them in the world.

17) When the children are in any trouble—if they be sick, or pained—I will take advantage therefrom, to set before

them the evil of sin, which brings all our trouble; and how fearful a thing it will be to be cast among the damned, who are in ceaseless and endless trouble. I will set before them the benefit of an interest in Christ, by which their trouble will be sanctified unto them, and they will be prepared for death, and for fullness of joy in a happy eternity after death.

18) Among all the points of education which I will endeavor for my children, I hope to see that each of them—the daughters as well as the sons—may gain insight into some skill that lies in the way of gain (however their own inclination may most carry them), so that they may be able to subsist themselves, and get something of a livelihood, in case the Providence of God should bring them into necessities. Why not they as well as Paul the Tent-Maker! The children of the best fashion may have occasion to bless the parents that make such a provision for them! The Jews have a saying worth remembering: "Whoever doesn't teach his son some trade or business, teaches him to be a thief."

19) As soon as ever I can, I will make my children apprehensive of the main end for which they are to live; that so they may as soon as may be, begin to live; and their youth not be nothing but vanity. I will show them, that their main end must be to acknowledge the great God, and His glorious Christ; and bring others to acknowledge Him: and that they are never wise nor well, but when they are doing so. I will make them able to answer the grand question of why they live, and what is the end of the actions that fill their lives. I will teach them that their Creator and Redeemer is to be obeyed in everything, and everything is to be done in obedience to Him. I will teach them how even their diversions, and their ornaments, and the tasks of their education, must all be to fit them for the further service of Him to whom I have devoted them; and how in these also, His commandments must be the rule of all they do. I will sometimes therefore surprise them with an inquiry, "Child, what is this for? Give me a good account of why you do it?" How comfortably shall I see them walking in the light, if I may bring them wisely to answer this inquiry.

20) I will oblige the children to retire sometimes, and ponder on that question: "What shall I wish to have done, if I were now a-dying?"—and report unto me their own answer to the question; of which I will then take advantage, to inculcate the lessons of godliness upon them.

21) If I live to see the children marriageable, I will, before I consult with Heaven and earth for their best accommodation in the married state, endeavor the espousal of their souls unto their only Saviour. I will as plainly, and as fully as I can, propose unto them the terms on which the glorious Redeemer would espouse them to Himself, in righteousness, judgment, and favor and mercies forever; and solicit their consent unto His proposals and overtures. Then would I go on to do what may be expected from a tender parent for them, in their temporal circumstances.

Guidelines

for Sanctifying the Lord's Day Rev. Moses Roney

A friend recently shared this article with me, written as an anonymous tract, though it was probably authored by Rev. Moses Roney. If we were to implement even half of it, our Sabbaths would no doubt be greatly blessed.

Wisely contrive, the day before, that you may have no unnecessary work to employ your hands or heads on God's day. Think seriously "what a weighty business I am going about! My worldly affairs are but trifles to this. What are shops, ships, or farms to Christ, grace, or heaven?"

Prepare for this holy day. Think to yourself, "What good did I get from any former Sabbath, and particularly from the last?" Pray that the Sabbath before you may be the best you ever kept; that your heart may be more humble, tender, and heavenly, and that this may be an earnest to you of keeping an eternal Sabbath with God in glory. Particularly beg, "O God of grace, prepare a suitable word for my soul! Let the minister's mouth be opened, his heart enlarged, and his message be according to Thy holy will! Enter Thou into Thy temple, and crown Thy ordinances with Thy presence and blessing. Give me, Lord, the hearing ear, the seeing eye, and the understanding heart, that I may receive with meekness the engrafted Word!"

As soon as you awake in the morning of this sacred day, direct your heart and eyes heavenward. Bless God that you see the light of another Sabbath, in which your soul may be furnished with grace and be fitted for glory. Call upon the Lord to pardon your defective preparations, bear with your infirmities, accept your poor services, and enrich you with His graces and consolations.

Proceed to solemn meditations until your heart is affected by considering such a subject as the majesty of the God you are to wait upon, the vileness of sin and yourself by reason of sin, the excellencies of Christ and the greatness of His love, the heavenly nature of divine worship and the gain of godliness, the vanity of the world, the worth of your immortal soul, the rage and policy of your spiritual enemies, the deceitfulness of your own heart, the torments of hell, or the joys of heaven.

Carefully and conscientiously perform the religious duties of your family as well as your closet. See that your children waste not this morning in sleep or idleness. Call them to join with you in reading, singing, and prayer. Inform them of the glorious Master you serve, the immediate blessedness of such service, and the abundant reward attending it, even life everlasting. Charge them to be constant and serious in personal, family, and public worship.

In going to the house of God, if you are alone, think, "O that God would meet all His worshippers, and bless my soul!" If you are in company, talk of God and His Word without pride or affectation; hearken to the heavenly discourse of others.

As you enter the house of God, lift up your heart to Him in such breathings as these: "Lord, Thou hast promised to be in the midst of Thy people. O let Thy goodness pass before us! Let us see Thy power and Thy glory in Thy sanctuary. Let Thy greatness awe us and Thy goodness delight and refresh us!"

In the house of God, make a covenant with your eyes and take heed of a wandering heart. Fix your eyes on the minister, your ears on the Word, and your heart on God.

Be spiritual in every part of the service. While the minister is confessing sin, let your heart melt and even bleed and break. When he begs for mercy, let your whole soul pant after it. When he offers praise, let all that is within you bless God's holy name. In singing, let your heart make melody to the Lord so that when your voice is high, your heart may be not low and dead. When the Word is read or preached, seriously recollect, "This is the Word of God. It is His command, and dare I disobey it? Does He threaten these judgments and denounce these curses on sinners, and must not I tremble? Are those His calls and invitations, His great and precious promises, and shall I refuse them? Ye everlasting doors of my heart, fly open, and the King of glory shall come in!" While the minister pronounces the blessing, haste not away (a fault too common), but hope, desire, and believe it shall come down upon you with a divine efficacy.

When you come from the house of God, take heed lest Satan catch away the seed that is sown or the thorny cares of the world choke it. Let not vain discourse proceed from your lips as soon as God's Word is out of the minister's mouth, but beg of God that the Word you have heard may not be as water spilt upon the ground; pray that your memory may retain it, your heart love it, and your will obey it.

Think not half a day is enough for God and your soul. If you come before the service begins, spend the interval in devout meditation or in religious discourse. It is lamentable to see a churchyard filled with idle persons, talking of their worldly affairs or anything rather than their souls.

Take heed how you spend the evening. Cherish good impressions and conclude by worshipping God in your family and closet.

Before you lie down to rest at night, review the whole work of the day.

Rev. Moses Roney (d. 1854) served as a Reformed Presbyterian Church minister in Newburgh, New York, for nearly twenty-five years.



The Sure Source of

Spurgeon's Success

The Baptist chapel in New Park Street, Southwark was situated in a “dim and dirty” district of London close to the south bank of the Thames. Although its congregation had a long and prosperous history going back two hundred years to the Puritan era, it now looked like one of the barges in the nearby mud when the tide was out. The church had been in decline for some considerable time and the greatly reduced congregation must have rattled around in the chapel which could accommodate more than four times its current number.

Into this house of public worship came a young, nineteen-year-old pastor from the Baptist chapel in Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire. The cold and dull weather of that December Sunday morning in 1853 must have done nothing to lift the spirits of the young preacher at the sight of so depressing a scene. However, we all know what happened next. The young C. H. Spurgeon preaches with such power that the church soon invites him to become their next pastor, and almost immediately a long and fruitful pastorate commences. The rest, as they say, is history.

New Park Street saw sweeping changes within the first few months. The regular attendance at the weekly prayer meeting quickly grew to about five hundred. On Sundays the crowded chapel soon reached breaking point; it was to be enlarged on more than one occasion, but even then still proved inadequate. Something was clearly happening in the nation's capital which had not been seen since the days of the Great Awakening a century earlier under Whitefield and Wesley. Eye-witness accounts from the period speak of vast crowds gathering outside the chapel waiting for admission long before the stated times of service. Although a ticketing system was introduced to prevent overcrowding, the chapel, which seated 1,500, was regularly swamped with more than 3,000 people.

