

Beacon Lights

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Honor and Respect

by John Huizinga

We have lost something in our churches when the young do not address the older members as “Mr.” or “Mrs.” It may seem small and insignificant, but the absence of this simple address is a sign of a problem with disobeying God. God commands children to honor their parents and He also calls children and young people in general to honor and respect the parents of their friends as well as other adults. Children must obey their parents. We read in Matthew 15:4 “For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother.” Children do not address their parents by their first name. They do not mock, ignore, or fight with their parents. Children must hold their parents in high esteem and listen to them carefully when they give instruction and guidance. So also, the young must give honor and respect to their elders. Honor and respect is the behavior of a healthy family as well as a healthy church. Disrespect is a sign of a sick and distorted family and church. The attitude and desire to obey God’s command must come from the heart, and the honor must be shown by appropriate words and actions. A lack of the words and actions is a warning sign that all is not well.

The child who speaks to his or her parents by their first names shows no respect at all. Sometimes I hear children speak of their parents to friends using the first names of their parents. This too, is disrespect. It is a sign that the relationship between parent and child has been corrupted. The young do not interact with other adults nearly as much as they do with their parents, but when they do, they must use the opportunity to manifest the honor they have for them. One small, but simple and significant way to show honor to them is to use a title of respect. For some reason, the use of “Mr.” and “Mrs.” appears to be on the decline. Do we now have a better way of showing respect? Some would rather get rid of the formal “respect” language so that the older generation can better relate to the younger generation. I fear that the “friendly” language is degenerating into disrespect. Children need wise and loving parents, not just a friend.

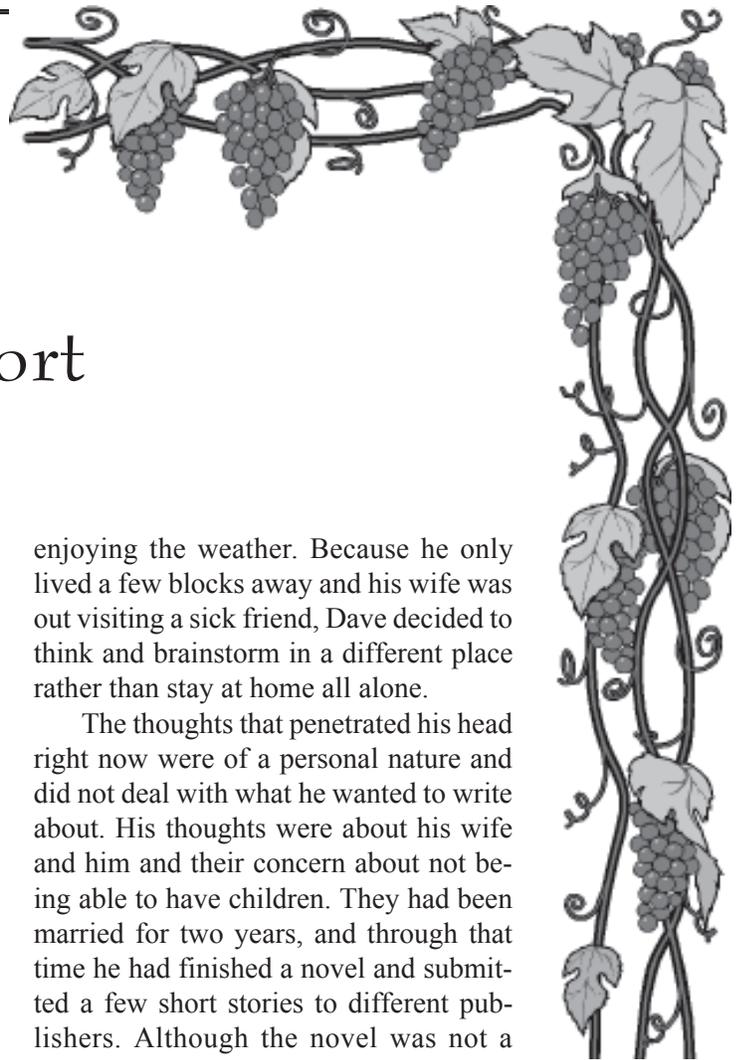
The society in which we live certainly does not promote respect. The “experts” on parenting and dealing with the youth like to emphasize the idea that the children and young people are the ones who need to be respected. If children tell their parents to “shut up” then parents, they say, need to understand that they have a right to express their feelings and listen to them. Children are given the right to take parents to court if they want. Television often portrays the youth as those who know it all, and the older ones as those who are “out of it” and not worthy of much honor. Let us be aware that the world is an example of what not to do. It will not get any better either. Don’t imagine that modern psychology is more reliable in this area than God’s word.

