

*"All scripture is given by inspiration of God,  
and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for  
correction, for instruction in righteousness."*

*2 Timothy 3:16*

Letters to a Believer | Professor Herman Hanko

Published by Ishu Mahtani

Copyright © Ishu Mahtani 2013

ISBN 978-981-08-0235-6

All references to Scripture are to the King James Version.

References are made in the book to the Reformed confessions. These Reformed confessions include: The Heidelberg Catechism, the Confession of Faith (sometimes called “The Netherlands or Belgic Confession), and the Canons of Dordrecht.

## *Acknowledgement*

I would like to thank my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for guiding me with His mighty hand, for nurturing me as believer, and drawing me closer to Him each day of my life.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Sis Tabitha for her kind assistance in proof reading the document for me. Without her help, I would have probably produced a book with many mistakes.

I am also grateful to Sis Anthea Lin for assisting me with the overall compilation of this work. Her continued expertise in the designing and coordination of the letters made it much easier for me to get this work done efficiently.

I would like to thank Sis Peng Lan for taking all the trouble to do the final check of the document.

I would like to say my most heartiest thanks to Professor Herman Hanko (Prca) for once again agreeing to take much time to provide me with good biblical and reformed answers and to be able to go through the letters over and over again, to ensure its suitability for publication.

To God be the power and the glory and dominion, forever and ever.

Amen.

*1 Corinthians 15:57, "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

## *Preface*

Jehovah Jireh is our Almighty God. And according to His word we live and breathe each breath daily. With this daily in my mind, I decided to embark on my second edition of Letters. This time round, the book is entitled, Letters to a believer, although I will still consider myself to be a very young believer.

Once again, the book been created with a personal desire to share some good biblical and reformed answers to questions which I have had in my mind over the years.

I pray and hope that we can all learn something from this book. May they enable us to have a better understanding of God's Word and lead us to have a desire to want to grow earnestly in our knowledge of our great and loving Father.

*In His Love,*

*Bro Ishw Mahtani*

*Email: christian1601@yahoo.com.sg*

The need for guidance from the Word of God in life continues throughout our pathway. It is a guidance implied in the Psalmist's confession: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light upon my pathway" (Psalm 119:105). Thankful to God for the interest shown in the first volume of letters, I now commend this second volume to you with the hope and prayer that it will be of profit to you and encourage you to pursue your calling in the world to the glory of God through Jesus Christ, in whom we have salvation."

*Herman Hanko, October, 2011.*

*Prof*

*Psalm 83:18, "That men may know that thou, whose name alone  
is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth."*

## *Foreword*

I have known Ishu Mahtani since the time of his conversion from Hinduism. I myself served for 10 years in Singapore as a missionary where brother Ishu and his family live. I had the great joy and excitement of seeing many young Singaporeans come to the saving knowledge the Lord Jesus Christ and to the knowledge of the truth of God's Word for the first time in their lives. Ishu was one of these. Ever since his conversion, even until today, Ishu has always been eager to grow in the knowledge of the truth of the Word of God and its application to many areas of Christian living.

As a businessman in Singapore, Ishu has been a zealous and faithful witness of his faith to those whom he meets in the course of his daily life. The 'Silk Shop' he owns and operates in a busy shopping district of Singapore constantly has people coming through. It is hard to get away from the shop without buying something since Ishu knows how to sell the products of his shop. But more importantly, Ishu often gets involved in spiritual conversations with many who visit, whether to buy or just to visit. Personally, visits to his shop are part of our own blessed and exciting memories of life in Singapore.

Prof. Herman Hanko is a senior minister of the Word of God in the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. He served for many years as Professor in the theological school of these churches located in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Uniquely and by the grace of God 'Prof' has spent lengthy periods of his years since 'retirement' in Singapore working among the members of Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church. Through his labors a close bond of mutual love, respect, and appreciation has been developed between the saints in Singapore and Prof. Hanko.

Out of this beautiful context has arisen the series of questions posed by Ishu and the answers given by Prof. Hanko.

*Pastor Arie den Hartog*

## *Letters*

1.	Accepting a call to the ministry	10
2.	Amil vs Premil	12
3.	Angels in Disguise	14
4.	Angels or Ministers	15
5.	Animal Kingdom (I)	16
6.	Animal Kingdom (II)	17
7.	Apostles	18
8.	Before the Earth was Created by God	20
9.	Bible Translations	22
10.	Blessed Assurance	24
11.	Christian Intolerance	27
12.	Christmas	28
13.	Concerning the Work of Evangelism	29
14.	Concerning Persecution	30
15.	Creation Repeated	32
16.	Do Animals Worship God? (Psalm 148)	34
17.	Do We Pray to Jesus or to God?	35
18.	Fellowship	36
19.	Final Heaven	38

20.	God's Divine Purpose	39
21.	God's Sovereignty in Hell	41
22.	Grace Upon the Reprobate	42
23.	Hatred Against John Calvin's Work	44
24.	Healing Gospel	46
25.	Is the KJV Bible Infallible?	47
26.	Judgement of God	49
27.	Knowing His Will Through Dreams	51
28.	Listening to Worldly Songs	53
29.	Live Preaching	54
30.	Loving Our Bodies	56
31.	Man's Capability	57
32.	Observing the Sabbath	58
33.	Other gods?	61
34.	Our Form in Heaven	63
35.	Peace with God	65
36.	Regarding the End of the World	67
37.	Regarding the Sea of Galilee	69
38.	Regarding Thunder	70
39.	Reward in Heaven	73

40.	Role of Husband and Wife in the Family	75
41.	Saints	76
42.	Saved or Not Saved	77
43.	Seed of the Devil (Genesis 3:15)	80
44.	Sin and Our Soul	82
45.	Stem Cells Research	84
46.	Suffering	86
47.	Time to Kill? (Ecclesiastes 3:1)	88
48.	True and False Churches of Christ	89
49.	Vengeance Against the Ungodly (Psalm 109)	91
50.	Visiting Other Churches	92

# 1 Accepting a Call to the Ministry

*Dear Prof,*

I thought I would ask you something pertaining to the call to a Ministry in the Church of Christ. If a brother had a desire to go into the ministry, would the brother be normally called by a church? Can a Christian man decide to go for seminary training on his own accord, without being sent by the local church? Finally must a man go only if and when he receives the blessings of his church to which he belongs?

*Dear believer,*

You raise an interesting question, one I had not thought much about.

In our churches the practice is that a student proceeds with his studies for entrance into the ministry without any ecclesiastical permission. He does, however, have to have a testimonial from his consistory that he is a member in good standing, and that, as far as the consistory can judge, he has the necessary gifts for the ministry. Also, although the churches have not approved his studies, various funds are available to him to assist him financially. If, in fact, he does not graduate and enter the ministry, these funds are simply forfeited; he is not obligated to repay them.

There are various steps, however, along the way. He enters Seminary with the approval of the Theological School Committee, which approval is, in turn, approved by Synod. Each year a report is made to Synod on the progress of the students, although synod only receives such a report for information, unless synod is not satisfied with what the school has done. When a student, usually after his second year of studies, is given permission to preach in the churches, this is a decision of the faculty, but approved by synod at its next session. At the end of his schooling, he is recommended for oral exams at synod. The synod must approve these exams and declare him candidate for the ministry. When he

has received and taken a call, before he can be ordained, he is examined at the classis, and their approval is decisive.

The professors evaluate a student's progress every semester, and may, if his work is not satisfactory, ask him to drop his course of study. Or a student may realize himself that he is incapable of mastering the work (very rigorous and demanding) and decide he should drop out. He does this without penalty, and it happens rather frequently. This method works well, and the churches have followed it for 83 years with success.

But in Presbyterian circles the matter is done differently. A student begins his studies for the ministry only with the approval of presbytery. I do not know exactly how the system works in its details, but the presbytery keeps close tabs on a student throughout his studies. However, increasingly seminaries are independent; that is, are not operated by a denomination or church. This is a serious mistake, but is nevertheless the case. Students go to such seminaries and, having completed their studies, simply apply for the ministry in a denomination or church.

Teaching in the seminary is an official part of the work of the church and, therefore, ought to be under strict ecclesiastical control. Heresy, after all, usually begins in the seminary. Also, in our system a student may discontinue his studies at any time without any decision of the churches or without any ecclesiastical penalties.

The point is that God through Christ calls a man to the ministry decisively through the call of a local congregation. Only then is he officially a minister and an ambassador of Christ to speak in Christ's name.

*Greetings and blessings,  
Prof*

## 2 Amil vs Pre-mil

*Dear Prof,*

I was wondering whether it is alright for Christians to differ when the matter pertaining to the millennial views are concerned. Does it matter whether a Christian believes in amillennialism or premillennialism?

Can Christians who believe in different millennial views continue to remain as members of a same local church?

*Dear believer,*

Greetings. It was good to hear from you once again.

The basis for unity among churches is the confessions, which we call The Three Forms of Unity. There must be agreement on these confessions before there can be unity in the church.

Pre-millennialism is not, in itself, condemned by the confessions, for Pre-mil theology is a recent heresy and appeared only after the confessions were written. But there are several doctrines in the confessions that Pre-mils deny. One doctrine is the kingship of Christ over the church. Pre-mils claim that only Jews are “kingdom people,” but not Gentiles and that Christ is king only of the Jews with whom He establishes His kingdom. See Lord’s Day 31 and 48 as well as the Belgic confessions, Article 27. Further, Pre-mils deny the unity of the Old and New Testaments, a doctrine abhorred by the confessions (See Lord’s Day 6, Arts. 4-7 of the Belgic Confessions, especially Art. 7). These articles assume that the Scriptures are one and that no division must be made between the Old and New Testaments. It remains true that “The New is in the Old contained; the Old is in the New explained.”

There are other serious errors in Pre-mil, including, in many pre-mil churches, a refusal to baptize infants because, making a division between Old and New Testaments, the Pre-mils deny that baptism has come in the place of circumcision.

Pre-mils are also, as a general rule, Arminian. John Gerstner has written a book in which Pre-mil doctrine is analyzed. It is such a powerful refutation of Pre-mil doctrine that it has forced many Pre-mils to alter their position in some respects. Its title is, "Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth." It goes so far as to question whether a true Pre-mil can even be a Christian. The book is worth reading.

*Greetings to you and blessings,  
Prof*

### 3 Angels in Disguise

*Dear Prof,*

I continue to ponder the subject of “gods.” Would it be correct to say that the gods which the heathen worship are actually “devils” in disguise?

*Dear believer,*

The idols before which men bow are not themselves devils, but, in the minds of the worshippers, represent gods, actually non-existent gods, but gods of their imagination. The devil uses these imaginary gods and the images of them, which men worship as tools by means of which men worship him.

In some instances, the devil is able to give these images certain seemingly miraculous powers to deceive the idolaters.

The wicked make images to corrupt deliberately and consciously the knowledge of the true God, because they hate him and refuse to worship him. Read Paul in Romans 1:18. They change the knowledge of God into an image of corruptible man and four-footed beasts and creeping things. To change something, you have to have knowledge of what you are changing.

Thus the wicked are without excuse.

*Prof*

## 4 Angels or Ministers

*Dear Prof,*

In Psalms 104:4, God speaks to us about His angels and His ministers. Are the ministers mentioned in this verse different from the angels who are mentioned in the Bible?

*Dear believer,*

The angels are ministers, as the last verse of Hebrews 1 makes clear. They are ministers who carry out the will of God with respect to the elect. They are like a nurse-maid of a little child, which child is to be the heir of all his father possesses. Now the angels are higher than we – as a nurse-maid is higher than a child when the child is small. The angels are heavenly creatures and are without sin. But when we are all in glory, then we will be higher than the angels, as a child, when come to years of adulthood, is higher than his nurse.

They are the elect angels, for the reprobate angels fell at the beginning of history when they sided with Satan in his rebellion against God.

*Greetings and blessings,*

*Prof*

## 5 Animal Kingdom ( I )

*Dear Prof,*

I would like to ask you about God's creation pertaining to the animal kingdom. Did God have a purpose in creating animals? Also do animals have the ability to worship God? Does God have a divine plan for animals in His Kingdom come?