In fact, there seemed to be no limit to those who wanted to hear Spurgeon preach. The church resorted to the hiring of the 4,000-seater Exeter Hall on London's Strand, for their Sunday evening services. When this became unavailable, the deacons turned to Surrey Gardens Music Hall, which could accommodate 10,000, and Spurgeon filled it, much to the annoyance of his bitterest critics who sneered at his preaching “Particular Redemption in saloons reeking with the perfume of tobacco.”

A spiritual awakening was taking place and Spurgeon found himself at its center. A question that has intrigued many over the years as they have looked back upon this movement of the Spirit in mid-nineteenth century London is, What factors made Spurgeon the instrument of this revival?

Various answers have been offered. Most have concentrated on Spurgeon's outstanding natural talents, which were all devoted to the pursuit of his calling as a preacher of the gospel. Spurgeon's powers of imagination and description were truly remarkable and he employed these to the full in presenting familiar truths with a vividness that arrested those who heard him. Such vivid language made his congregations sit up and listen. While others preached in monochrome, Spurgeon preached in “glorious Technicolor!” For him there was nothing worse than a dignified, unfeeling, and cold presentation of the gospel. He spoke to his hearers as though shaking their hands and talking to them in the street. In this familiarity and naturalness he revelled: “It is delicious to put one's foot through the lath and plaster of old affectations, to make room for the granite walls of reality. This has been a main design with me, and may God send success to the effort.”

Spurgeon was particularly brilliant at taking doctrines which had come to be regarded as dull, boring, and heavy, and presenting them in such clear and forceful language that

men could not but be gripped by what they heard. “If you preach the truth in a dull, monotonous style, God may bless it, but in all probability he will not; at any rate the tendency of such a style is not to promote attention but to hinder it. It is not often that sinners are awakened by ministers who are themselves asleep.”

Without doubt Spurgeon’s greatness to a certain degree lay in his ability and great courage to break through long established conventions of his day whatever his actions might arouse. In this he resembled his great hero, George Whitefield, the leading evangelist of the eighteenth-century revival. But there was something about Spurgeon that was not true of his renowned and worthy predecessor. Spurgeon’s mental powers were such that he was able to take in, distil, and then popularize almost everything he read. As a child and grandchild of the manse he had free access to the very best of Christian books. By the time he arrived in London in 1853, he had read more in his nineteen years than most read in a lifetime. In particular he was well versed in the writings of the seventeenth-century Puritans. But above all, like Timothy, he had known the Holy Scriptures from childhood. What Spurgeon said of Bunyan was equally true of himself: “He cannot speak without quoting a text, for his soul is full of the Word of God.” And again, “Prick him anywhere; and you will find that his blood is Bibline.”

While it would be foolish to pass over Spurgeon’s outstanding natural gifts and theological learning, it would be absolutely unforgivable to argue that these things alone supply the reasons for the success of his remarkable ministry. For Spurgeon himself traced the source of his success to divine rather than human strength. As the young preacher looked upon the gloomy conditions facing the believers in New Park Street chapel, he was conscious that God had been hiding His face from His people. The Bible and the history of the church taught him that, compared to what the church had good reason to expect, the Spirit of God was in great measure withdrawn. If God should continue to hide His face, he declared to his people, then nothing could be done to extend His kingdom. It is not one’s knowledge, talent, zeal even, that can perform the work of God. “Yet, brethren, this can be done—we will cry to the Lord until he reveals his face again.” “All we want is the Spirit of God. Dear Christian friends, go home and pray for it; give yourselves no rest till God reveals himself; do not tarry where you are, do not be content to go on in your everlasting jog-trot as you have done; do not be content with the mere round of formalities. Awake, O Zion; awake, awake, awake!”

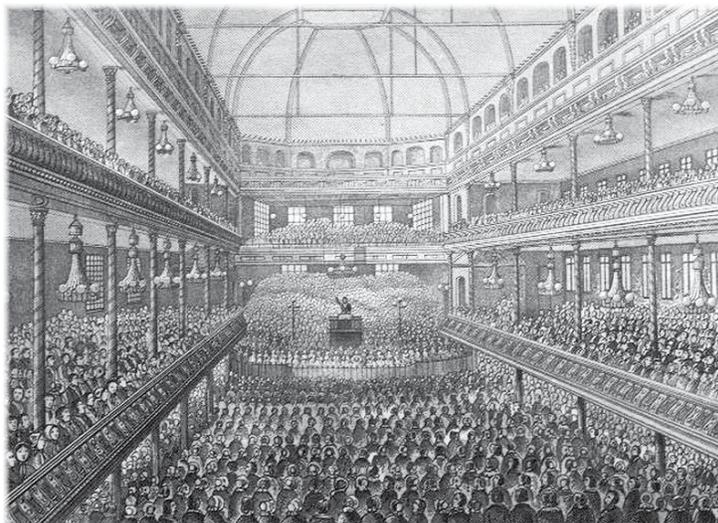
Before many months had passed it was clear that the New Park Street congregation was awaking, and a common burden for the outpouring of the Spirit of blessing spread from pastor to people. Looking back on those early years in Lon-

don, Spurgeon wrote in glowing terms of the prevailing spirit of prayer in the church. “Every man seemed like a crusader besieging the New Jerusalem, each one appeared determined to storm the Celestial City by the might of intercession; and soon the blessing came upon us in such abundance that we had not room to receive it.” “What prayer meetings we have had! Shall we ever forget Park Street, those prayer meetings, when I felt compelled to let you go without a word from my lips, because the Spirit of God was so awfully present that we felt bowed to the dust?” “And what listening there was.... The Holy Spirit came down like showers that saturate the soil till the clods are ready for the breaking; and then it was not long before we heard on the right and on the left the cry, ‘What must we do to be saved?’”

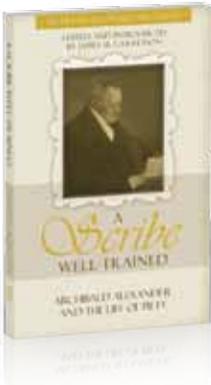
An indication of the seriousness with which Spurgeon believed his success depended on the Spirit, is seen in the very solemn warnings he gave to his people about the danger of no longer depending upon God in prayer. “May God help me, if you cease to pray for me! Let me know the day and I must cease to preach.” We should not put such warnings down to the eloquence of the preacher. No, he truly believed that without the Spirit of God nothing could be done. This concern he kept in his heart throughout the long and fruitful years of his ministry.

Here then is the primary explanation of Spurgeon’s success in preaching the gospel. “I believe in the Holy Spirit” was for Spurgeon more than just a creed.

Jonathan Watson is editorial director of Banner of Truth Trust in Edinburgh.



Charles Spurgeon preaching at Surrey Music Hall



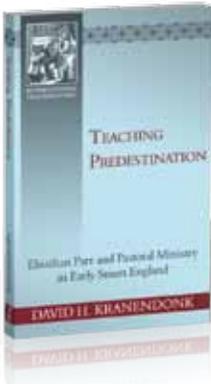
“A Scribe Well-Trained”: Archibald Alexander and the Life of Piety — *James M. Garretson*

“*A Scribe Well-Trained*” acquaints us with the life and writings of Princeton Theological Seminary’s founding professor, Archibald Alexander (1772–1851). In the opening biographical sketch, James M. Garretson introduces us to the things that influenced Alexander and how he sought to cultivate godliness in himself, the men he trained, and people to whom he ministered. Garretson reinforces this through fifty-six short excerpts from across the published writings of Alexander, allowing us to experience firsthand the richness of “Old Princeton” spirituality.

“James Garretson’s book on Archibald Alexander, Princeton Seminary’s first teacher, is an excellent addition to an important series. Garretson provides a brief but substantive overview of the life and especially the piety of Alexander, offers fifty-six selections from his writings, and concludes with an interesting appendix on ‘Impressions of Dr. Alexander.’ This book will inform the mind but even more stir the heart to greater love for God and deeper holiness of life.”