God's word is very clear about relations between the youth and older members of the church and how the young are to behave themselves. One way to show honor and respect is to stand up when they enter into your presence. Offer a chair. Stand up to shake their hand. God says to the young, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD," Leviticus 19:32. Dishonor towards parents is a clear warning that the family is in trouble. Dishonor in the church is a very serious indication that the church is in trouble. We read in Isaiah, "And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour: the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable," Isaiah 3:5. Let us take heed to this warning of our God.

This word of God is not only an exhortation to the young; the older members need to receive the honor due unto them. Too often, older members are reluctant to be called "Mr." or "Mrs." Perhaps they are unwilling to face the fact that they are growing older. It may be a somewhat awkward transition for a young man or woman to have a title, but they must look forward to the new roles which God gives to them in the church. They must take their roles seriously and receive the honor due unto them. Parents ought to demand that their children honor the adults with a title of respect. Parents must also give a good example to their children by showing honor to those in authority over them with a title of respect. They should address the police as "officer" instead of "cop." God gives the president of our country his place of authority and he should be addressed as "President Clinton" and not "Bill." He does not earn respect of himself, it is given to him by God. In church the minister should be addressed with his title "Reverend" or "Pastor." We must also show respect to our elders and deacons, and what better way is there than "Elder Jones" or "Deacon Jones." God commands His people in Romans 13:7 "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." Parents, this is how you instruct your children to show the honor which God commands them to give to you and other adults.

God gives sharp warning to children who do not honor their parents. Dishonor has always been a serious sin, and it continues today. We read in Proverbs 30:11 "There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother." Concerning such children God says in Proverbs 20:20 "Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness." God does not limit the warning to words alone. The attitude of dishonor is also condemned. We read in Proverbs 30:17 "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it." Honor also extends to the giving of parents to their children. Parents give to their children what they need. Children dishonor their parents if they think they need more and take advantage of their parents materially or in other ways. God says to such in Proverbs 28:24 "Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer." The younger generation must show such respect to all those of the older generation of the church.

Positively, God commands children to listen to their parents and respect them in all things. Remember that God has given your father to you to instruct you. God has increased his wisdom through the experiences of his life. We read in Proverbs 23:22 "Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old." Doing this we show honor. Doing this for our elders, we also show honor to all those to whom honor is due. Above all, we honor God with our obedience to Him. ❖



My Only Comfort

by Russell Tolsma

Walking through the cold, blustery wind, a figure in a black trenchcoat, perhaps a young man, heads toward a glass door. As he enters, he looks up the well kept wooden stairs. Barely paying attention to the soft playing sound of a bass guitar and trumpet, he begins to walk up the stairs. He enters the small, but cozy atmosphere of a cafe. The wooden tables and the roughly painted floor blend with the white plaster walls and daisies in their vases. He walks up to the stained oak counter and pulls off his trenchcoat. As he puts it over his arm, he leans over the counter and asks the cashier for a large coffee. Standing there for a second, he reaches into his pocket and grabs some change. Giving it to the cashier, he takes his coffee and walks to a table next to the wall with a window on the right hand side. In his motion to sit down, he observes all the people walking down the street, each of them doing his own thing and going to different places. Still staring out the window in some sort of trance, he absentmindedly reaches for the sugar and begins to pour some into his coffee. Suddenly realizing what he is doing he stops pouring the sugar and picks up his spoon. Stirring, he looks at the oak table and notices now smooth and worn it is. He reaches into an inner pocket of his trenchcoat and pulls out a wad of folded paper. Opening the paper and smoothing it out, he pulls a pencil out of his pant leg pocket.

“Now, where was I?” Dave thought to himself. “I can’t seem to think straight. I can’t believe I have writer’s block right now.” After writing a couple of novels and too many short stories to count, Dave knew that he would have times when nothing would come out of his head. Then there were times he had so many ideas he couldn’t keep track of them all. He also knew where he could get his ideas to flow. He found this cafe one evening when he and his wife had been taking a walk down the street,

enjoying the weather. Because he only lived a few blocks away and his wife was out visiting a sick friend, Dave decided to think and brainstorm in a different place rather than stay at home all alone.

The thoughts that penetrated his head right now were of a personal nature and did not deal with what he wanted to write about. His thoughts were about his wife and him and their concern about not being able to have children. They had been married for two years, and through that time he had finished a novel and submitted a few short stories to different publishers. Although the novel was not a bestseller, it was still a competitor even after having been on the shelf for a year.