*Dear believer,*

Your questions about animals are interesting and worth searching the Scriptures for answers to them. Yes, God has a purpose with every single creature that he created, including the animals. They also, in their own way, reveal the glory of God. We must remember, however, that the curse has come on the creation; this curse changed radically the entire creation. The result is that we cannot see clearly what that purpose of God is in each animal.

Animals do not worship God and cannot. They have no knowledge of God as far as we can tell, for they do not have the soul that man has and by which man knows God. They were not created in the image of God, but in the image of man. Yet, though they do not know this, they do show forth God's praises. But then, so does the sun, the constellations, the mountains, etc.

There will surely be animals in heaven, for all the creation is redeemed from the curse and saved. Many passages in Scripture teach this, as for example Colossians 1:20, Romans 8:19-22, Isaiah 65:25, and many others. But the individual animals that live now will not be saved, for they have no soul. But the animal kingdom will be saved and new animals representing the animals that now are will be saved. According to Genesis 9, God establishes His covenant with the whole creation. God created all things and continues to give all things existence in His providence. God will not abandon His own work. It will be redeemed. That is a wonder. The new heavens and the new earth is emphatically a new earth.

*Prof*

## 6 Animal Kingdom ( II )

*Dear Prof,*

I am not clear on what it means that animals were created in the image of man?

*Dear believer,*

God created the animal world so that there is a gradual descent from the highest animals to the lowest. Genesis 3:1 says that the serpent was more subtle than any other animal. This means that the serpent was the animal with the highest intelligence of any animal, although he was lower in intelligence than Adam. It could communicate with man, for Eve was not surprised when it talked.

It may even have been capable of agreeing with Satan who wanted to use it to tempt Eve, for it was also punished. A long stairway of animals goes down to the lowest of all, an amoeba or a virus. Each lower level of animal lacks some of the characteristics of the animals above them. Hence the animal chain descends from the higher forms of animal life to lower forms, but in a slow decline. So each lower level of animal bears the image of the animals on the level above it, but retains many of the characteristics of those higher animals. An image of something is lacking certain characteristics of that which is imaged.

Even dogs can know certain things, want certain things with their wills, and feel sad or happy.

Because of these facts the creation is an organism with every creature related to and dependant on every other creature.

*Prof*

# 7 Apostles

*Dear Prof,*

I understand from the Bible that there were 12 Apostles which Jesus had called, namely, Peter, Andrew, James, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, Thaddeus, Simon, and Judas. However I find that in the NT, only a few of the Apostles wrote parts of Scripture. I therefore was wondering whether those Apostles' names which are included in the Bible did write anything or were their writings just not included in the Bible.

*Dear believer,*

Actually, as you know, there were 13 apostles. Prior to our Lord's death, there were 12, but Judas Iscariot committed suicide, which left 11. The early church, prior to Pentecost, chose another apostle (Acts 1) by the name of Matthias. So that made 12 once again. But then God choose Paul to be an apostle (Galatians 1), with the result that there were 13. But this is not so strange, for there were actually 13 tribes as well. There were the 12 sons of Jacob, but Joseph did not become a tribe himself; instead, his 2 sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, became tribes, which totaled 13.

But to get to your real question: No, actually only a very few apostles became instruments of God to write the Scriptures: Matthew, John, Paul and Peter. Mark was probably a relative, but he was not an apostle. Neither was Luke, although Luke accompanied Paul, as Paul's doctor, on Paul's missionary journeys. James and Jude were half-brothers of the Lord, and no one knows who wrote the book of Hebrews. So God chose some apostles to write Scripture and some who were not apostles.

The other apostles who did not have any role in Scripture did not write other writings, at least, not infallible ones like the Scriptures. They may have written letters, as we all do, but not letters inspired by the Holy Spirit.

It is interesting that the Scriptures tell us very little about most of the apostles. But this does not mean that they did not do a great deal of work both in Jerusalem and outside Jerusalem. There are traditions that Thomas even went as far as India; but we cannot be sure of this. The purpose of the Bible is not to give us biographies of the apostles, but to show how the gospel was sent to the ends of the known world of that day.

*Greetings and blessings,*

*Prof*

## 8 Before the Earth was Created by God

*Dear Prof,*

I am currently reading a book entitled, “Twelve Sermons on the Holy Spirit” by Charles Spurgeon. I wish to share with you a passage which I have read in the book. The chapter is headed, “The Power of the Holy Ghost” and reads as follows:

“But if you will look in the 1st chapter of Genesis, you will there see more particularly set forth that peculiar operation of power upon the universe which was put forth by the Holy Spirit; you will then discover what was His special work. In the 2nd verse of the 1st chapter of Genesis, we read, And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. We know not how remote the period of the creation of this globe may be- certainly many millions of years before the time of Adam. Our planet has passed through various stages of existence, and different kinds of creatures have lived on its surface, all of which have been fashioned by God. But before that era came, wherein man should be its principal tenant and monarch, the Creator gave up the world to confusion. He allowed the inward fires to burst up from beneath and melt all the solid matter, so that all kinds of substances were commingled in one vast mass of disorder; the only name you could give to the world then was, that it was a chaotic mass of matter; what it should be, you could not guess or define....”

I think this is probably the first time I have come across an author who speaks about the earth in this manner. I know from the Bible about how God created the earth and that it was without form before that. However the description given about how earth was before that time was quite intriguing to read.

*Dear believer,*

I was a little surprised to find a passage in Spurgeon like this. But it is not an uncommon view of creation. It was at one time taught by many. It is one of many attempts to harmonize Genesis 1 with science. The only way to harmonize

Genesis 1 with science is to make the universe millions of years old (now billions of years). And so millions of years are placed between Gen. 1:2 and Gen. 1:3, and that period is described as a time of chaos much along the lines of Spurgeon. I think it was called The Catastrophe Theory. This theory was followed by The Period Theory, which made all the days of Genesis 1 long periods of time. And that has been followed by many other attempts to make Genesis 1 fit with science, for example, the hypothesis Framework and the liturgical theory, which make Genesis 1 a doxology of praise to God, but not to be taken literally.

They are all efforts to introduce evolutionism into the church in one way or another by making this world old. They are all contradicted by the Genesis account, and the only way to make them work is to deny the literal meaning of Genesis 1. They are all, therefore, condemned by Scripture itself, as e.g., by the fourth commandment: “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth. . . .”

Genesis 1:2 describes the original mass that God formed and from which He created the rest of the universe. There was no light as yet and so there was no heat. This is what is called absolute zero. Scientists have not been able to create a situation which is absolute zero, but the nearer they approach it, the more chaotic matter becomes. But all was created on the first day: the original mass of material and light. That is Scripture and to that we must hold.

*Greetings to you in our Lord's name,  
Prof*

## 9 Bible Translations

*Dear Prof,*

I have seen several different interpretations as far as Bibles are concerned. Are you able to comment as to why is it necessary for us to use the King James Version and not any other versions for our better understanding of Gods word?

*Dear believer,*

This matter of Bible translations is a rather complicated question. In brief, I suggest the following.

1. If your correspondent who prompted your question is able to work with the Hebrew and the Greek, he ought to limit himself to them.
2. If he wishes to use a translation in connection with the Hebrew and Greek text, he should choose one translation and stick with that. The wide proliferation of Bible translations is a curse and has only served to confuse the student of Scripture, for, unless he has knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, he will, after looking at many translations, not know any more what the Bible in fact says.
3. As far as Psalm 25:14 is concerned, the meaning of the word secret in Hebrew indicates one man speaking into the ear of another man so that no one else can hear. This is, says the Psalmist, a picture of how God reveals Himself to His people. He, so to speak, whispers in their ear the truths concerning Himself and all His works.
4. The verse is an instance of Hebrew parallelism in which the two parts of the verse explain each other. So when the text says that God gives to His people His secrets, that is the same as establishing His covenant with them. And the establishment of His covenant with His people consists of God revealing His secrets to His people.

5. The word “confide” comes close to what the Hebrew means, but is not quite the same. There is here, therefore, an instance in which it is better to work with the Hebrew and not lean on other translations.

6. As far as other translations are concerned, I have, over the years, worked with many. After careful study, I am convinced that the KJV is the most accurate, the most readable, and the easiest to memorize of all translations. The NIV is a bad translation because 1) It uses defective manuscripts which leave out part of the Bible which should be included; 2) The translation is on the principle of dynamic equivalence. This means that it is not a word for word translation. It thus denies the principle of verbal inspiration. Rather, it takes the thought of a sentence and puts the same thought in English. But that means that it is a commentary, not a translation.

7. One ought not to go from the English to the Greek or Hebrew, for one is biased by the translation, but one ought to go from the Greek or Hebrew to the translation. That is, one ought to have a clear understanding of the Greek or Hebrew, and then one can find out, if he wishes, what a translation does with the verse. Your correspondent seems to have this backward.

There is considerable material on the CPRC website on the question. There are, in fact, six pamphlets on the question. I think the PR website also has some pamphlets, although they may be the same ones.

*Greetings and blessings in the Lord,  
Prof*

References:

<http://www.cprc.co.uk/m3u/bibletrans.m3u>

[http://www.prca.org/pamphlets\\_and\\_articles.html#The\\_Bible](http://www.prca.org/pamphlets_and_articles.html#The_Bible)

[http://www.prca.org/pamphlets/pamphlet\\_9.html](http://www.prca.org/pamphlets/pamphlet_9.html)

[http://www.prca.org/pamphlets/pamphlet\\_10.html](http://www.prca.org/pamphlets/pamphlet_10.html)

# 10 Blessed Assurance

*Dear Prof,*

How can I be sure that I am saved? How can I be sure that I am a child of God?

*Dear believer,*

There are churches, as you know, who claim that only a few in the congregation have assurance of their salvation, while many, if not most, consider doubt concerning their salvation to be the normal part of a Christian's life. They live all their lives in the church and die at an old age without any assurance of their salvation. They are deathly afraid that the devil gives them a false assurance to deceive them. They talk about the possibility of going to hell while imagining they are going to heaven. They are constantly inquiring into their assurance and never finding it. They base, oftentimes, their assurance on some strange event in their lives in which they claim that God has spoken to them in a special way. All this is dreadfully wrong, but was characteristic of Puritan theology. And that is one reason why I do not like Puritan writings. I was told of a congregation in the Netherlands of about 2000 souls in which only about 8 or 9 went to the Lord's Table to celebrate communion, because the rest were in doubt concerning their salvation. The minister preached a sermon in which he sharply reprimanded the congregation because too many were coming to the Lord's Table

The fact of the matter is that if I went around my daily business asking myself the question: "Am I truly a child of God? Could I be fooling myself into thinking that I am a child of God when really I am not?" I would soon convince myself that indeed I am not. Let me use a figure.

Every child at one time or another in his early years wonders whether he is truly a child of the people who claim to be his parents. He wonders whether there may have been a mix-up in the hospital; whether he is adopted; whether somewhere along the line his so-called parents took him into their care because of some event in his early life. Now if that child grows up continuously questioning whether he is truly such and such and not really a child of his parents, what is going to happen? If you would stand in front of the mirror every morning to shave and, while standing there, would ask yourself repeatedly the question: "Am I really who people say I am? Or am I perhaps someone else?" And you would ask that question seriously with a certain doubt in your mind; you would begin, more and more, to convince yourself that you probably are not who people say you are, but some other person.

Now the same thing is true of our spiritual assurance. We are surrounded by our Father's love and by the many tokens of His favor -- just as a child is surrounded by the love of his parents. May you keep asking whether you are a child of God -- or a child of Satan? If you would question your earthly parents all the time and ask them if they are truly your parents, they would become angry and finally ask you, "Why do you think you are not? Do you not know our love for you? Our care of you? Our constant concern for you? What more do you want? If you think you are not a child of us, then you had better go and live with those whom you think are your parents." We may not doubt our sonship. It is a sin that has to be confessed and for which we have to be forgiven. God is good to us. May we doubt His Fatherhood?