—David B. Calhoun, *professor emeritus of church history, Covenant Theological Seminary*

(208 pages, PB) \$10.00 | \$7.50



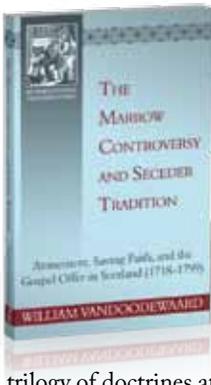
Teaching Predestination: Elnathan Parr and Pastoral Ministry in Early Stuart England — *David H. Kranendonk*

In *Teaching Predestination*, David H. Kranendonk focuses on the ministry of an early seventeenth-century Puritan-leaning theologian, Elnathan Parr (1577–1622). Although relatively unknown today, Parr’s works were popular in his own day. Kranendonk’s survey contributes a nuanced picture of this English Reformed pastor and demonstrates that Parr’s scholastic development of predestination, coupled with his pastoral concern for the salvation and edification of his hearers, resists the caricature of Reformed Scholasticism as being a philosophically speculative system. Here one sees the practical use of predestination for the care of souls as Parr and others aimed to help increase the faith and joy of God’s people.

“In this careful analysis of the Calvinist preaching and catechesis of Elnathan Parr, David Kranendonk reveals the pastoral significance of the teaching of predestination. He convincingly explains how a forbidding doctrine seemingly based on cold logic could be ‘on the ground’ of parish life a spiritually enriching source of comfort and joy. Kranendonk strengthens his argument by his impressive familiarity with Parr’s contemporaries in practical theology and by his emphasis on the exegetical rather than speculative nature of much Reformed piety and theology in early Stuart England.”

—Dewey D. Wallace Jr., *professor of religion, George Washington University*

(208 pages, PB) \$22.00 | \$17.00



The Marrow Controversy and Seceder Tradition — *William VanDoodewaard*

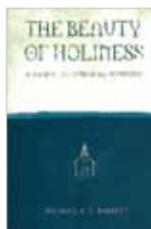
After the Reformation, the Marrow Controversy of the eighteenth century is noted as one of the most significant and defining events in the Scottish church. However, until now, there has not been a serious analysis of the theology of the Marrow Men as it relates to churches in Scotland during the aftermath of the controversy. In this important study, William VanDoodewaard identifies characteristic understandings of Marrow theology on the atonement, saving faith, and the free offer of the gospel and traces them out in the theology of the Seceder tradition. In doing so, he presents substantial evidence for the continuity of Marrow theology in the Associate Presbytery and Associate Synod in Scotland during the eighteenth century. He ably demonstrates that while Marrow theology was not the primary cause of the Secession churches, the Seceders were aware of the significance of Marrow theology and consciously made it an integral part of their churches.

“William VanDoodewaard has satisfied a scholarly need by carefully demonstrating the substantial theological continuity between Thomas Boston and the rest of Scotland’s early eighteenth-century Marrow Men and the later churches of the Associate Presbytery and Associate Synod. While this connection has long been assumed, it is now thoroughly demonstrated. The trilogy of doctrines at the heart of VanDoodewaard’s argument—the substitutionary atonement, saving faith, and the free offer of the gospel—are not of merely historical interest, but of perennial necessity for the truth of the gospel and the vitality of the Christian church.”

—Philip G. Ryken, *president, Wheaton College*

(336 pages, HB) \$25.00 | \$19.00

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Michael P. V. Barrett

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The Christian's Heaviness and Rejoicing

Experiential Christianity
Charles Spurgeon

Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.

— I PETER 1:6

This verse to a worldly man looks amazingly like a contradiction; even to a Christian man, when he understands it best, it will still be a paradox. “Ye greatly rejoice,” and yet “ye are in heaviness.” Is that possible? Can there be in the same heart great rejoicing, and yet a temporary heaviness? Most assuredly. This paradox has been known and felt by many of the Lord’s children, and it is far from being the greatest paradox of the Christian life. Men who live within themselves and mark their own feelings as Christians will often stand and wonder at themselves. Of all riddles, the greatest riddle is a Christian man.

As to his pedigree, what a riddle he is! He is a child of the first Adam, “an heir of wrath, even as others.” He is a child of the second Adam: he was born free; there is therefore now no condemnation unto him. He is a riddle in his own existence. “As dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed.” He is a riddle as to the component parts of his own spiritual frame. He finds that which makes him akin to the devil—depravity, corruption, binding him still to the earth, and causing him to cry out, “O wretched man that I am”—and yet he finds that he has within himself that which exalts him, not merely to the rank of an angel, but higher still—a something which raises him up and makes him “sit together with Christ Jesus in heavenly places.” He finds that he has that within him which must ripen into heaven, and yet that about him which would inevitably ripen into hell, if grace did not forbid. What wonder, then, beloved, if the Christian man be a paradox himself, that his condition should be a paradox too? Why marvel when you see a creature corrupt and yet purified, mortal and yet immortal, fallen but yet exalted far above principalities and



powers—why marvel that you should find that creature also possessed of mingled experience, greatly rejoicing, and yet at the same time, “in heaviness through manifold temptations.”

I would have you look first of all at the Christian’s heaviness: he is “in heaviness through manifold temptations”; and then, in the next place, at the Christian’s great rejoicing.

I. In the first place, *his heaviness*. This is one of the most unfortunate texts in the Bible. I have heard it quoted ten thousand times for my own comfort, but I never understood it until a day or two ago. On referring to most of the commentaries in my possession, I cannot find that they have a right idea of the meaning of this text. You will notice that your friends often say to you when you are in trouble, “There is a needs be for this affliction”; there is a needs be, say they, “for all these trials and troubles that befall you.” That is a very correct and scriptural sentiment; but that sentiment is not in the text at all. And yet, whenever this text is quoted in my hearing, this is what I am always told or what I conceive I am always told to be the meaning: that the great temptations, the great trials which befall us, have a needs be for them.

But it does not say so here: it says something better; not only that there is a needs be for our temptations, but that there is a needs be for our heaviness under the temptation. Now, let me show you the difference. There is a man of God, full of faith and strong; he is about to do his Master’s work, and he does it. God is with him and gives him great success. The enemy begins to slander him; all manner of evil is spoken against him falsely for Christ’s name sake. You say, there is a needs be for that, and you

are quite correct: but look at the man. How gallantly he behaves himself! He lifts his head above his accusers and, unmoved amid them all, stands like a rock in the midst of a roaring tempest, never moved from the firm basis on which it rests. The scene changes, and instead of calamity, perhaps he is called to endure absolute persecution, as in apostolic times. We imagine the man driven out from house and home, separated from all his kindred, made to wander in the pathless snows of the mountains; and what a brave and mighty man he appears when you see him enduring all this! His spirits never sink. "All this can I do," says he, "and I can greatly rejoice in it, for Christ's name's sake; for I can practice the text which says, 'Rejoice ye in that day and leap for joy.'" You will tell that man there is a needs be for his persecution; he says, "Yes, I know it, and I fear not all I have to endure; I am not cowed by it." At last imagine the man taken before the Inquisition and condemned to die. You still comfort him with the fact, that there is a needs be that he shall die: that the blood of the martyrs must be the seed of the church—that the world can never be overcome by Christ's gospel, except through the sufferings and death of His followers—that Christ stooped to conquer, and the church must do the same—that through death and blood must be the road to the church's victory. And what a noble sight it is, to see that man going to the stake and kissing it—looking upon his iron chains with as much esteem as if they had been chains of gold. Now tell him there is a needs be for all this, and he will thank you for the promise; and you admire the man; you wonder at him.

Ah! but there is another class of people who get no such honor as this. There is another sort of Christians for whom this promise really was intended, who do not get the comfort of it. I do admire the man I have pictured to you: may God long preserve such men in the midst of the church. I would stimulate every one of you to imitate him. Seek for great faith and great love to your Master, that you may be able to endure, being "stedfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." But remember, that this text has not in it comfort for such people; there are other texts for them, but this text has been perverted for such a use as that. This is meant for another and a feebler grade of Christians, who are often overlooked and sometimes despised.

I was lying upon my couch during this last week, and my spirits were sunken so low that I could weep by the hour like a child, and yet I knew not what I wept for. A very slight thing will move me to tears just now, and a kind friend was telling me of some poor old soul living near who was suffering very great pain, and yet she was full of joy and rejoicing. I was so distressed by the hearing of that story and felt so ashamed of myself that I did not know what to do; wondering why I should be in such a state as this while this poor woman, who had a terrible cancer and was in the most frightful agony, could nevertheless "rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." And in a moment, this text

flashed upon my mind with its real meaning. I am sure it is its real meaning. Read it over and over again, and you will see I am not wrong. "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness." It does not say, "Though now for a season ye are suffering pain, though now for a season you are poor; but you are 'in heaviness'"; your spirits are taken away from you; you are made to weep; you cannot bear your pain; you are brought to the very dust of death and wish that you might die. Your faith itself seems as if it would fail you. That is the thing for which there is a needs be. That is what my text declares: that there is an absolute needs be that sometimes the Christian should not endure his sufferings with a gallant and a joyous heart; there is a needs be that sometimes his spirits should sink within him and that he should become even as a little child smitten beneath the hand of God.

Ah! beloved, we sometimes talk about the rod, but it is one thing to see the rod and it is another thing to feel it; many a time have we said within ourselves, "If I did not feel so low spirited as I now do, I should not mind this affliction." What is that but saying, "If I did not feel the rod I should not mind it"? It is just how you feel—the pith and marrow of your affliction. It is that breaking down of the spirit, that pulling down of the strong man, that is the very fester of the soreness of God's scourging—"the blueness of the wound, whereby the soul is made better." I think this one idea has been enough to be food for me many a day; and there may be some child of God here to whom it may bring some slight portion of comfort. We will yet again dwell upon it. "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations."

Let me for a moment or two try to explain why it is that there is an absolute needs be not merely for temptations and troubles, but likewise for our being in heaviness under them. In the first place, if we were not in heaviness during our troubles, we should not be like our Covenant Head, Christ Jesus. It is a rule of the kingdom that all the members must be like the Head. They are to be like the Head in that day when He shall appear. "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." But we must be like the Head also in His humiliation, or else we cannot be like Him in His glory. Now, you will observe that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ very often passed through much of trouble without any heaviness. When He said, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head," I observe no heaviness. I do not think He sighed over that. And when thirsty, and He sat upon the well and said, "Give me to drink," there was no heaviness in all His thirst. I believe that through the first years of His ministry, although He might have suffered some heaviness, He usually passed over His troubles like a ship floating over the waves of the sea. But you will remember that at last the waves of swelling grief came into the vessel; at last the Savior Himself, though full of patience, was obliged to say, "My

soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” One of the evangelists tells us that the Savior “began to be very heavy.” What does that mean, but that His spirits began to sink? There is a more terrible meaning yet, which I cannot enter into now; but still I may say that the surface meaning of it is that all His spirits sank within Him. He had no longer His courage, and though He had strength to say, “Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done,” still the weakness prevailed when He said, “If it be possible let this cup pass from me.” The Savior passed through the brook, but He “drank of the brook in the way”; and we who pass through the brook of suffering must drink of it, too. He had to bear the burden, not with His shoulders omnipotent, but with shoulders that were bending to the earth beneath a load. And you and I must not always expect a giant faith that can remove mountains: sometimes even to us the grasshopper must be a burden, that we may in all things be like unto our Head.

Yet again, if the Christian did not sometimes suffer heaviness, he would begin to grow too proud and think too much of himself and become too great in his own esteem. Those of us who are of elastic spirit, and who in our health are full of everything that can make life happy, are too apt to forget the Most High God. Lest we should be satisfied from ourselves and forget that all our own springs must be in Him, the Lord sometimes seems to sap the springs of life, to drain the heart of all its spirits, and to leave us without soul or strength for mirth, so that the noise of tabret and of viol would be unto us as but the funeral dirge, without joy or gladness. Then it is that we discover what we are made of, and out of the depths we cry unto God, humbled by our adversities.

Another reason for this discipline is, I think, that in heaviness we often learn lessons that we never could attain elsewhere. Do you know that God has beauties for every part of the world, and He has beauties for every place of experience? There are views to be seen from the tops of the Alps that you can never see elsewhere. There are beauties to be seen in the depths of the valley that you could never see on the tops of the mountains; there are glories to be seen on Pisgah, wondrous sights to be beheld when by faith we stand on Tabor; but there are also beauties to be seen in our Gethsemanes, and some marvellously sweet flowers are to be culled by the edge of the dens of the leopards. Men will never become great in divinity until they become great in suffering. “Ah!” said Luther, “affliction is the best book in my library”; and let me add, the best leaf in the book of affliction is that blackest of all the leaves, the leaf called heaviness, when the spirit sinks within us and we cannot endure as we could wish.

This heaviness is of essential use to a Christian if he would do good to others. Ah! there are a great many Christian people that I was going to say I should like to see afflicted—but I will not say so much as that; I should like to see them heavy in spirit; if it were the Lord’s will that they

should be bowed down greatly, I would not express a word of regret, for a little more sympathy would do them good. A little more power to sympathize would be a precious boon to them, and even if it were purchased by a short journey through a burning, fiery furnace, they might not rue the day afterwards in which they had been called to pass through the flame. There are none so tender as those who have been skinned themselves. Those who have been in the chamber of affliction know how to comfort those who are there. Do not believe that any man will become a physician unless he walks the hospitals; and I am sure that no one will become a divine, or become a comforter, unless he lies in the hospital as well as walks through it, and has to suffer himself. God cannot make ministers—and I speak with reverence of His Holy Name—He cannot make a Barnabas except in the fire. It is there, and there alone, that He can make His sons of consolation; He may make His sons of thunder anywhere; but His sons of consolation He must make in the fire, and there alone. Who shall speak to those whose hearts are broken—who shall bind up their wounds—but those whose hearts have been broken also, and whose wounds have long run with the sore of grief? “If need be,” then, “ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.”

I think I have said enough about this heaviness, except that I must add it is but for a season. A little time, a few hours, a few days, a few months at most, and it shall all have passed away; and then comes the “eternal weight of glory, wherein ye greatly rejoice.”

And now to the second part of the text. Here we have something far more joyous and comfortable than the first: “*wherein ye greatly rejoice.*” Can a Christian greatly rejoice while he is in heaviness? Yes, most assuredly, he can. Mariners tell us that there are some parts of the sea where there is a strong current upon the surface going one way, but that down in the depths there is a strong current running the other way. Two seas do not meet and interfere with one another; but one stream of water on the surface is running in one direction, and another below in an opposite direction. The Christian is like that. On the surface there is a stream of heaviness rolling with dark waves; but down in the depths there is a strong under-current of great rejoicing that is always flowing there.

Do you ask me what is the cause of this great rejoicing? The apostle tells us, “Wherein ye greatly rejoice.” What does he mean? You must refer to his own writings and then you will see. He is writing “to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus,” and so forth. The first thing that he says to them is that they are “elect according to the foreknowledge of God,” “wherein we greatly rejoice.” Ah! even when the Christian is most “in heaviness through manifold temptations,” what a mercy it is that he can know that he is still elect of God! Any man who is assured that God has “chosen him from before the foundation of the world,” may well say, “Wherein

we greatly rejoice." Let me be lying upon a bed of sickness and just revel in that one thought. Before God made the heavens and the earth and laid the pillars of the firmament in their golden sockets, He set His love upon me; upon the breast of the Great High Priest He wrote my name, and in His everlasting book it stands, never to be erased—"elect according to the foreknowledge of God." Why, this may make a man's soul leap within him, and all the heaviness that the infirmities of the flesh may lay upon him shall be as nothing; for this tremendous current of his overflowing joy shall sweep away the mill-dam of his grief. Bursting and overleaping every obstacle, it shall flood all his sorrows until they are drowned and covered up, and shall not be mentioned any more forever. "Wherein we greatly rejoice." Come, thou Christian! You are depressed and cast down. Think for a moment. You are chosen of God and precious. Let the bell of election ring in your ear, that ancient Sabbath bell of the covenant; and let your name be heard in its notes and say, I beseech you, "Doth not this make thee greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, thou art in heaviness through manifold temptations?"