But there is more. When we do doubt, we must go to the cross to confess our sins and find forgiveness. By faith we believe that we belong to Christ. By faith, therefore, we know that belonging to Christ; we are God's children for Christ's sake. The devil tries to rob us of our assurance by pointing us to our sins and whispering to us that we are too wicked to be children of God. But we must shut the mouth of Satan with the words: "I know I am a sinner. You do not have to tell me that. But I belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ; and I am a child of God because my sins are taken away by the sacrifice of my Savior."

And then this. I have this assurance only when I walk in obedience to my Father's will. I cannot live like the devil, walk in sin, let evil fill my mind and direct my will and still think I am a child of God. God's wrath is then my experience. A child,

who is naughty and disobedient to his parents and incurs his parents' anger, loses the consciousness of the love of his parents. Only when he confesses his wrong and says, I am sorry; I won't do it again, do his parents take him into their arms. So in our relation to God, we go to the cross; confess our sins, tell God we are sorry and turn from our evil ways; then do we have again the assurance that we are God's children.

People who are living in sin have told me when confronted with their sin that they know they are children of God. This is a lie and a brazen attempt to justify their evil way. When we live in the consciousness of our salvation we are thankful; and thankful children are obedient children -- always. Then assurance is so naturally a part of life -- my life -- that I do not need to ask myself the question of whether I am a child of God. If someone comes to me and says to me, "You are not a son of Rev. and Mrs. Cornelius Hanko, then I would look at him in amazement and say, "You do not know what you are talking about. Of course, I am. You must be out of your mind. Go away."

Assurance is a necessary and blessed part of the Christian's life. Read Romans 8.

*In Christ's service,  
Prof*

# 11 Christian Intolerance

*Dear Prof,*

Many countries have tried to maintain peace and harmony by encouraging their citizens to be more tolerant toward each other. They also try to inculcate religious tolerance amongst its people. Do you think that Christians will become a group which will be less tolerated during the end times?

*Dear believer,*

Yes, it is true that Christians will not be tolerated at all as we near the end. Christians take the position that the truth of Scripture is the only truth. While they do tolerate the religion of others in the sense that they do not force Christianity on people, they do tell people that the only way to be saved is by faith in Christ and that all other religions are false. Those who believe them will suffer the wrath of God in hell. But they tell people this because they earnestly love their neighbor and want him to be saved.

But while the world preaches and practices tolerance, there is one religion that the world will not tolerate, and that is Christianity. This is clear, for example, from the growing hatred of evolutionists for those who believe that God created the heavens and the earth in six days of twenty-four hours. It is also evident in the fact that in some places one can be jailed for a hate crime when he condemns homosexuality as a sin against God.

The day is coming when to stand for the truth of God revealed in the Scriptures will result in persecution.

*Prof*

# 12 Christmas

*Dear Prof,*

Greetings in His most precious and holy name. During Christmas, Christians rejoice when they celebrate the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I wish to ask you, is there an official date when Jesus was born?

*Dear believer,*

The time of the birth of Christ is not known. I think God deliberately caused the time to be erased from the records of history so that we may concentrate on the wonder of the birth of the Son of God and not on the time of His birth.

We must remember that there were no calendars in those days to reckon years and months. The Jews reckoned a year from the celebration of the Passover to the next celebration. The Passover lamb was killed on the 14th of Nisan. The Jewish month Nisan was approximately our March, although the latter half of the month. But this does not help us determine the birth of Christ because we do not know how near the Passover His birth took place.

Reckoning on the basis of the decree of Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed (Luke 2:1), it is generally reckoned that Christ was born in the year 4 B.C. Although the transition from B.C. to A.D. is supposed to have taken place at the moment of Christ's birth, mistakes in reckoning were made and the accepted date is 4 B.C.

Some have concluded that the time of the year must have been Spring or summer, for the shepherds were out in the fields taking care of their sheep. They would probably have been unable to do this, if it had been winter. The birth of Christ did not take place on the 25th of December. How the church came to designate that date as the date to commemorate Christ's birth is a long and complicated story that even involves a very serious doctrinal error that was present in the early post-apostolic church. And that is as close as anyone can come.

# 13 Concerning the Work of Evangelism

*Dear Prof,*

In recent years, the work of evangelism has become harder to do. Do you think that it will be more difficult for us to bring the gospel to the lost? Or perhaps have the elect people already been gathered, thereby making it unnecessary to do this work so zealously now?

*Dear believer,*

I am of the opinion that the last possibility you mention is true. As we near the end of the world, God finishes his work of gathering his church. God does not arbitrarily stop at any moment gathering his people. From all eternity he has a definite number who belong to Christ and are redeemed in the cross of Calvary. God knows who they are, and when they are all gathered, the end comes.

It is like thousands of pennies spilled on the floor. As one picks them up to put in a container, he can pick up whole handfuls at first. But the more he has picked up, the less remain; and so a time comes when he has to pick them up one by one.

Another reason is that one of the signs of Christ's coming is apostasy (Matt. 24:10-13). Many in the church shall fall away and the number of those brought into the church decreases.

But this is not a reason to slow down our evangelistic efforts; it is rather a reason to increase them. Our calling is to bring the gospel to others; God will take care of saving His people. When persecution comes and evangelistic work becomes impossible, then we know that the end is near.

*Prof*

# 14 Concerning Persecution

*Dear Prof,*

During the lifetime of a Christian, I believe many may face persecution. I wish to ask you how a Christian should react during times of persecution. Can we try to avoid persecution if at all possible?

*Dear believer,*

The Christian, if he is faithful in his life and walk, always suffers persecution. Scripture is clear on this. A couple of texts will make that clear. “In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (John 15:18, 19). Paul told the churches he organized on his first missionary journey “We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

If we do not know what persecution is, the reason is that more than likely we have not been faithful in our life and our witnessing. To be persecuted (or to suffer tribulation, which is the same thing) does not necessarily mean that we are imprisoned, tortured and put to death. It can also mean that we are deprived of our daily living, are reproached, reviled, mocked and evil spoken of. And this happens all the time.

Christ himself makes it very clear how we are to act in persecution. “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for their’s is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets

which were before you” (Matt. 5:10-12).

This was said by the Lord in the Sermon on the Mount. In the same sermon on the mount Jesus told his disciples (and us): “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matt. 5:44).

We have also the example of the apostles when they were beaten by the Jewish authorities for preaching Jesus. We read of them, “And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:41). Persecution is a privilege for which we ought to give thanks.

A Christian ought not to do all he can to escape persecution, for this would involve compromising his faith. In the early church there were those who eagerly sought persecution. The mother of the church father, Origen, hid all his clothes so that he would not give himself up to those who had imprisoned his father. This too is wrong. And Jesus tells us that when we can no longer worship in our churches because of persecution, we are to flee (Matt. 24:15-22). But for the rest, we are to live faithfully in doctrine and life; we are to be witnesses to our faith by our words and deeds. If we are persecuted as a result, we are to receive this persecution from God. God uses persecution to sanctify us and prepare us for heaven (I Peter 1:6-7 – where the word “temptation” ought to be “trial”).

The time fails for the author of the letter to the Hebrews to tell of those in the Old Testament “who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trials of cruel mocking and scourging, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect” (Heb. 11:31-40).

*Prof*

# 15 Creation Repeated

*Dear Prof,*

I was recently reading about God's creation in Genesis 1:27, 28. The verse reads, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" And in Genesis 1:31, this is mentioned; "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day."

I thought that this verse would speak of the completion of all of God's creation. However when I read Genesis 2:28, "And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an help meet for him," and in v21 and 22, "And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man," history seems to repeat itself.

I was wondering why creation of the woman was being mentioned again in the latter chapter? If the first part the Bible had already mentioned about the completion of His creation, that is, of the creation of man and woman as well, I was wondering why the creation of the women was being mentioned again in the second chapter?

*Dear believer,*

The question you ask is an interesting one; but I think the answer to your question lies in what Genesis 2 is all about. Genesis 2, beginning especially with verse 4, gives a more detailed explanation of what is said in chapter 1. This more detailed description is introduced by verse 4. A more detailed description of the plant life

of the creation and how it was watered is found in verses 5, 6, 8, 10-14; a more detailed account of man's creation is found in verse 7; additional details are given about the creation of the world when the formation of the garden of Eden is described in 8, 9; the command given to Adam is described in 16, 17; and finally, because the creation of Eve is also the institution of marriage, God spent a lot of time describing the creation of Eve and her marriage to Adam, although the creation of woman was mentioned already in Genesis 1:26, 27.

But I think there is another aspect to the answer. When God finished creating (1:31, 2:1-3), the meaning of the text is that God's world was exactly the way He wanted it to serve His eternal purpose. "And God saw all that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." That does not mean that there was no sin in the creation. Of course, there was no sin. If there had been sin, God would be the One who created sin. But it means that everything God made was exactly as He wanted it to be, so that the whole creation could serve His purpose in the salvation of a church in Jesus Christ. It was like the preparation of a stage for a dramatic production. When everything is made, put in its place and adjusted just right, then the stage is set perfectly for the dramatic production that will take place on it. And so the creation was the "stage" for God's drama of history, the title of which is: "Sin and Grace: the Fall and Salvation in Christ."

And so we must expect that God did, on occasion, do more creating. For example, He created the water in the Rock that poured out for Israel at Rephidim. It was not there before. God made it. It was a miracle. And when Jesus fed the 5000 and later the 3000, Jesus created bread. It was not there before. To say that the water was always in the Rock and the bread in the lunch bags of some of the people is to deny the miracle. But these were miracles that pointed to salvation: The Holy Spirit is pictured in the water (John 7:37-39), and the bread with which Jesus fed the multitudes was Jesus Himself, the Bread of life (John 6).

*Greetings and blessings to you,  
Prof*

# 16 Do Animals Worship God? (Ps 148)

*Dear Prof,*

In Psalm 148, some verses seem to speak about animals offering praise and worship to God. Were animals created even for this very purpose?

*Dear believer,*

You have undoubtedly noticed that the Psalmist in Psalm 148 speaks of inanimate creatures also praising God. It would be impossible for something inanimate to praise God consciously, for consciousness is a part of being alive.

There is a figure in Scripture called “personification,” by which inanimate creatures are addressed or spoken to or have ascribed to themselves characteristics of human intelligence. Three well-known examples are: “O death, where is thy sting? O, grave where is thy victory?” “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy chickens together . . .” “The blood of Abel crieth to me from the ground.” In no instance do such figures of speech imply consciousness.

Such it is also with Psalm 148. The Psalmist calls upon the creation to praise God, not because this would become a conscious activity on the part of mountains and trees, but because the Psalmist wants the entire creation to reveal God’s glory and praise – as it certainly does.

This is also evident from the fact that wicked men are called to praise God, such as kings. Wicked men do not consciously praise God, but God gains praise to himself also from wicked men.

*Greetings and blessings,*

*Prof*

# 17 Do We Pray to Jesus or to God?

*Dear Prof,*

During a reading on the book of Hebrews recently, I understood that the author spoke about the divinity of Jesus Christ. Scripture also mentioned the fact that Jesus is God. If Jesus is indeed God, can we direct our prayers only to Jesus, or do we still need to mention God in our prayers?

*Dear believer,*

Greetings in the Lord.

Yes, the book of Hebrews emphasizes the divinity of Christ, as does the gospel of John. And because Jesus Christ is, in the words of the Nicene Creed, “true God of true God” we may pray to Him. Scripture gives us one prayer to Him: “Come, Lord Jesus; yea, come quickly.”

Nevertheless, we are instructed to pray to the triune God, as Jesus Himself instructs us: “Our Father, which art in heaven . . .” Our Father is the triune God. He is also the Father of Christ, for Christ is His only begotten Son in our flesh. As the angel tells Mary, the child to be born of her has God as His Father: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon you and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you.” And so, we are instructed, as a general rule, to pray to the triune God in the name of Christ, for through Him we have the right to come, as sinners, to God.

But this does not alter the fact that, as Hebrews 1 makes clear, we are to adore and worship Christ as God.

*Blessings,  
Prof*

# 18 Fellowship

*Dear Prof,*

What advice would you give to believers, who do not wish to go to church and do not wish to have fellowship with other saints? What if some Christians just wished to pray in their closets, often due to their conservative nature? Would this be okay?