Again, you will see another reason. The apostle says that we are "elect through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," "wherein we greatly rejoice." Is the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ girt about my loins, to be my beauty and my glorious dress, and is the blood of Jesus sprinkled upon me, to take away all my guilt and all my sin, and shall I not in this greatly rejoice? What shall there be in all the depressions of spirits that can possibly come upon me that shall make me break my harp, even though I should for a moment hang it upon the willows? Do I not expect that yet again my songs shall mount to heaven; and even now through the thick darkness do not the sparks of my joy appear, when I remember that I have still upon me the blood of Jesus and still about me the glorious righteousness of the Messiah?

But the great and cheering comfort of the apostle is that we are elect unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. And here, brethren, is the grand comfort of the Christian. When the child of God is sore-stricken and much depressed, the sweet hope that, living or dying, there is an inheritance incorruptible, reserved in heaven for him, may indeed make him greatly rejoice. He is drawing near the gates of death and his spirit is in heaviness, for he has to leave behind him all his family and all that life holds dear. Besides, his sickness brings upon him naturally a depression of spirit. But you sit by his bedside, and you begin to talk to him of the

Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,
Arrayed in living green.

You tell him of Canaan on the other side of the Jordan—of the land that floweth with milk and honey—of the Lamb

in the midst of the throne, and of all the glories which God hath prepared for them that love Him; and you see his dull leaden eye light up with seraphic brightness. He shakes off his heaviness and he begins to sing,

On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye,
To Canaan's fair and happy land,
Where my possessions lie.

This makes him greatly rejoice; and if to that you add that possibly before he has passed the gates of death his Master may appear—if you tell him that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming in the clouds of heaven, and though we have not seen Him, yet believing in Him we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, expecting the second advent—if he has grace to believe in that sublime doctrine, he will be ready to clap his hands upon his bed of weariness and cry, "Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly! come quickly!"

In drawing to a close, I may notice, there is one more doctrine that will always cheer a Christian, and I think that this perhaps is the one chiefly intended here in the text. Look at the end of the 15th verse: "Reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." This perhaps will be one of the greatest cordials to a Christian in heaviness: that he is not kept by his own power, but by the power of God, and that he is not left in his own keeping, but he is kept by the Most High. Ah! what should you and I do in the day when darkness gathers round our faith, if we had to keep ourselves! I can never understand what an Arminian does when he gets into sickness, sorrow, and affliction; from what well he draws his comfort, I know not, but I know whence I draw mine. It is this: "When flesh and heart faileth, God is the strength of my life, and my portion for ever." "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

But take away that doctrine of the Savior's keeping His people, and where is my hope? What is there in the gospel worth my preaching, or worth your receiving? I know that He has said, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." What, Lord, but suppose they should grow faint—that they should begin to murmur in their affliction. Shall they not perish then? No, they shall never perish. But suppose the pain should grow so intense that their faith should fail: shall they not perish then? No, "they shall not perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." But suppose their sense should seem to wander, and some should try to pervert them from the faith: shall they not be perverted? No; "they shall never perish." But suppose in some hour of their extremity, hell and the world and their own fears should all beset them, and they should have no power to stand—no power whatever to resist the fierce onslaughts of the enemy; shall they not perish then? No,

they are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed,” and “they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” Ah! this is the doctrine, the cheering assurance “wherein we greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, we are in heaviness through manifold temptations.”

One word before I end. There are some of you to whom this precious passage has not a word to say. Our heaviness, oh worldling, “our heaviness is but for a season.” Your heaviness is to come; and it shall be a heaviness intolerable, because hopelessly everlasting. Our temptations, though they be manifold, are but light afflictions and are but for a moment,” and they “work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory”; but your joys that you now have

are evanescent as a bubble and they are passing away; they are working out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of misery. I beseech you, look at this matter. Search and see whether all be right with your spirits—whether it be well for you to venture into an eternal state as you are. May God give you grace, that you may feel your need of a Savior, that you may seek Christ, lay hold upon Him, and come into a gracious state wherein ye shall greatly rejoice, even though for a season, if needs be, ye should be in heaviness through manifold temptations!

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) was pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, a congregation of 6,000 when he died. This sermon was preached when he was twenty-three years old.

(continued from page 183)

New motivation, new power, new help; that can make everything so much easier.

Character

Is this school beginning to appeal? Let me go on to speak of the teacher’s character.

The character of the teacher is “meek.” Most college brochures describe the qualifications, abilities, and achievements of their teachers. There are usually lots of letters after their names, lots of journals in which they have published, lots of books they have written—all this to impress and appeal to prospective students.

When you open the brochure for Christ’s school, you find but one teacher who boasts of but one qualification—“I am meek.”

Is that it? Well, He puts it another way also, “I am lowly in heart.” Well, that’s not really going to appeal to the best and brightest, is it? Maybe it’s not meant to. As Christ looked out on the teachers of His day He saw arrogance and pride. The Greek philosophers and Jewish Pharisees were impatient and scornful of the simple. They belittled and intimidated the uneducated. Who can learn under such teachers?

I had a history teacher who humiliated anyone who got the wrong answer. I had a chemistry teacher who smirked at my attempts to do chemical formulae. I had a woodwork teacher who threw tools across the classroom when he got angry. I had a math teacher whose vocabulary was seven grades too high.

I had a French teacher who scared me so much I could hardly squeak, “Je ne sais pas.” It was almost impossible to learn in such an environment (not that I was the model pupil either!).

But here is a teacher who is gentle, tender-hearted, kind, patient, approachable, persevering. He is not full of majesty and terror but full of grace and truth. He is not out to show off or impress. He is “lowly in heart” (alternative translation: “close to the ground”). What a beautiful character! That’s the kind of teacher I need.

Take the yoke

Every time the gospel is preached, Christ comes to enroll pupils. He’ll take PhDs, but He prefers the simple (Matt. 11:25). As you enter, close your mouth, open your ears, and realize that you know nothing yet as you ought to know (1 Cor. 8:2).

Submit your whole minds to Christ’s truth—the bits you understand and the bits you don’t; the bits you like and the bits you don’t; the bits you agree with and the bits you disagree with. The more you submit, the easier the yoke will be.

And remember this is all about getting ready for the final exam (2 Cor. 5:10). This is a universal and compulsory exam. There are no exemptions, extensions, exceptions, or excuses. There are not re-sits or appeals. And just as exams often influence the direction of your future life, so the direction and destiny of your future eternity depends on this exam.

If you have not started preparing for this exam, come to the only school which can guarantee 100 percent success. The course is “easy.” The teacher is “meek.” And the tuition is free.

Dr. David Murray is Professor of Old Testament and Practical Theology at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary.

"He is Faithful that Promised"

[For Our Children]

[Diana Kleyn]

The Bible contains many commands from God to us. He is very clear on what He expects from us. Long ago, the Israelites gathered at the foot of Mount Sinai to hear Him speak the Ten Commandments. To help us remember these laws, God wrote them on two stone tablets. Every Sunday morning we hear these familiar commandments read from the pulpit. However, there is a huge problem: we cannot obey these commandments perfectly, no matter how hard we try. You know very well the story of our fall in the Garden of Eden. God created Adam and Eve perfect, capable of obeying every law of God. That all changed when they foolishly disobeyed the command of God and ate the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. From then on, no one was able to keep God's laws perfectly.

You might ask, why does God still command us to keep these laws if we are unable to do any of them according to His standards? It is because God is still holy. We are the ones who fell into sin; we changed. God did not change, so He has the right to demand perfect obedience from us. He would be completely just if He would punish us eternally when we trespass against them. We are so corrupt that, instead of repenting of our sins, we complain that God is not fair and that we cannot help sinning against Him. No one wants to admit that we deserve to be punished and that God is just and holy. For this we need the work of the Holy Spirit, who teaches us to see ourselves as God sees us. He shows us that we are full of sin and that we fully deserve God's wrath against sin.

Thankfully, this is not the end of the story. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Even though Adam and Eve sinned deliberately when they turned away from God, He sought them out in the Garden—not to destroy them, but to offer them a way of escape. He promised that He would send His only Son to pay for the sin of His people in their place. He promised that anyone who asks Him for salvation will receive it. The Bible not only contains commands from God, but also many beautiful promises that He will do as He has said. "I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right" (Isaiah 45:19). These promises are totally undeserved, yet they are free to all who ask with importunity.

Dear children, do you ask God for salvation? Do you seek the Lord? Or are you so used to hearing about this amazing gift from God that you don't even pay attention to it anymore? Do you ignore the God of heaven and earth, who offers you free grace at the expense of His Son? I hope not! If you have never sought the Lord, then turn to Him

at once, confessing your sins. Tell Him all about your hard heart and ask Him to soften it and fill you with His Spirit. Ask Him to make you one of the little lambs that belong to the flock of the Good Shepherd.

Maybe there are some of you who do pay attention to what God says in His Word. You listen well to God's promises and wish that you belonged to Him. Perhaps you have prayed and prayed, but you are afraid nothing changed. You begin to doubt whether God truly means what He says, or whether there is really a God who hears your prayers. Satan whispers all kinds of doubts and questions, and you begin to fear. Dear children, whenever you doubt or fear, turn immediately to God's own Word and ask the Holy Spirit to bless you as you read it. Then you will hear Him speaking to you again, and Satan's lies will be silenced. Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you to love and trust the Lord Jesus Christ. God has promised to answer those prayers.

Let's look at some of God's promises to those who seek Him. It is important to notice that seeking God is actually a command; it is not an option: "For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live" (Amos 5:4). This is stated as a command. The wonder is that God includes promises to those who obey: "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" (2 Chronicles 7:14). You are called by God's name: you are Christian, and you have been baptized in the name of the triune God. If you humble yourself by confessing your sin and turn away from sin to seek the Lord, then He promises to forgive your sins.

Some of you may be a bit worried now. You may think, "I must humble myself and turn away from sin? I have tried, but I am not humble; instead, I am proud. I don't like sin, but I find myself sinning before I even realize it! I am so discouraged! Is there only salvation for people who successfully turn from their sins?" No, children, even for those who feel saturated with sin, God promises mercy. Jesus said, in His Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). Jesus also encouraged people "always to pray, and not to faint [or give up]" (Luke 18:1b). Remember that you are not asking God to grant you salvation because of your many prayers or because of any goodness in you, but because of His goodness. "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (John 14:13–14). This is the answer: you are begging God for salvation for *Christ's sake*, so that *He* is glorified. God

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is glorified when sinners ask Him for undeserved salvation, and all of heaven rejoices when a sinner is saved. Jesus so tenderly told His disciples, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). God is pleased to give you salvation. Do not think that you must convince God by your prayers to grant you mercy; He gives it freely and gladly. It is never because of your beautiful prayers or your many tears, but only because He is faithful

to His own promises. You must ask, but you may also trust that He will do as He has said. "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me" (Proverbs 8:17). This leaves no room for doubt: when you seek God, you will find Him. Be encouraged, dear children, and seek the Lord; He will certainly answer you in mercy, for "He is faithful that promised" (Hebrews 10:23).

Diana Kleyn is the author of several books for children.

[Story For Children]

Mary Ann

A few miles from Geneva, in western New York, was a small village where some Christians opened a Sunday school. The teachers called at every house to invite the children and to speak with the parents. As he passed along, one of the teachers came to a very run-down house. The broken windows were stuffed with rags, the doorstep was falling apart, and everything looked neglected. The door was opened by a woman with a sad, worried face. The visitor soon discovered that the woman's husband was an alcoholic and had abandoned his family. A bright-eyed child of about seven years of age was also in the room, and the teacher asked her if she would like to go to the Sunday school.

"What is a Sunday school?" she asked.

The teacher explained that it was a school where children could learn about God, and the little girl begged her mother to allow her to attend. The woman made many objections, but her little daughter pleaded so earnestly that at last she gave her consent.

The next Sunday morning, Mary Ann came to the school. After that, she did not miss one Sunday. No matter how unpleasant the weather might be, there was Mary Ann's smiling face. There were five little girls beside Mary Ann. One Sunday, the teacher asked them if they knew what it meant to have a new heart, but none of them could answer, so he explained that a new heart is a heart that loves God more than anything else. Mary Ann had never thought about this before. She heard, for the first time, that all children have wicked hearts, and unless they receive a new heart, they will die in their sins. The teacher said: "The Bible says, 'There is none that doeth good, no, not one' (Psalm 53:3b). So if our sinful hearts are not changed, we cannot go to that holy and happy place where God lives. But God sent His only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to earth. He became man, and died a cruel death upon the cross, paying the price for the sins of His people. After three days, He arose from the dead and is now in heaven."

After speaking to the girls for some time, the teacher asked Mary Ann if she thought she was a sinner. She replied, "I feel that I have a very wicked heart."

"Yes, you do, and so does every child that does not love the Savior. Unless children repent of sin and go to Jesus and

pray for a new heart, they will grow up to be hardened sinners. It is very wicked not to hate sin and love God better than everything else."

While he was speaking, Mary Ann began to weep, and when the teacher asked her why she cried, she replied that she wanted God to give her a new heart.

"Then you must confess your sins and seek the Lord with all our heart. Pray for grace to give yourself away to the Lord Jesus. Pray for grace to give your hands to Him to work for Him, your tongue to praise Him, your mind to think of Him, and your heart to love Him."

Mary Ann said that she wanted to do this, but still wept very much. The teacher then told her when she went home to go alone by herself and ask God for the sake of Jesus Christ to pardon her sins, and give her a new heart so that she could give herself to Him and be His child.

The next week, the teacher asked, "Children, have any of you become lost sinners before God and surrendered your hearts to God?"

All the girls hung their heads and were silent except Mary Ann, who said modestly, "By grace, I believe I can say so."

"I shall be very happy if this is so, but, my child, the heart is deceitful above all things. Why do you think you have surrendered yourself to the Lord?"

(continued on page 204)



(continued from page 202)

"I prayed to God to give me a new heart, and I hope He did, and that He made me His child."

"What makes you hope that you have a new heart?"

"You told us, that if our hearts are made new, we will love God best of all."

"Do you love Him best of all?"

"Yes, sir." She said this as if she knew what she was saying, in a humble, but firm manner. She seemed to be happy because she loved this blessed Savior.

Mary Ann was generally the earliest at the Sunday school, and she always knew her lessons, although she had no one to help her at home. But God was pleased to send the Holy Spirit to give her a new heart and teach her to love the Lord Jesus, and thus she was very happy. Mary Ann wanted others to love the Savior, too, and often brought other children to the Sunday school.

The teacher often noticed how she loved to hear about the Lord Jesus Christ. When he spoke to the children about what the Savior had suffered for sinners, tears would come into her eyes. While she wept to think of the sorrows of the Savior, she also rejoiced that He had loved her and given Himself for her. When they sang sweet hymns of praise, she joined in with delight. When prayer was offered, she lifted her heart to God. During the week, Mary Ann read her Bible and other Sunday school books. On Mondays she began to learn her lesson to prepare for the next Sunday school meeting. No wonder she was so happy, for God has promised, "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me" (Proverbs 8:17).

Six months passed; what happy months those were for Mary Ann! But one Sunday, when the children had gathered for Sunday school, the teacher noticed that Mary Ann was absent. One of the children told him that Mary Ann was so ill that she was not expected to live. The teacher was very sad to hear this and, immediately after the lesson, went to visit the little girl. He found the poor mother looking very sad. "I have come to see your little girl, who I hear is very ill."

"Yes, she is very sick. She is in her bed in the next room."

The teacher sat in the chair next to Mary Ann's bed and was grieved to see the change in her. Her rosy cheeks were now pale as a lily. She could only speak in a whisper, but

she smiled as sweetly as ever. Taking his hand, she told him that she was glad to see him; it reminded her of her beloved Sunday school. The teacher talked and prayed with her. He was not sure that she knew how sick she was, so he asked, "Mary Ann, you are very ill. Do you think that God will take you away by this sickness?"

With her pleasant smile, she answered, "I believe I shall die, but I am not afraid."

"Why not?"

"Because I hope to go to the Lord Jesus."