*Dear believer,*

There are times when God makes it impossible for a believer to go to church. He cannot go because of the infirmities of old age, or because of serious sickness, or because he or she must stay home with a helpless relative. In our age of modern communications, it is still possible for such a one to hear the worship services, although he cannot attend the services himself. Also, part of the elder's work is to visit such a one and bring the word in a pastoral visit.

But the question is concerning those who will not go to church. That unwillingness is a sin and must be confessed. Scripture says: "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." This is clear and unambiguous. Therefore, those who will not go to church and do not wish to have fellowship with other saints are not true believers. There are many passages in Scripture that speak of the joy God's people have of going to church. See Psalms 84, 133, 122, 27:4 and many others.

What would you think of a member of a family who refused to live with the rest of the family? Who insisted on eating by himself and would never enjoy a meal with his parents and siblings? You would say, Such a one does not consider himself a part of the family and, in fact, dislikes the family. If the one who will not live with the family of God says, I am to shy, too conservative, too embarrassed to come,

then you would tell that person, We all love you and will make you feel at home. But you must live with the family, for if you do not live with the family, you are not a part of the family. And the church is the family of God!

I had a similar experience in my own ministry. There was a man and his wife who, while they did come to church regularly, would not join the church. That is, they would not become members of the family. When the Lord's Supper was to be administered, they asked for permission to come to the table of the Lord. The elders told them, No; they had to join the church first. They were very angry and did not come to church for a while. But after a few weeks they were back in church, but still refused to join on the grounds that they were members of the universal church. Every time the Lord's Supper was administered it was the same story. They asked to partake, were refused, and became angry. But eventually they did not come any more and never did become members of a church so far as I know.

Christians must pray in their closets also and must meditate on God's word in their homes too. But if they do not put themselves under the preaching of the word and become members of the church, they will not be saved (Rom. 10:13-17).

God' people show their membership in and love for the whole church of Christ by becoming a part of a congregation that is the true church.

*Prof*

# 19 Final Heaven

*Dear Prof,*

Greetings in His precious and holy name. In one of your articles, based on the book of Revelation, I quote, "Heaven, right now, is where God, the angels, and all the glorified saints exist. And, although it is glorious, that heaven is not the final state that God has in mind. The saints who are now there are not in their glorified bodies. That heaven will pass away. It will be completed when Christ returns to make all things new, to create out of this earth and out of heaven the new Jerusalem."

I was wondering which Heaven is the ultimately resting place for believers when they die.

*Dear believer,*

The quote in your letter sounds a bit like something I wrote, with the exception being the phrase "where God is." He is revealed in heaven, but the heavens and the heavens of heavens cannot contain Him -- as Solomon prayed at the time of the dedication of the temple.

Apart from that, the statement is correct. We are told that when Christ comes again there will be a new heavens and a new earth. The present heaven is a very glorious place, but the new heavens will even be more glorious. We are not told in Scripture what changes will take place in the heavenly creation, but we know that all the church will be present, and all the saints will for the first time be present in their resurrection bodies. Further, heaven and earth will become one creation and it is quite possible that the union of the heavenly creation to the earthly creation will involve some changes in the heavenly as it will surely involve some changes in the earthly.

The earthly, however, will be made heavenly; that is, a spiritual creation to match the spiritual character of the heavenly. But we really know very little about these things.

*Greetings and blessing,  
Prof*

## 20 God's Divine Purpose

*Dear Prof,*

Greetings in His precious and holy name. I am reading a book entitled, "Israel of God," by O. Palmer Robertson. In his comments in one of the chapters concerning the people of God, the author mentions this:

*"The election of God could be redirected. Yet the Lord promises that he will not cut off his people altogether. In his sovereign action of saving certain undeserving people, God could decide to redirect his grace and choose another nation to be his own. Because of the undeserving character of all the descendants of Adam, God could determine to apply his grace to a different community of people. As the prophet Amos declares, there is no difference;*

*"Are not you Israelites the same to me as the Cushites?"*

*declares the Covenant LORD.*

*"Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt,*

*the Phillistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?" (Amos 9:7)*

*God has been moving peoples across the face of the earth for a long time. He retains a special interest in all the nations of the world. Could he not choose one nation just as easily as another? Indeed he could!"*

My question is whether the above seems to say that God is a God who can change his plans, and decide whom He wishes to save along the way. Is this possible?

*Dear believer,*

As to your question: The answer is emphatically NO. It is not possible that God change His mind or His eternal counsel. This is contrary to Scripture, where in Malachi, God says, "I am Jehovah. I change not. Therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Immutability is a part of being eternal; if God is changeable He

is not eternal. Change belongs to time, God is above all time.

We could conceivably interpret O. Palmer Robertson's words to mean that God did not choose Israel to be His people because some special goodness or attractiveness could be found in them. As far as Israel was concerned, they were no better than any other nation. God chose them freely by His own eternal decree and His purpose that He eternally determined. From a purely hypothetical point of view, God could have chosen any nation.

The statement, "God has been moving peoples across the face of the earth for a long time. He retains a special interest in all the nations of the world. Could he not choose one nation just as easily as another? Indeed He could!" is a strange statement and very vague. I do not think that it ought ever to be on the lips of a Reformed man.

*Many blessings,  
Prof*

# 21 God's Sovereignty in Hell

*Dear Prof,*

Greetings in His precious Name. I read in Psalm 139:8, a verse which speaks of God being present, even in hell. Is God also going to be present in hell and have sovereign rule in hell as well?

*Dear believer,*

The answer to your question is this.

First, it is possible that the reference here is to the grave and the state of the dead. The OT uses the word sheol, which means either the place of everlasting punishment or the place of the dead: that is, the place of everlasting suffering, or the grave and the state of the soul existing without the body (either in heaven or in hell). That is the word used in Ps.139:8.

The NT uses two words: hades which is the place of the dead and the so-called intermediate state, and gehenna, which is hell, the place of everlasting punishment.

If the meaning is hell itself, then the text reminds us that God is present even in hell. He is not present with His favor and love, but with His anger and wrath. He is present because by His providence He upholds the wicked and gives them their existence all the days of their life and on into hell, where they are everlastingly tormented.

If the meaning is “the place of the dead,” then the idea is that death itself is God’s punishment for sin and that even in that disembodied state, God still upholds us and gives us our existence. This is true of the wicked and the righteous.

I think that probably the latter meaning is the meaning in Psalm 139:8.

*Greetings and blessings,  
Prof*

## 22 Grace Upon the Reprobate

*Dear Prof,*

I wish to ask you something about election and reprobation. Is God able to bestow His grace upon the heart of an unbeliever, and change his heart? If a man lives his whole life in the sin of drunkenness, adultery, murder, but repented one day of his sins could God's grace still be bestowed upon this person, if he was not really one of God's chosen?

*Dear believer,*

There is no grace at all for the reprobate: only wrath. "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but he blesseth the habitation of the just" (Prov. 3:33).

In my forum on common grace, I have dealt at length with this question and have shown how Scripture and the Reformed Confessions never teach such a thing. In fact, I have written on it for over a half year and have answered many questions in the forum that readers sent in.

These are, briefly the objections against common grace, in addition to the fact that Scripture never teaches the doctrine.

1. If God blesses and gives grace to the reprobate, Christ died for the reprobate, for all blessings come to mankind only in the cross of Christ. One who holds to common grace must also believe in a universal atonement: in some sense Christ died for all men.
2. Is it a Biblical view of God that God loves all men, gives them all grace, expresses His desire to save them, and then puts them into hell? Such is an obvious absurdity and an insult to God.
3. Earthly possessions and earthly good things (such as rain and sunshine) are never in themselves blessings, and cannot be interpreted as blessings. Paul even warns against riches as being a snare of the devil (I Timothy 6:6-10).

4. God is sovereign in all He does. Common grace leads to a God who gives grace to all men, but is, in the final analysis, unable to save them.

5. The reprobate are unable to do good and are incapable of living moral lives. Paul reminds us in Rom. 14:23 that all that is not of faith is sin. And our Heidelberg Catechism defines good works as those that are according to the law of God, are rooted in true faith, and are to God's glory. The reprobate are capable of living outwardly moral lives without being regenerated and without grace. They are able to do this because even they are capable of seeing that outward conformity to the law of God is beneficial for society, for if everyone went around killing people, stealing from people, committing fornication, and hating his neighbor, society would be impossible. The ancient church father Augustine (died in 430) already faced the question and called the good of the unregenerated "splendid vices." They look great from the outside, but are vices for all that.

The place of the reprobate in the purpose of God is the following.

1.Reprobation, according to the Belgic Confession is the revelation of God's justice in the judgment God sends upon the sinner.

2.Reprobation serves election: as the scaffolding of a building serves the building, and as the straw of a wheat plant serves the wheat and as the corn stalk, husks, tassel, shucks, cob serve the corn kernels. All things work together for our good, even reprobation.

3.You and the brother with whom you talked must read chapter 1 of the Canons where it is all explained.

*Greetings,*

*Prof*

## 23 Hatred Against John Calvin's Work

*Dear Prof,*

Greetings Prof in His precious and holy name. I wish to find out more about the teachings of John Calvin. Some have spoken with hatred about John Calvin and his work.

*Dear believer,*

Greetings in the Lord,

I do not have the time nor the inclination to read all the material you sent as attachments. But I scanned them and they are vicious attacks against a man whom God used to bring deliverance from the bondage of Rome. If you think these attacks are vicious, you should read some of the attacks that were made against Calvin in his own lifetime; they were worse. Calvin suffered greatly at the hands of his enemies.

But such is true of every faithful man of God. The old proverb says, "Only the tall trees catch the wind," and it is my experience that the more powerful a defender of the truth is and the more faithful his witness, the fiercer are the attacks against him. Christ Himself warned us that as men hated him, so they would hate those who trust in him.

Calvin's doctrine (and I have studied it now for over a half century) is the truth of God.

1) The hateful attacks against him in the material you sent are frequently misrepresentations of Calvin's actual teaching. Calvin did not (I say again, did not) teach baptismal regeneration; he in fact opposed it. I wonder how much of Calvin this Mr. Servant has actually read of Calvin. Probably not much. Calvin did not have his opponents killed. This is an unprincipled lie.

2) He is, of course, a Baptist and would quite naturally hate Calvin, who opposed the Anabaptists of his days.

3) We are not to judge Calvin's teaching by what others say of Calvin. If we want to know what Calvin taught, let us read what he wrote and compare it with Scripture.

4) Calvin did not introduce into the teachings of the church ideas of his own. He went back to the early church fathers and showed that he taught the same thing as they did. Particularly, he went back to Augustine who died in 430 AD and he carried on Augustine's teachings, teachings which had been rejected by the Roman Catholic Church.

5) Calvin's teachings have been carried on by hundreds of thousands, embodied confessionally in the Westminster Confessions, the Canons of Dort, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the French Confession of Faith, the Scots Confession of Faith, the I & II Helvetic Confessions and the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England. Catechism books without number have been based on Calvin's work. Calvinism has not only been confessed by thousands and hundreds of thousands, but many gave their lives for the precious truths of what Calvin taught. Are we going to spit in their faces?

The pope himself said, "If I had fifty men like Calvin (instead of all these prelates and monks) I could conquer the world."

Let us leave these wicked and slanderous attacks against Calvin to God's judgment in the judgment day and let us get on our knees in thanksgiving that God has given such men to His church.

*Greetings and blessings,  
Prof*

## 24 Healing Gospel

*Dear Prof,*

A Christian recently shared with me that the gospel was actually all about healing. Would this type of a gospel be okay to share with others? What if it did indeed lead to many being converted? Does it matter how we evangelize, as long as we bring the gospel to others and see some rewards?

*Dear believer,*

I think that it must be established that we are called to bring the pure gospel according to the Scriptures in the confidence that God uses only the pure gospel to save His people. It seems to be on the surface of it that a person who is “converted” through the witnessing of some miracle of healing is not converted at all. Conversion leads the sinner to faith in Christ, not to the hope of healing from some diseases. Supposing that some person was “converted” because conversion held out the hope of healing, and supposing that person herself was ill, but supposing she was not healed: what would she think of the gospel? The gospel is, as Paul describes it in I Cor. 1, the preaching of Christ crucified. Let us confine ourselves to the Scriptures and not try to add to what God has ordained as the content of the Scriptures.

Greetings to you, dear brother, and many blessings.

*Prof*

## 25 Is the KJV Bible Infallible?

*Dear Prof,*

Do you think there are some parts of the KJV which stand to be corrected? Would those corrections enable us to better understand the Word?

Which translations would you recommend me to read, so that I am able to have a better understanding?

*Dear believer,*

There are only a very few places where the translators of the KJV could have done a better job, in my opinion. But these places are not only very few in number, they are places where the different translation makes no difference of any significance in the meaning, and surely does not touch on a doctrinal truth.

I was asked to speak on Bible translations a while ago and I made an extensive study of the KJV as compared to other versions, along with a detailed study of how the translators of the KJV actually worked. I was completely persuaded that the KJV is far and away the most accurate translation, that it is written in a timeless English that is still understandable today (apart from a few words, the meaning of which can be found in any good dictionary and in many Bibles), is the easiest by far to memorize, and is written in a magnificent rhythm that gives it a lasting beauty, dignity and sanctity. The whole project borders on the miraculous. You can read of it yourself in a pamphlet that I wrote on the subject and which is available on the PRC website. There is a book entitled “God’s Secretaries” which is very much a book worth reading.

If you want another translation that you could use, I would suggest you take a look at the Revised Standard Bible. The trouble is that people cannot judge the accuracy of a translation, and that is why I insist that the KJV is the most accurate of any translation in existence.

The proliferation of translations is doing untold harm to the church. No one knows any more what the Word of God says, because the translations differ so much.

*Greetings and blessings,  
Prof*

# 26 Judgement of God

*Dear Prof,*

Many have spoken of God who is a God full of love and mercy. Can God therefore withhold His punishment from those who sin against Him but who refuse to repent of their sins? Is this the God we speak of which is found in the Bible?

*Dear believer,*

In many Psalms David prays for judgment upon the wicked. The last verse of Psalm 137 is a case in point. Higher critics of Scripture who will not receive the Scriptures as inspired by God point to these Psalms as proof that Scripture cannot be inspired by God. God is a God of love, compassion, kindness, etc., and would never speak of judgment and condemnation, of anger and vengeance, of dreadful punishment and certain destruction. This is how they speak of God. But that is a caricature. Consider the following.

1) The most important point in this question is the point of the holiness, the supreme blessedness, the glorious perfection of the triune God. His holiness is so great that the angels cover their faces with their wings and cry, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of Hosts (Isaiah 6:3). In His holiness He hates sin, burns in righteous indignation against it, cannot and will not tolerate it or excuse it in any way. He told Adam and He repeatedly tells men that He is holy and just, and that He hates sin with a burning hatred, for He is holy. Thus, to speak of God as being only merciful, kind, etc., is to build an idol of God that deals lightly with His intense holiness.

2) Adding to the aggravation of men's sins is the fact that God always gives good gifts and bestows on man many good things. But man spurns His gifts, uses them in his pride to destroy God and infuriates God by his ingratitude and base rebellion.

3) If God did not punish sin and punish the evil-doer, God would no longer be the holy God that He is, but is a wishy-washy God who easily overlooks sin and will not punish it. Hell is, after all, the measure of the greatness of God's holiness.

4) How wonderful that God has, out of free grace, for Christ's sake, in His sovereign and undeserved mercy, turned to us in love and favor, blessing us and delivering us from the same terrible wrath that comes upon the wicked. The contemplation of this brings us to our knees in humility, for we deserve, as well as the wicked, God's avenging wrath.

*Greetings and blessings,*

*Prof*

## 27 Knowing His Will Through Dreams or Visions

*Dear Prof,*

Recently I read about the saint called Saint Patrick in the book entitled, “Portraits of the Faithful Saints,” which you had authored. In it is mentioned that Saint Patrick began serving the Lord zealously after he had a dream.

If someone had a similar dream or vision, would the person also take that to be a calling from God to serve Him?

*Dear believer,*

This is in answer to your query about St. Patrick.

The answer to your question is emphatically, No. The Lord does not reveal Himself to us by means of dreams. We would then never be sure what the will of the Lord is. I recall my father telling me about a woman in his congregation who came to him saying that she had had a dream in which God told her that she should marry a certain man. Now my father was no fool. He immediately suspected something, and said to her, “Is this man of whom you dreamt married, by any chance?” She admitted that he was. My father told her that she should not marry him because it was contrary to the will of God revealed in Scripture. She was, however, adamant. My father told her that if she married him, she would be excommunicated. But she persisted, claiming that God had made it very clear in a dream that to marry this man was His will. She went ahead and did it, and was subsequently excommunicated.

God’s will is revealed in the Scriptures only. If you would like more information on how God reveals His will to us through Scripture, read my book, “When you Prayer.” I have a rather long section in that book on this subject.

As far as St. Patrick is concerned, you must remember that it was commonly thought that God revealed Himself through dreams and visions, for this was early in the history of the church. That Patrick thought that God’s will was

actually revealed through a dream is really not so strange. St. Patrick was probably thinking about the matter for a fairly long time and, because of the seriousness of the question, it weighed heavily on his soul. We all know that when we are burdened with a major decision or an important work, we dream about it. I dreamt last night about working in Singapore, for example. Again it may be possible, and I have had people tell me this in their own experience, that they dream something that basically has nothing to do with what they conclude, but they somehow connect their unrelated dream to something happening in their own lives.

Dreams were revelatory in Biblical times before the Scriptures were complete. Now we have Scripture and the Spirit in our hearts. We no longer need dreams. Thank God for that.

*Greetings and blessings,  
Prof*

## 28 Listening to Worldly Songs

*Dear Prof,*

Greetings from Singapore. I wish to ask you something pertaining to songs. If a Christian listens to songs which are not Christian songs, would this be a sinful act? I listened to many worldly songs when I was younger, but have not listened to them since. Would it be wrong for me to listen to them again?

*Dear believer,*

I do not know if it is a sin to listen to some of the worldly songs you speak of. It would, I presume, depend on the lyrics. But to me the question is, why? Why do you want to listen to them? What is your motive? That is always the question in our practice of Christian liberty.

I recall in the years I went to primary school, we learned a lot of secular songs: patriotic songs, purely secular songs, Negro spirituals, etc. There were also many songs written during World War II that were sort of theme songs of different branches of the military. Although we rarely listen to such music today, there is, I think, no sin involved. When we do listen to them it is for reasons of nostalgia or patriotism primarily.

*Prof*

## 29 Live Preaching

*Dear Prof,*

I realize that there are websites which offer live broadcasts of the preaching of the Word on Sundays. I wonder whether such broadcasts may deter some from going to church on Sundays. If someone could listen to a sermon in the comfort of his home, why would any one wish to travel distances on Sunday mornings for this purpose?

*Dear believer,*

I do think you have a point in your assessment of the use of on-line sermons. It is certainly possible for people to stay home from church and listen to a sermon on-line. That would surely be very wrong. It may even happen that in a place, where the church is being gathered, that forming a congregation is made more difficult because of the ease with which people are able to listen to sermons on line, and use the availability of such sermons as an excuse not to organize a congregation.

However, such argumentation would be in conflict with Scripture. I do not have a Bible handy at the moment – my wife and I are sitting in a motel in Fontenbleu, Pennsylvania; but there is a passage in Hebrews 13, I think, which warns us not to neglect the gathering of the saints. God calls his people to corporate worship in which God's people pray together, sing together and under the preaching, live in the communion of saints. See Psalm 132. Such corporate worship was begun soon after the fall. I think it is found in the last verse of Genesis 3.

It was once argued by some that there was no need to go to church because people could sit down with their Bibles, read them, meditate on them, and be edified without going to church. The Reformed churches have always disciplined such people.

Sermons on-line do, however, serve a good purpose. People who have no church

faithful to God's truth to attend receive their spiritual food from such on-line sermons. Sometimes they invite others to listen with them and a group of believers comes together for this purpose and this can even be the beginning of a new congregation. People who are shut-ins or sick on a Lord's Day listen to such sermons and are blessed. I know that many in our own churches listen to such sermons during the week, mothers in the home while working; men who drive trucks and listen to them on their tape players, and others who can do their work while listening. But they go to church on Sundays. I know people who listen over and over again to a taped sermon because it was one that spoke to their own needs and hearts.

Such on-line sermons can be, have been and are now profitable. But as is true of all God's good gifts, they can be abused.

*Greetings in the Lord,  
Prof*

# 30 Loving our Own Bodies

*Dear Prof,*

Recently someone shared with me that one problem which lies with me is that I don't love my body. I was told that I ought to say to the various parts of my body these words – "I love you heart, I love you liver, and so on." The reason given to me was so that this love shown would cause my body parts to function more effectively and positively.

*Dear believer,*

The ancient and pagan Greeks worshipped the human body, and your Hindu relative apparently does the same. This is dreadfully wrong, but is characteristic of our age. Are we returning to paganism? That is why your relative thinks that loving different parts of our body will bring healing and restore normal functions.

We are indeed to love our neighbor as ourselves. But this is a different matter altogether. We are to love ourselves as God has made us and redeemed us. That is, we are to love ourselves as image-bearers of God, friend-servants of God, members of the body of Christ and Christ's bride. We are not to love ourselves as we are by nature. What is the reaction of a sinner when he stands before a holy God? "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6).

We must not seek miracle cures by following the God-dishonoring recipes for healing that come from wicked men. We must receive what God sends in humility, in trust in Him, and in the consciousness that we deserve much, much worse than any ailment we may have, but that we are redeemed, body and soul, by Christ and will be saved by His power.

*Blessings in our Saviour,  
Prof*

# 31 Man's Capability

*Dear Prof,*

I heard a preacher once mention that we have to do this or do that as Christians.

Would it be more appropriate to say that if we are truly God's people we will do this or that, the Lord willing, instead of we have to do this or that?

*Dear believer,*

The question you ask is a good one. You are correct that we are able to say, "We will do this or that," if only we remember that we will indeed only if the Lord gives us grace. It is also true that we will do this or that, because we can do this or that; but, again, we can do this or that only because "God works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

At the same time, we also must do this or that. See Lord's Day 32, Q & A 86: "Why must we do good works?" And then the Heidelberg Catechism gives the reasons. God demands of us that we must do good works, and the must is necessary:

- 1) Because we are his people and we must represent His cause in the world.
- 2) Because we are still sinful and we must fight against our sin and struggle to do what is right.
- 3) Because God saves us as rational and moral creatures. As my old pastor used to say, "God does not take us to heaven in the top bunk of a Pullman sleeper." A Pullman sleeper was a coach on a passenger train in which one could sleep if he was travelling during the night.

And so, though we are totally depraved at birth, we are now saved and so we must do good works, we can do good works, and we will do good works. In heaven we shall no longer struggle and fight against sin, but we shall be made perfect.

*Greetings and blessings,  
Prof*

# 32 Observing the Sabbath

*Dear Prof,*

Does it matter which day Christians observe as the rest day? Can the Sabbath rest be observed on a weekday instead of a Sunday?

*Dear believer,*

The questions you raise are, I think, pertinent questions, but they rest on some confusion. The names of the days (Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, etc.) mean nothing. They were given in the Middle Ages and have pagan connotations. Sunday, e.g., is the day for the worship of the sun; Thursday is the day for the worship of Thor, a pagan god. These names are not found in Scripture and, in fact, no names are found in Scripture for individual days. Scripture uses the terms “first day of the week” etc.

The second matter of confusion is the meaning of the word “rest.” “Rest” in Scripture does not mean cessation of labor in itself. For me the first day of the week is a day in which I frequently work harder than any other day. Rest in Scripture is conscious fellowship with God through Jesus Christ in public worship with the saints (a foretaste of heaven) and a constant attention to spiritual exercises that lead us to God. It is the study of Scripture, prayer, visiting the poor and aged, reading devotional and spiritually instructive material, etc. God spoke of one day a week as set aside for these purposes because our preoccupation with earning our daily bread, living in the world and caring for our families does not give us much time for these things. We are too spiritually weak; we need a day of freedom from earthly obligations.