"When you were well, did you pray?" questioned the teacher.

"Yes, sir."

The teacher looked around him. There were only two rooms in the house, and he wondered where she could find a spot in which she could be alone. "Where did you find a place to pray?"

She pointed up and said, "In the attic was a quiet corner where I could pray. I have been very happy there. It was just like talking to Jesus." Her face radiated her joy.

Mary Ann did not live many days after this, but she was peaceful to the end. When she died, her happy spirit was taken, we trust, by angels to the Savior's bosom.

Dear children, have you surrendered your heart to the Lord Jesus? Do you have a new heart? Have you given yourself for His service? Have you asked Him to use your mind, your voice, your hands, and your feet for His glory? Have you ever felt sorry that you are wicked and, like little Mary Ann, have you asked God to wash away your sins in the blood of Jesus Christ? If you want to be God's child, tell Him so, and ask Him to teach you how to love Him. Ask Him to give you His Spirit to teach you what is necessary for salvation. Do not put it off. Our Savior said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8). Ask this for Jesus' sake; He promised, that "whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13).

Adapted from *Mary Ann; or, How a Child Can Give Itself to Jesus*. New York: American Tract Society, No. 51, n.d.

Answers to last month's puzzle

- | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Ask | 12. observe | 23. offerings |
| 2. enter | 13. according | 24. cleanse |
| 3. hearken | 14. testimony | 25. think |
| 4. obedience | 15. continually | 26. another |
| 5. servant | 16. everlasting | 27. diligence |
| 6. every | 17. righteous | 28. creator |
| 7. written | 18. sanctuary | 29. paths |
| 8. conformed | 19. nothing | 30. set |
| 9. receive | 20. liberty | 31. "Strive to |
| 10. songs | 21. lusts | enter in at the |
| 11. getting | 22. neither | strait gate." |

Thanks again to all who answered last month's puzzle!

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Robert Boatwright | Jonathan DeHaan | Simon Kranendonk |
| Leah Boerkoel | Calvin denHertog | Harry Maddox |
| Phillip Boerkoel | Janae denHertog | Hailey Meerdink |
| Silvia Boerkoel | Matthew denHertog | Kelly Overbeeke |
| Abigail Boesterd | Eugene Douse Jr. | Kaitlyn Stubbe |
| Andrew Boesterd | Natasha Eckhardt (2) | Sara Stubbe |
| Judith Boesterd | Richard George | Meghan VanDalen |
| Justin Boesterd | Jacob Koppert | Melanie VanDalen |
| Katelyn Boesterd | Lydia Koppert | Megan VanderStel |
| Matthew Boesterd | Rachel Koppert | Danique Veldhuizen |
| Becky Boot | Matthew Kranendonk | |
| Shelly Boot | Samuel Kranendonk | |

OBITUARIES

VANDEN TOORN, Mr. Peter Albert, aged 91, passed away Saturday, June 18, 2011 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He was predeceased by his grandson, Bradley Pylman, and his brother, James Vanden Toorn. He is survived by his wife of nearly 70 years, Harriet; Children—Mary Lou (James) Karel, Shirley (John) Doherty, Paul (Linda) Vanden Toorn, Jan (Skip) Pylman, Tom (Mary) Vanden Toorn; Brothers—Al (Shirley) Vanden Toorn, Howard (Jet) Vanden Toorn; Brother-in-law—Vincent Faasse; Sisters-in-law—Dorothy Hitchcock, Esther Richards, June Faasse, and Flowell Faasse. 11 Grandchildren, 18 great-grandchildren. (Dr. J. R. Beeke, Psalm 17:15).

GRANZOTTO, James F., aged 86, passed away on July 18, 2011 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. James was preceded in death by his son Paul, grandson Anthony, and brother Richard. He is survived by his wife of over 58 years, Margaret; Sons—James Granzotto, John (Kim) Granzotto; Daughters—Margaret (Patrick) Kovach, Marie (Fred) Kegel, Jane (Jim) Braun; Brothers—Rev. Peter A. Granzotto, Robert Granzotto, Edward Granzotto; Sister—Mary (Ralph) Paonessa. 19 grandchildren, two great-grandchildren. (Rev. Peter Vu, Rev. Peter A. Granzotto, John 14:1-7).

TEACHERS NEEDED

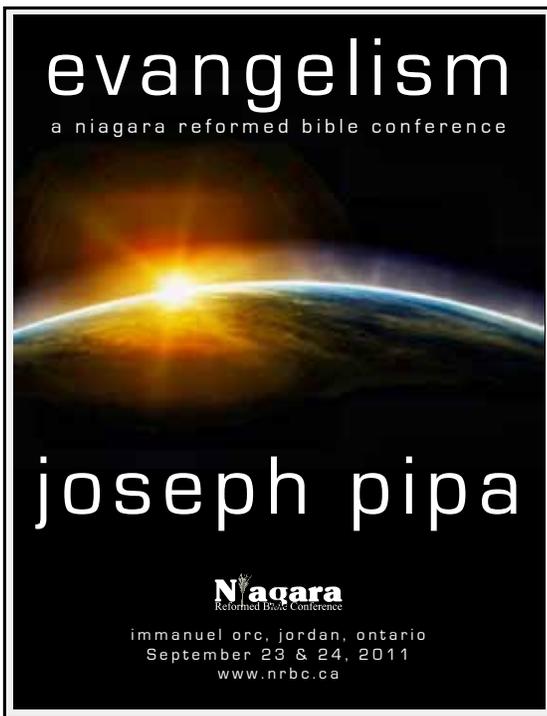
PROVIDENCE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Providence Christian School invites applications for the position of Principal and Elementary/Jr./Sr. High Teacher for the 2011/2012 school year.

Providence Christian School is situated in a beautiful, southern Alberta rural community, minutes from Lethbridge. PCS has grades K-12 with about 120 students attending and 12 staff members. We offer a four-day school week, competitive salaries/benefits, a growing, committed school community, and a dedicated team of teaching staff.

We encourage qualified teachers who submit to God's Holy Word and the Reformed confessions, and are committed to educating children and youth in the Reformed Christian perspective to apply. Please send your resumé, references, statement of faith, and philosophy of Christian education to Providence Christian School, Box 240, Monarch, AB T0L 1M0. For more information, e-mail: admin@pcsmonarch.com; phone: 403-381-4418 (school); fax: 403-381-4428.

CONFERENCE



Obituary notices, church events, and marriage and anniversary notices will be printed free of charge and under no obligation of a gift received. Other announcements and/or requests will be approved by the editorial committee on an individual basis as received.

COME OVER AND HELP

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The COAH Board is seeking a long-term candidate for the following position:



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Qualifications:

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- Primary responsibility for implementing the mandate and the year-plans/budgets of the Organization. Annual budget and project-support planning • Organize meetings, conferences and presentations • Communicate with donors, Board of Directors, financial organizations, Eastern European representatives • Prepare information for meetings • Make travel arrangements • Maintain databases • Coordinate financial administration and fundraising • Assist the editor in preparation of quarterly magazine • Facilitate strategic planning.

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Please direct inquiries and send resume to: Bas DeLeeuw, CHAIRMAN
Email: bdeleeuw@idirect.com Phone: 905-562-7444

NATIONAL NEWS

PRESBYTERIANS APPROVE ORDINATION OF OPENLY GAY CLERGY

After 33 years of debate, the Presbyterian Church (USA) has voted to change its constitution and allow openly gay people in a same-sex relationship to be ordained as ministers, elders, and deacons. The outcome is a reversal from only two years ago, when a majority of the church's regions, known as Presbyteries, voted against ordaining openly gay candidates. The vote was 205-56, with 3 abstentions. In the next few months, the denomination will gauge the reaction from its more conservative members, who believe that ordaining gay people is inconsistent with the Bible. The Presbyterian News Service estimates about 100 congregations have left the Presbyterian Church (USA) in the past five years. (NY Times News Service)

TEXAS DEFUNDS PLANNED PARENTHOOD

Texas has passed a bill defunding Planned Parenthood, making it the seventh state to do so. The bill sends \$47 million in tax funds to other organizations that provide medical services to poor women. In passing the law, Jonathan Saenz of Liberty Institute, suggests elected officials are simply responding to the desire of constituents who refuse to allow their tax dollars to be used for abortion and would prefer that money be spent more responsibly. Planned Parenthood has sued Indiana and Kansas for passage of defunding bills in those states. Saenz says the Texas measure (S.B. 7) should withstand legal scrutiny. (OneNewsNow)

NEW YORK LEGALIZES GAY MARRIAGE

A pro-family group is vowing to continue the fight to protect Bible-based marriage in the wake of the state of New York legalizing gay marriage. The Republican-controlled Senate in the Empire State voted 33-29 to approve same-sex marriage; it was signed into law a few hours later by Governor Andrew Cuomo. Brian Brown, president of the National Organization for Marriage (NOM), calls it "a tragic day" for both New York and the United States. "The people of New York were robbed of the right to vote directly on this issue, and the legislature forced this on the state," he told OneNewsNow. *The New York Times* reports the governor personally played a major role in lobbying those Republicans who reversed their earlier votes.