In heaven, when we do not sin any more, everything we do will be perfectly an act of worship and praise, and will be done in fellowship with God. Then we will

enjoy a continuous Sabbath. But not now.

To give us a day of rest, God set up in creation a seven-day cycle. He did this by His own example of creating for six days and then entering into the enjoyment of His work, the seventh day, that is, the day of rest. This day of rest means that in distinction from creating, God entered into the enjoyment of His work. This is Scripture -- which I pointed out to you before. See also Hebrews 4:4, 5, 9, and 10.

Now you may call these days whatever you wish to call them; it makes no difference. The days are called by different names in different languages. That all makes no difference at all. There is a seven day cycle that rests on God's work. There is, therefore, the first day of the cycle (whatever you want to call it) and there is a seventh day of the cycle (whatever you want to call it). The first day of the cycle is the day God began creating; the seventh day of the cycle is the day God rested. So also we, if we had not fallen in Adam, would have worked in God's creation for six days and we would also have rested the seventh day. For us too the cycle began for man with the creation of Adam. He was created on the sixth day. The next day was his day of rest.

But working in God's creation does not mean "hoeing the garden or selling materials for suits and dresses; it means doing the work God gives us to do, but doing such work because we love God with all our hearts and minds and souls and strength. Then we can rest. So we work six days and then rest.

But when man fell he could not love God any longer, and so he might never enter into God's rest. He could not enjoy God's fellowship because he worked out of hatred of God.

But Christ kept God's law even when he died on the Cross. And He entered God's rest. But he did so for us. Hence, by His resurrection, which we celebrate on the first day of the week, we are given grace to work to God's glory. In other words, God takes us into His fellowship, not because of our faithfulness, but out of mere grace through Christ; this is what the day of rest is all about. Then, by the strength of that grace, we work in God's creation to His glory and out of love for Him.

Never mind the names of the days; they are arbitrary and meaningless. Those who rest on the 7th day are still in the old dispensation and teach also that they can earn their salvation by their works. That is why Seventh Day Adventists, a sect, also deny the full divinity of Christ, and thus deny what Christ has done for them. We do not do that. We belong to Christ because God takes us, unworthy sinners, into His fellowship out of mere grace. In gratitude we praise Him in our daily work.

*Prof*

# 33 Other gods?

*Dear Prof,*

Greetings from Singapore. I wish to ask you something pertaining to the book of Psalms chapter 136 verse 2. The verse reads, "O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever." I was wondering since there is only one true and living God, which other "gods" was this verse referring to?

*Dear believer,*

Heathen religions, as I am sure you know better than I, are built on this principle: There is a god whom they serve whether it is nature as a whole or some part of nature, fate or whatever, alive, creative, able to affect the lives of men and able to give men what they seek at their own whim. The idols themselves are only representatives of this god or these gods. This was also the theory of the early Greek philosophers from Thales to Plato. When men prayed to an image, they prayed to the image as the god through whom they could reach the real god behind the image.

Roman Catholicism has even carried this a step further in ascribing divine powers to certain images themselves, although the power of the images is the power of the person depicted in the image -- as, e.g., Mary and the images of her.

Sometimes these images do have powers, although mostly the powers are to be found in the people who are the representatives of the image and of the god behind the image. They are the priests and prophets of the god -- of whom mention is made repeatedly in Scripture (the priests and prophets of Baal whom Elijah slew) But they are also the astrologers, soothsayers, magicians and enchanters. Read, e.g., Exodus 7:10 and following verses. These magicians were able also to make their rods turn to serpents. This was not sleight of hand, but real.

The difference was that the powers of the idols were demonic; behind them was

not a real god, but the devil himself who enslaved people by persuading them to worship the idols as being gods.

This is the reference of Scripture. Just as the snake of Aaron ate the snakes of the magicians, so are all those gods of the heathen subject to the power of Jehovah. If the god of the heathen is nature (as was often done) Jehovah is Creator and Sustainer of creation. Even the devil, whose power is sometimes present in the idols, is subject to God's will.

This is all true because God is the only true and living God.

*Blessings,*

*Prof*

# 34 Our Form in Heaven

*Dear Prof,*

Greetings in His precious name. Recently I had thoughts about children and also what form they will take when they reach heaven. Will children appear in the form of an adult in heaven? Will they think like children or as adults? Will all souls in heaven think alike, and be found of the same age?

Does the Bible give us any clue to some of these questions?

*Dear believer,*

Your questions are not able to be answered. We know so little about heaven. The reason is that heaven is so different from this present creation that there is no way in which it can be described in earthly language. When Paul was caught up to the third heaven (II Cor 12 : 1-3)\*, he received revelations that cannot be expressed in human language. All the languages of the earth are, after all, earthly and human and describe earthly things.

When God does speak to us in Scripture about heaven, He always uses symbols of earthly things, as, e.g., in Revelation. 21. In this way we can form something of an idea of what heaven is like, but not very much. And that is why the glory of heaven for the believer is, in the first place, complete deliverance from sin and secondly, seeing Christ face to face to have fellowship with Him. I think, when we come to heaven, we will say what the Queen of Sheba said when she saw the splendor of Solomon's kingdom: "The half has not been told me."

Nevertheless, we are able to deduce from Scripture some things about heaven. There is, after all, a reason why children, babies, adults, old people die when they do. Scripture speaks of a certain glory that belongs to every stage of life. "Except ye become like little children . . ." The strength of manhood. The beauty of mature womanhood. The wisdom of a white-haired aged man. That leads me to believe that somehow (we do not know how) these beauties of each age will be preserved in glory. But how that will be, we do not know.

We do know that all the imperfections, all the sins, all the limitations that sin has brought about will be gone. It is a wonderful prospect for which to look forward.

I do think that, because each child of God is saved with all his own individual characteristics, personality traits, gift and talents, character and personal identity, that all these differences will be retained, though made perfect, in the new heavens and the new earth. I think too that a child will still be a child and an old man still an old man, although without the infirmities, weaknesses and limitations that are our lot here. After all, Isaiah, when describing the new heavens and the earth talks about a child playing on the hole of an asp.

But we do not know and will have to wait. And, for me, that is not very long any more.

*Blessings,  
Prof*

# 35 Peace with God

*Dear Prof,*

I understand that faith and peace may come through hearing. I wish to find out whether it is possible that a person who continually reads the bible and prays, is not able to find peace with God and not be convicted that he is saved? Can this lead to a person becoming very discouraged and frustrated if this happens? Is there something I can do to encourage such a person?

*Dear believer,*

There are many reasons why such a man could find no peace and comfort, even though he claims to read the Bible faithfully and to pray regularly.

1) Sometimes children of God fall into depression, and one aspect of depression is loss of assurance. But such a person would never say that “he did not feel anything at all;” usually such people are very concerned about their salvation and suffer a great deal because of lack of assurance.

2) Such a person may not fulfill the requirements laid down in Heb. 11: Those who come to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

3) He may not be reading the Bible the right way; that is, receiving it as the Word of God before which he must unconditionally bow. He may have reservations about what it says; he may have a certain unwillingness to do what it demands; he may read it as if reading it is some magic exercise that automatically brings solutions to problems. There are many wrong ways to read the Bible.

4) The same may be true of prayer. Some people consider prayer to be a magic formula that automatically brings one what he wants. Maybe he is praying, not as Scripture commands us to pray, but in a way he prefers. Again, there are all sorts of wrong ways to pray. Maybe he wanted things his way and was rebellious against God’s way.

5) It sounds to me from what you write that the problem lies in the fact that he wants to blame God for not doing what God said He would do. I think he should have engaged in some serious self-examination. I am personally convinced that he was not sincere in anything he did or said. The Scriptures tell us that anyone who comes to God in prayer through Jesus Christ will be heard and answered. Maybe the answer will not come when we think it should come and maybe the answer won't be what we would like to have it be, but God has never yet turned away a praying soul from heaven's door. Why should God suddenly turn away from him? It is impossible.

All of it may be a lesson to us and a reminder of how we ought to pray.

Have a pleasant evening.

*Prof*

# 36 Regarding the End of the World

*Dear Prof,*

In recent times, man has tried to predict the end of times. Do you think that anyone is able to do this? Some have predicted events in life which have come true? Would man be able to predict when the world would come to an end?

*Dear believer,*

No man is able to predict the future under any circumstances. Only God knows the future, for He has planned it from all eternity in His counsel. If it seems as if a man does predict the future, it is only because his predication was so vague that it could mean many things, or because he made a correct guess. If it is hot and muggy and the air heavy and if the barometer is falling, I can predict that it is going to rain, and I am usually right. If the current president of my country is riding a wave of popularity and his opponent in an election is not well-liked, I can predict that the president will be re-elected.

No one can or may predict the time of Christ's coming, because Christ himself said that no one knows, not even the angels in heaven (Matt. 24:36). If we try to predict the time of Christ's coming, we sin.

As you know, this has recently happened. A radio evangelist by the name of Harold Camping has twice now predicted the time of Christ's coming. The first time was in 1994 that Christ was supposed to come back; the latest was May 21, 2011. Both predictions were wrong, although thousands quit their jobs and gave their money for advertising. The advertisements all said that the world would end on May 21, 2011. Both times Mr. Camping had a lame excuse why it didn't happen as he predicted. In 1994 he was wrong he said, because he made a mathematical error. This time he said that he was wrong because he thought Christ's coming would be "physical," and it turned out to be "spiritual." In other

words, Christ did come, but in a spiritual way.

He is a false prophet and the words of Jesus apply to him: “Then if any man shall say unto you, lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth; behold, he is in the secret chambers, believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together” (Matt. 24:23-28).

*Prof*

# 37 Regarding the Sea of Galilee

*Dear Prof,*

I have read from an article this information:

“For Christians, the holiest lake in the world is the Sea of Galilee. This body of water, on the shores of which Jesus lived, walked, taught, and performed miracles, has been known through the years by a variety of names: the Lake of Gennesaret, the Sea of Tiberias, Tiberias Lake, and presently, Yam Kinneret. It is the largest freshwater lake in Israel, and the lowest freshwater lake in the world.”

Would there be any truth to this?

*Dear believer,*

There is no truth in the whole claim. The Sea of Galilee is no holier than Lake Michigan or a mud puddle in my yard after a heavy rain. Nothing in the land of Palestine is in itself holy. That is Roman Catholic theology and is nothing but image worship.

I recall, when I was a child, that one of the members of my father’s congregation went to the Holy Land. He purchased, for quite a sum of money, a small bottle of water from the River Jordan. He was told it was holy water, because Jesus had been baptized in the Jordan River. But when he got home the bottle of water stank so badly that he had to throw it away.

The “Holy Land” is where Jesus is now – in heaven, where we too shall someday go.

*Blessings,*

*Prof*

# 38 Regarding Thunder

*Dear Prof,*

Sometimes I have heard thunder that was very loud and sometimes frightening. Would it be true to state that whenever we hear thunder, we can imagine the voice of God speaking to us? Would thunder have specific meanings attached to it? For example, would we say that God's anger is manifested towards us when we hear great and loud thunder?

*Dear believer,*

A fierce thunder storm is a delight to me. When we were children our father would take us outside during a thunder storm so that we could witness first hand that mighty beauty and power of our God. When we lived in Iowa, the storms were much more powerful that they are here. I remember storms in Iowa that contained so much lightning that there was not one moment that the sky was without flashes of lighting in one place or another. The booming of the thunder was constant.

Of course, thunder and lightning are the voice of God. But they are not the voice of God any more than a tree, or a lion, or a spider, or a cow. Read Psalm 29. Surely His word is His voice. God's word created all things, but God's word also upholds all things. God's word makes all things in the creation happen.

Lightning can be destructive, of course. And so it certainly can be a voice of God's judgment. But lightning also changes carbon dioxide into nitrogen and nitrogen falls on the soil and enriches it. Thunder does no damage, for thunder is caused by the lightning. A good encyclopedia or even Wikipedia on the web will explain it all. But whatever science may say about it, thunder and lightning are displays of the might and power of God. I still thoroughly enjoy a violent thunder storm.

The last time we were in Singapore, a thunder storm came over the YMCA.

Mrs. Hanko and I were sitting on the top of the steps in front of the main office. We were watching the storm and enjoying it. A bolt of lightning suddenly hit the ground just across the street. We could see it hit. The boom of the thunder was instantaneous and the crash was so close it seemed like it had entered my pockets.

Sound travels 1100 feet per second at sea level. One can tell, therefore, how far away the lightning is. All you have to do is see the flash of the lightning and count the seconds between it and the thunder. Five seconds between the flash and the boom of the thunder would mean that it is about one mile away. When they come together they are very near. Less than one second means 1100 feet.

God's displays of his power and majesty are always so much greater and more wonderful than anything man does. A good thunderstorm out on the prairie where it can be seen is more fun to watch than Sentosa's musical fountains.

I was lying in bed last night thinking about what I wrote you in connection with your question on lightning and thunder. Particularly, I was wondering what the chemical reaction that produced nitrogen was. I thought I may have had it wrong. So I did a bit more inquiring and have found what really happens.

A nitrogen molecule as it is present in our atmosphere (and our atmosphere is made up of 78% nitrogen) is composed of two atoms of nitrogen joined together. When lightning hits a molecule of two atoms, the two atoms are split apart into two atoms of nitrogen of a slightly different make-up. That is, the number of electrons changes. This atom of nitrogen is able to join itself to a droplet of water that falls to the earth, and so nitrogen, which plants need to be healthy, is beneficial.

Something similar happens to ozone. The ozone molecule is composed of two atoms of Oxygen. When lightning hits this molecule, it splits off one atom. These single atoms join to other two-atom molecules to form a molecule with three atoms of oxygen. That ozone is what one smells when a lightning bolt is very close.

The clouds in a rain storm, under certain conditions, become charged with positive charges. The earth becomes increasingly charged with negative charges. When the strength of the positive charge and the negative charge becomes strong

enough, they attract each other, and the result is lightning. Although scientists claim to know so much that they are almost as knowledgeable as God himself in their own judgment, no scientist can yet explain the dynamics of lightning. You would think that would humble them, but it doesn't. There are many marvels in God's world, of which God himself is the Author, that are mysterious and beyond the understanding of man. Humility is the order of the day for us mere mortals.

*Prof*

# 39 Reward in Heaven

*Dear Prof,*

I have been thinking about the reward which God will give to His children when they finally reach heaven. I read in Matthew 16:27, “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.”

Will every believer receive a different reward according to the work he has done on earth? What is the reward and will God give some more reward than others?

*Dear believer,*

The answer to your question is Yes, God does reward our works and does give to each man according as his works have been. Yes, some receive greater rewards than others. There are many texts in Scripture, besides Matthew 16:27, that teach the same thing.

However, you must understand that the reward is not on the basis of merit. We never, never merit anything with God. We are, as Jesus says, always unprofitable servants when we have done only that which is commanded us. Our Belgic Confession states it corrected in Article 24. You should read the whole article, for it is a very important article. But the part to which I refer is this: “Therefore we do good works, but not to merit by them, (for what can we merit?) nay, we are \*beholden to God for the good works we do, and not He to us, since it is He that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Let us therefore attend to what is written: when ye shall have done all these things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do. In the meantime, we do not deny that God rewards our good works, but it is through His grace that He crowns His gifts.”

An article like this shows how important it is to know our Confessions.

Our good works are given us by grace (See Eph. 2:10). The reward for them is also given of grace. This reward will be related to a man's works. I do not know what this means, but Scripture clearly indicates that the glory of some will be greater than the glory of another. Our difficulty in understanding this is due to our inability to understand what heaven is like.

I heard a minister once, long ago, described it in this way. While on earth God fits and forms each saint to be a vessel of some sort. Some, because of life's trials, are bigger vessels than others. When each arrives in glory, each is filled with the glory of Christ and of God himself. But each is filled and is full! Some may have more than others, but each is filled to the top.

And we must not forget that the first shall be last and the last first.

*Greetings in Christ,*

*Prof*

# 40 Role of Husband & Wife in the Family

*Dear Prof,*

Greetings. I wish to ask you regarding the husband's role in the family. If there was a case where a wife was able to earn enough and support the family, would it be okay for the husband to stay at home and look after the children. I mention this because many in society these days have stressed the need for the man to play the role of a homemaker as well, when possible.

*Dear believer,*

God has so created man and woman in such a way that a man is intended and equipped for work outside the home that he may support his family and the church. A woman is so created that she is able to take care of the family and provide a home for her husband and children. In this way she is a help meet (fit, able to help) for her husband. The feminist movement has destroyed God's purpose in creating man and woman, and in the process it has destroyed the home. That the church is willing to go along with all this is a sign of the great apostasy that enters the church.

It is a battle for the church to hold to Biblical principles. The world tries to convince the church that it suppresses women when it limits their sphere of work to the home; and women are all too ready to swallow that line and "escape" from the home. But there are few callings in life more glorious and blessed than that of a godly mother who cares for her home and children.

*Greetings in Christ's name.*

*Prof*

# 41 Saints

*Dear Prof,*

Greetings in His precious name. When I read the book entitled, “Portraits of Faithful Saints,” it strikes me that Catholicism also refers to many such saints. Does this mean that the Protestants and Catholics read and teach about the same saints? Should Christians consider such saints good examples and follow their footsteps?

*Dear believer,*

The Roman Catholic (RC) Church is a strange institution, skilled in double-talk and deception. An outstanding example of this is its treatment of Augustine, the great defender of sovereign grace. The RC has made Augustine a saint and given him the title “Doctor of Grace.” He is hailed as one of the great saints in RC hagiography. But they have repudiated Augustine’s teachings. They did this as early as the Synod of Orange (529), at which Synod a semi-Pelagian position, that denies sovereign grace, was adopted officially by the church. They did this in the murder of Gotteschalk who preached and defended pure Augustinian doctrine. This is common RC practice and those in the Middle Ages who were defenders of the faith were also martyred. There are those, however, in the book Portraits, who, while making major contributions to the cause of Christ, were nevertheless, thorough-going Roman Catholics in other respects. I refer to Catherine of Sienna and Anselm as examples. God sometimes uses a crooked stick to draw a straight line.

In the Bible all God’s people are called saints. A saint is one who is holy because he is justified and sanctified by Christ. The saints in the Roman Catholic Church are called saints because they were supposed to do more good works than they needed to escape purgatory and so they go directly to heaven without going to purgatory. So they earn their sainthood by their own works. This doctrine denies the cross of Christ.

*Greetings and blessings,*

*Prof*

# 42 Saved or Not Saved

*Dear Prof,*

Greetings in His precious name. I wish to ask you something regarding election. I understand that we remain members of a physical church but will ultimately be part of God's Universal church when He returns. Could it be possible for a Christian to confess Christ as his Saviour, and not be a member of any physical church here on this earth? Will this Christian be found in God's Kingdom in heaven?

*Dear believer,*

Warmest greetings in our Saviour's name.

In general, the answer to your question is that we may never and need never judge whether a given person is going to heaven or not. Luther once said that when he comes into heaven, he will be surprised that there are people there whom he thought would be absent. But he also thought that people of whom he thought well and whom he confidently expected to be in heaven, will be absent. He meant, of course, that we never know a man's heart, and we never know whether God is pleased to convert a person shortly before death.

Our business is only to defend and promote what the Scriptures require of us. That is, we must defend right doctrine and we must defend a godly walk. God will take care of the rest.

People who are leaving the church and want to justify themselves would frequently try to tempt me by asking, "Do you think I will go to hell if I leave the Protestant Reformed church?" My answer would always be: "Whether you go to heaven or to hell is not my business, for God determines this. But I do know that you sin when you leave the church of which you yourself admit possesses the marks of the true church."

In our own churches, we exercise what Calvin and our Reformed fathers called the judgment of charity. If our fellow saints walk in God's ways and give no reason to be considered wayward and worldly, we consider them our fellow saints. We must, because if we did not do that, the communion of the saints would be impossible. And, on the other hand, if a person walks in sin and refuses to repent, we may tell that person: If you persist in your evil way, the end is destruction and hellfire. We may say this because the Bible says it. The Lord was talking about this very thing when He warned us: "Judge not that ye be not judged."

Now your questions.

1 - Any true child of God will make it a point to join a church because joining a church is obedience to Christ. He will also recognize his own need to be fed with the preaching of the gospel.

2 - A man must join a church which has the marks of the church: the pure preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments according to the command of Christ, and the exercise of Christian discipline.

3 - If a man is unable to find a church with these three marks, he must join the best church he can find -- unless it is the false church. But he must consider seriously the calling to move to where he can find a pure church. Article 28 of the Belgic Confession says that a man must join himself to the true church "though the edict of princes be against it." That is, though he suffer persecution because he joins the true church. And the fathers meant to say that there is never an excuse for not joining a true church.

4 - Unwillingness to commit to any church is a sin.

5 - The Lord speaks of the fact that in the judgment day there will be many people who say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works." The answer of the Lord is, "I never knew you. Depart from me ye workers of iniquity." The Lord makes it clear in innumerable places that doing the will of Christ is more important than mammoth good works and earth shaking deeds.

But, more specifically, if these people of whom you speak do overseas mission work, they must belong to the church that sends them, be members there, be under the supervision of the elders there, and be sent by that church. There is

altogether too much independentism in our day. People claim to be moved to go out and save others, to go to the heathen and the Hottentots, to rescue people from hell, to preach the gospel in every land. But they are members nowhere, responsible to no one, sent by no church, never ordained, and yet they pious prate about doing the Lord's work. If they truly wanted to do the Lord's work then let them follow the clear teachings of the Lord.

Missionaries are members of the church that ordains and sends them. The nature of the work they do makes it impossible to attend the church where they are members, but they are under the supervision of the elders, and when they preach on the mission field they receive their own preaching as the means of grace to feed their souls. I frequently come down from the pulpit with these words in my soul: If the congregation was only blessed half as much as I was blessed, that would be a wonderful thing. A minister preaches to himself too.

This is kind of a long answer, but the questions are important.

*Greetings and blessings,*

*Prof*

# 43 Seed of the Devil (Gen 3:15)

*Dear Prof,*

In Genesis 3, we read about how God had cursed the serpent for tempting Adam and Eve and we read in 3:15, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel.” Here God refers to the serpent and its seed? Does the serpent or the devil have any seed? I was wondering who God was referring to in this verse?

*Dear believer,*

Genesis 3:15 has been called by Reformed believers going back to the Reformation, “the mother promise.” It has been called that because the seed of the woman is centrally Christ. It is the promise of Christ who would crush the head of the serpent. That Christ is the seed is evident from Galatians 3:16, where Christ is called the seed of Abraham. But also, all that are in Christ are the seed of Abraham. So the seed of the woman are all the elect of God throughout the entire history of the world.

The seed of Satan are spiritually the wicked world. Jesus calls the wicked of his day “children of their father, the devil”(John 8:44). They are called that because they do the works of the devil. So the enmity is between the people of God in the world and the children of darkness, the wicked world. That enmity is the spiritual battle of faith which the elect fight against the wicked throughout all time.

That the heel of the seed of the woman (Christ) is bruised means that, though Christ conquered Satan and the world, nevertheless, he suffered and died on the cross. This was at the devil’s instigation, who entered the heart of Judas Iscariot and convinced Judas to betray the Lord; but it was also under the sovereign control and direction of God who had determined it in His counsel. See Peter’s speech on Pentecost: in Acts 2:23, “Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye with wicked hands have crucified and slain.” And the church says the same thing in prayer to God after the beating of

the disciples: Herod and Pilate were gathered with the Jews to do “all that thy counsel determined to be done” (Acts 4:28). So, the bruising of the heel of Christ on the cross was at the same time the crushing of the head of the devil and his wicked brood.