According to that report, Cuomo delivered their votes with the promise of substantial campaign contributions from prominent Republican donors Paul Singer, Cliff Asness, and Daniel Loeb. *The Times* says those donors "had the influence and the money to insulate nervous senators from conservative backlash" if they supported the same-gender marriage legislation. Within days after meeting with Cuomo, those wealthy Republican donors reported back to the governor that they were on board. "Each of them cut six-figure checks to the lobbying campaign that eventually totaled more than \$1 million," says *The Times*. The bill makes New York only the third state, after Vermont and New Hampshire, to legalize marriage through a legislative act and not via a court ruling. (OneNewsNow)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

JUDGE EXONERATES JAILED EVANGELIST

A judge exonerated a Christian sentenced to one year in prison for selling and distributing Christian literature near a major Muslim gathering north of the capital city of Dhaka, Bangladesh, his lawyer said.

After reviewing an appeal of the case of 25-year-old Biplob Marandi, the magistrate in Gazipur district court cleared the tribal Christian of the charge against him and ordered him to be released, attorney Lensen Swapon Gomes told Compass. Marandi was selling Christian books and other literature when he was arrested near the massive *Bishwa Ijtima* (World Muslim Congregation) on the banks of the Turag River near Tongi town on Jan. 21. "Some fundamentalist Muslims became very angry with him for selling the Christian books near a Muslim gathering," Gomes said, "so they harassed him by handing him over to the mobile court. His release proves that he was innocent and that he did not create any trouble at the Muslim gathering." The judge reviewing the appeal ruled that Marandi proved in court that he sells books, primarily Christian literature, for his livelihood. Bangladesh is the world's third-largest Muslim-majority nation, with Muslims making up 89 percent of its population of 164.4 million, according to Operation World. Christians are less than 1 percent of the total, and Hindus 9 percent. (CompassDirect)



PERSECUTION FOCUS: SUDAN

MILITARY MILITIAS KILL CHRISTIANS IN SOUTH KORDOFAN

Military intelligence agents killed one Christian and Islamic militants sympathetic to the government slaughtered another after attacking churches in Sudan's embattled South Kordofan state. Christian sources said a Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) Intelligence unit detained Nimeri Philip Kalo, a student at St. Paul Major Seminary, near the gate of the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) in Kadugli's al Shaer area and shot him in front of bystanders. Kalo and other Christians were fleeing the town after Muslim militias loyal to the SAF attacked and looted at least three church buildings in Kadugli, they said.

Armed conflict in Kadugli broke out between southern and northern militaries after northern forces seized Abyei last month. Islamic militants loyal to the SAF slaughtered a young Christian man by sword in Kadugli Market, the sources said. Adeeb Gismalla Aksam, 33, was a bus driver whose father is an elder with the Evangelical Church in Kadugli. The Islamic militias were heard shouting "Allahu-akbar (God is greater)" as they began shooting at a Roman Catholic Church building the same day. No one was hit by the bullets shot at the building from the outside, but SAF agents arrested the Rev. Abraham James Lual in front of his congregation. Authorities took him to an unknown location and tortured him for two days, a priest said. The SAF and Islamic militias also set fire to buildings of the Episcopal Church of Sudan and the Sudanese Church of Christ in Kadugli, sources said. "The churches and pastors were directly targeted," said the Rt. Rev. Bishop Andudu Adam Elnail. (Compass Direct News)

Jesus said "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven" (Luke 6:22-23a).

**Corner For Teens
The Reformed Faith (18)**

Rev. Mark Kelderman &
Rev. Maarten Kuivenhoven



The End?

“The End.” Anyone reading a good book dreads those two words. However, for the Christian, these two words mean life—eternal life. The end of life in this world is but an introduction to life in eternity to come. The final step to the order of salvation is called glorification.

The purpose of glorification is highlighted in 1 John 3:2: “And it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” Upon death or the return of Christ, whichever comes first, there will be a transformation. Sin will be put away. Death will no longer be able to touch us. Afflictions will be turned into eternal joy. Faith’s focus will be on Christ forever and ever with no interruption or temptation. There is so much against Christians in this life, especially Christian young people. You are navigating the severe storm of sexual, technological, and material temptation. But keep this goal of glorification in mind; let it guard you from sin and keep your eye on the glorified Christ, that one day you will be like Him.

Paul speaks of the certainty of glorification in Romans 8:30, “Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Paul takes some of the terms that we have used in our study of the Reformed faith and he ties them together into a chain of salvation; each term is a link made by God Himself. From predestination (God choosing sinners in His Son) to calling sinners like us from darkness to light, to justifying sinners before the bar of God’s justice, to glorifying sinners and turning them into the likeness of His well-beloved Son—each of these links is sure. If you remove one link, the chain would break; if you pull one link of the chain, you can use the whole chain. If God has chosen you, He

will glorify you. If He has called you, He will glorify you. If He has justified you, He will glorify you. That is the beauty of God’s salvation. You live in a world that is shaking at its foundations. Regimes come and go. Truth is at a premium and has fallen on hard times in places of higher learning. There is no surety except in the salvation that God offers through His Son. You can pull one link and be assured of all the rest.

The focus of glorification will not ultimately be on us, but on Christ. Our glorification happens in the light of His glory. We often think of heaven and glorification in self-centered terms: “Everything will be in my favor.” That is true only because of what Christ has done—His atonement and intercession. Scripture says, “In thy light we shall see light.” We will be at once perfect and complete, and yet that perfection will only grow in quantity as we stand in the light of the Lamb’s glory.

As we navigate airports, we often hear the words, “Caution, you are approaching the end of a moving walkway.” We are all moving to the end of this life. For some, a cautionary note needs to be trumpeted in your ears because you are not yet saved. You will not be glorified unless you flee for refuge to the Lamb who has died for sinners. For others, an encouragement is in order to keep pressing on. Amid your afflictions, look forward to the day where you will behold Christ face to face in His glory, where your song will be, “Glory to the Lamb!”

Rev. Mark Kelderman is pastor of the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Burgessville, Ontario. **Rev. Maarten Kuivenhoven** is a pastor of the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and a Th.M. theological student at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Feel free to email either of them: makelderman@execulink.com; kuivenhoven.maarten@gmail.com.

From *The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth*
Publication Number (USPS 010584)
540 Crescent St. NE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

PERIODICAL
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GRAND RAPIDS, MI

MAY THE MIND OF CHRIST, MY SAVIOR

May the mind of Christ, my Savior,
Live in me from day to day,
By His love and power controlling
All I do and say.

May the Word of God dwell richly
In my heart from hour to hour,
So that all may see I triumph
Only through His power.

May the peace of God my Father
Rule my life in everything,
That I may be calm to comfort
Sick and sorrowing.

May the love of Jesus fill me
As the waters fill the sea;
Him exalting, self abasing,
This is victory.

May I run the race before me,
Strong and brave to face the foe,
Looking only unto Jesus
As I onward go.

May His beauty rest upon me,
As I seek the lost to win,
And may they forget the channel,
Seeing only Him.

—KATE B. WILKINSON

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HERITAGE REFORMED CONGREGATIONS

A Periodical for Young and Old