The saints in the OT always took it that way as well. When Adam and Eve had their first child, they probably thought it was the promised seed when they said, “We have received a man-child of the Lord.” (Genesis 4:1). Little did they know that history would go on for thousands of years and the battle would be fought in countless generations. That we have a part in that battle marching under the banner of Christ’s victory is glorious indeed.

*Greetings and blessings,*

*Prof*

# 44 Sin and our Soul

*Dear Prof,*

The author John Owen mentioned this in one of his books - "If sin and soul do not part, Christ and your soul can never meet." What do you think he was really trying to portray to his readers?

*Dear believer,*

I am not acquainted with the quote as such, but I am quite sure that I know what he means. He is talking about the depravity of our entire nature: body and soul. He is saying that our souls are also corrupted by sin so that we can do no good with either our bodies or our souls.

When he refers to our souls, he is speaking primarily of our minds and wills, both of which are powers of the soul. Our minds are the faculty with which we think, ponder, meditate, reason, remember, learn, etc., etc. Our wills are the power by which we make conscious choices – whether, for example, to go to work today or stay home because of illness, whether to eat satay or Kentucky Fried Chicken, whether to raise the price of a piece of cloth or keep it at the same price we have been selling it for these many years. The will is also the power of all our emotions: love, hate, joy, anger, sadness, kindness, etc. Ultimately the will is the power by which we choose for God or for Satan. The totally depraved man always and in everything chooses for Satan; the regenerated and saved child of God chooses for God – although because he is still sinful, he experiences a struggle between choosing for God or choosing for the world.

When one is saved, the soul is also saved and the whole Christian is brought into fellowship with Christ. But the soul must be holy to “meet” with Christ and have fellowship with Him. Thus sin and our souls must be separated (something God accomplishes by His grace) for the soul to meet with and have fellowship with

Christ.

In other words, our thoughts and meditations must not be of sinful and wicked things, for then Christ is excluded. Nor must our wills desire wicked things, for that excludes Christ from our minds and wills (our souls). But when our thoughts are of Christ and our desires are for Him, then Christ and we meet together in joyful fellowship.

But such union with Christ always takes place through the Scriptures and our thoughts and desires that direct us to the Word of God.

*Greetings and blessings,*

*Prof*

# 45 Stem Cell Research

*Dear Prof,*

I wish to ask you something pertaining to the ongoing stem cell research around the world. Is an embryo only alive when the brain of the live cells begins to appear and function? Before this happens, would embryos be still considered not fully alive? And if this was the case, would this make the use of the stem cells of human beings ethically okay to be used for various stem cell research programs?

*Dear believer,*

The embryo becomes a person at the moment of conception. There can be no doubt about that at all. Psalm 139 is the decisive Scriptural proof. To do any harm to that embryo or to abort it is dreadfully sinful, for we are doing harm or murdering a person. God unites a person to the embryo at the moment of conception. Conception is a wonderful and mysterious event.

Stem cell research that involves an embryo is wrong and ought not to be done. It is a grievous sin and brings upon one the judgment of God. Even President Bush has declared stem cell research involving embryos to be illegal.

But I understand that stem cells can be harvested in different ways than from an embryo. I am not fully acquainted with the processes involved, but I have read that there are other sources of stem cell collecting. They do not, supposedly, involve any damage to a person. They can be, so I am told, harvested from umbilical cords. But I would have to investigate the matter more thoroughly before I could be assured of these things.

One thing I know: the world engages in all such research, including DNA research, because it believes that evolutionary processes, which, in their judgment, have produced man, are now known to scientists. With the knowledge of evolutionary processes, scientists are confident that they now have the ability to direct the evolutionary processes through cell manipulation, DNA

modification, stem cell implants, etc. By doing these things, they can speed up the evolutionary processes and direct these process to the improvement of the human race and the ultimate production of people far, far superior physically and intellectually to anything we know now. This is dreadfully wicked. If the theory is wrong, the application of the theory cannot be right. We must be on our guard against these corruptions of God's creation and creational processes. In-vitro conception, surrogate motherhood, frozen embryos, and all the things that go along with these procedures are very wicked. I personally even have some doubts about organ transplants, which are becoming an increasingly common thing. I personally would not do it. I would rather die.

*Greetings and blessings,*  
*Prof*

# 46 Suffering

*Dear Prof,*

When sickness befalls a believer, it oftentimes makes him very weak and he is prone to submit even more to temptations surrounding him. Would you say this is a time of severe trials in the life of a believer? Would suffering be seen as the most difficult trial a Christian can face?

*Dear believer,*

This matter of trials deserves much more attention than I can give it in a short answer. I have spoken on this subject at length in a series of lectures delivered under the auspices of Hope Protestant Reformed Evangelism Committee. They are on CDs and can be obtained by writing them.

It is true that sickness and pain can often make us spiritually weak. Physical weakness and spiritual weakness often go hand in hand. When we are spiritually weak we are easily tempted to complain, to groan, to ask God why he does these things to us and to become rather bitter against Him. Sometimes in anger against him for sending us sickness, we may strike out and deliberately commit other sins as a gesture of our displeasure with God. This is something like shaking our fist in God's face. Yes, indeed, sickness can be a time of severe trial.

However, God can and does use all trials, including sickness, to purge us of our sin and to sanctify us. We can learn in sickness to say, as David does in Psalm 119: "Affliction hath been for my profit . . ." I recall a dear saint who had been brought to the edge of the grave by her sickness. The Lord restored her and she said to me, "Prof, I would not have missed out on what happened to me for all the world." As she said it, I knew she was speaking the truth, for her face lit up with a glow of joy. This is almost always the response of God's children in sickness and suffering. The Lord used this sickness to bring me closer to him and to teach us to rely only on him.

If sickness and suffering are to be for our profit then we must heed the words of Peter: “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your cares upon him; for he careth for you” (I Pet. 5:6-7). There are many such passages in Scripture which put sickness and suffering in their proper spiritual perspective.

To humble ourselves under God’s mighty hand means that we receive with patience and thanksgiving what God is pleased to send us, knowing that we deserve more than He sends, but that He, in His wisdom, chastises us because He loves us and seeks our salvation. Paul in more than one place admonishes us to be thankful in sickness and suffering. When preparing a sermon on such a passage, I was struck by the fact that the text did not say, “Be thankful for suffering.” But in pursuing the thought of Scripture on this matter, I discovered that Paul even admonishes us to be thankful for all things, which include suffering (Eph. 5:20). I was somewhat taken aback by this, and rather frantically reached for my Greek Bible in the hope that the translation was wrong. But it was not! We are required by the Scriptures to be thankful for suffering as well as for everything else. We are to be thankful because “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28).

The Christian religion is a glorious religion; but its demands on us are great. They are demands of which the wicked world knows nothing. But they are demands which we are able to fulfill by the power of the atoning death of Christ and faith in him.

*Greetings and blessings,  
Prof*

# 47 Time to kill? (Ecc 3:1)

*Dear Prof,*

I wish to ask you something about a verse which I read in the book of Ecclesiastes. In chapter 3:1, I read; “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;” I believe I understand what the verse is speaking about. However I think I don’t understand what it means when it says that there is a time to kill. Is there a time when Christians are called to kill as well?

*Dear believer,*

There is indeed a proper time to kill. A nation may summon its young men to war to defend a country against a foreign aggressor, and the young men may have to kill the enemy in defense of their home land. It is proper and commanded by Scripture that the magistrate uses the sword to punish those who have themselves committed murder. God requires capital punishment. It may also be necessary for a member of the family to kill someone in self-defense. It would then be a matter of kill or be killed. The Lord would consider that a proper time to kill. So there is a time to kill for soldiers and for magistrates. And in doing so, both would be doing that which is approved of God.

So I think that would be the answer to your question. Further questions may be necessary if you have any remaining problems with that text.

*Greetings and blessings,*

*Prof*

# 48 True and False Churches of Christ

*Dear Prof,*

I wish to find out more about the matter pertaining to the true Church of Christ. Am I able to distinguish between a true church and a false church of Christ on this earth? Should I be concerned whether I truly belong to a true church of Christ? Should I, as a Christian, reach out to those who I feel belong to a false church?

*Dear believer,*

Article 29 defines for us the marks of the true church and the marks of the false church. It adds, “These two may easily be distinguished from each other.” The marks of the true church are: the pure preaching of the gospel; the administration of the sacraments according to the command of Christ, and the faithful exercise of Christian discipline.

The church of Christ in this world can be compared to a wedge. The true church is the sharp cutting edge of the wedge. As one moves further from the cutting wedge, the wedge becomes broader and of less significance for the actual work of the wedge. These are the churches where some gospel is still preached, but not without error. These churches also become less and less pure as time goes on, until at last they manifest nothing but the false church.

Christians must be very mindful of the church to which they belong, for they have the solemn obligation from Christ to join themselves to the true church. The Belgic Confession presses this calling upon us and adds, “even though the edict of princes be against it.” If someone is not a part of the true church, he must leave the church of which he is a part to join with the true church.

There is a very practical reason for this. Those who remain in a church that no longer shows all the marks of the true church are in a church that gradually drifts further and further into error. A church either moves forward in the

development of the truth or it goes backwards. There is no such thing as standing still. Nor has it ever happened in all the history of the Church that a church, once having left the true gospel, returns again to the truth. The result is that those who stay in a church in which the truth is not fully preached stay in a church which gradually deteriorates. As the church of which they are a part, with their children, gradually deteriorates, their family (their children and grand children) go along with the church, and they go lost in their generations.

We should indeed use every opportunity God gives us to call others to join with us in the true church.

*In Christ,  
Prof*

# 49 Vengeance Against the Ungodly

## (Ps 109)

*Dear Prof,*

I read in Psalm 109 about a child of God who seeks vengeance against the ungodly. I wish to ask you, whether I too am able to speak in such a manner against someone who I feel was evil? Can I ask God to punish whoever deals with me in an ungodly manner? Am I also able to ask God for vengeance against those who hate God?

*Dear believer,*

I will try to be more specific with respect to Psalm 109.

I do not think that we are required by Scripture to ask God to punish a certain individual who does evil to us. This would be contrary to the Lord's commands to love our enemies and pray for them that despitefully use us. It would also be contrary to Scripture's command not to seek vengeance, but to leave vengeance to the Lord. We are to love our neighbor as ourselves.

We are never to hate anyone who hates us. But we are to hate those who hate God (See Psalm 139\*). We are not interested in what happens to us, but we are concerned about God. And so, when we are concerned about God, His glory and honor, then we are also concerned that the enemies of God be punished.

It is also true that only in a very general way can we seek the overthrow and punishment of God's enemies. We need not and cannot seek vengeance on our neighbors, that is, those with whom we come into contact.

The point is that Scripture admonishes us to love our neighbors, but also to pray for God's judgments upon the wicked, who fight against Him and persecute His people. I hope this helps. It is a problem which is perplexing for many of God's people.

*Greetings and blessings,*

*Prof*

# 50 Visiting Other Churches

*Dear Prof,*

Is it okay for me to visit other churches whilst I remain as a member of my local church? Would my visitation of the other churches cause me to become confused in my theological thinking or would I benefit from such an exercise?

*Dear believer,*

I do not know whether visiting other churches would confuse you. I think it would, if you did it on a regular basis and were not firmly grounded in the truth. But the fact of the matter is that you (and every member) belong in the church where he/she is a member. My wife does not go with me when I preach elsewhere, because she knows she belongs in her own church.

By our presence in the divine worship services, we make a visible confession of our membership in the church of Christ. This is important and necessary. Besides, why would one want to eat a stale piece of bread when he can have a delicious meal? Why would one want to go to a church where the truth is not purely preached when one has the calling to go to a church where the truth is purely preached?

There may be times, such as when we are on vacation, that we cannot go to our own church, but even these times should be as short as possible. When we go on vacation, we try to be in a place where we can attend a PR church.

The trouble is that we are so taken up by the word “tolerance” that we think it is all right to go to almost any church at almost any time. It is a tolerance of false doctrine. This is wrong.

*Greetings to you  
Prof*