He had managed to get enough money to support both him and his wife, and still pay for a house that they could call their own. Having written his first novel when he was still at home and going to the university, Dave paid for school with the royalties. His full time job included working around the house and trying to write anything worth getting published. Yet more than anything, he wished with his wife that they could have a child. Dave also recognized that it was all in the Lord’s hands. However, that feeling of wanting to control the situation was so prominent that it took everything in him to control it. Daily, he and Mary prayed that God would answer their prayer, and every day they took comfort in the fact that God alone was taking care of their lives. It was especially on Sundays that they yearned to hear that spoken Word and to take it in as food for their souls.

“I really enjoyed and am thankful for last Sunday’s sermon on the abundance of God’s mercy,” Dave thought to himself. “Sometimes I wonder how much we take that

mercy for granted.” Looking out into the street, he began to think about the people out there in the world who seem to benefit so much. He thought, “it’s so easy to get wrapped up in the cares and concerns that face us in our daily lives.”

“I really should get writing. Too much of this thinking, and I won’t be able to ever write again.”

For some unknown reason, the cashier came up to Dave. He raised an inquiring eyebrow in her direction. “I’m sorry for interrupting,” she said, “but it’s just that I couldn’t help but see the troubled look on your face. I was just wondering if you would like another cup of coffee?”

Dave looked at his cup and noticed that during the exchange of inner thoughts, he had finished his coffee a long while ago. “Don’t worry, this one’s on the house,” she said. Dave wasn’t really worried about that. No, what bothered him more was the fact that these thoughts plagued him in such a manner as this. “Uh, thanks,” said Dave still a little bewildered. She looked at him and said, “I’ll be leaving you now. Sorry again, I just thought that you needed a break from whatever you were thinking. By the way, my name’s Joanne. If you need anything else, I’ll be right over there,” she said pointing to the corner of the cafe by the counter. She poured him a coffee, and then began walking back to a chair at a table with a miniature backgammon game laid out. As she was walking away, Dave managed to say “Hey Joanne! Thanks, uh...thanks for the coffee.” She looked back, smiled at him, and said, “Really it’s no problem.”

Dave settled a little more into the chair and said to himself, “A break in my thoughts, that’s almost an understatement. Okay, now I have to concentrate. This is getting a little out of hand.”

A half an hour went by and the paper that sat before him was still blank. The coffee that Joanne had given him had been finished a long time ago. Dave caught himself staring out the window. He noticed that the wind had died down, and there was a quiet rain falling down into the streets. “I can’t believe this. What’s wrong with me? This has never happened to me before. Usually my blocks only last a little while. This is too much. I wonder what Joanne is doing?”

He glanced up at Joanne. He saw her alone, sitting at the table playing the backgammon game. Dave got up from his chair and walked slowly over to her. Joanne moved her intent gaze from the game to him, and she looked as though she was already anticipating what he was going to say.

“Hey Joanne, would you mind if we talked a bit?” Dave asked. “What’s the matter?” she said. “Can’t get those writing juices flowing? Sure, I don’t mind. It’s not as though I was doing anything important,” said Joanne with a small grin on her face. “Don’t worry. I’ve seen a lot of writers come and go through here. They’ve all suffered from a shutdown on imagination, just like you have right now. It’ll pass.”

“What do you want to talk about?” Joanne asked Dave with an inquisitive look on her face. “I, was just...wondering...” Dave began to ask, “How do you deal with problems in your life, or about things that worry you?”

“Interesting question you have asked. Well, generally I try to find something that will make me relax or feel better. I try to read or have a glass of wine. If all else fails, then I just try to forget about my problems. You know, I just occupy my mind with something else or with someone else,” said Joanne with a laugh in her voice. “Why do you ask?” she asked as she looked at him.

“Oh, I don’t know. I just wonder how people react to their problems. It seems kind of interesting. Don’t you think so?” Dave asked.

“I never really gave it much thought before to tell you the truth,” Joanne said, “Sorry.” “Oh, that’s okay. There are just a few things that I have a resolve in my heart.” said Dave.

Dave walked back to his table and sat down. He thought, “That’s kind of funny. I never thought about it before, but I think that I let my writing try to take the place of my problems. Just as Joanne allows her problems to be replaced or forgotten by things that make her feel good about herself; I have a tendency to escape into my writing so that my problems don’t seem so bad. My relationship with my God and Father should be the place that I turn to. I’ve always been taught that God is there for me all the time.”

“I should turn to God before I turn to anything else. Maybe the Lord is trying to show me something by the fact that I can’t write,” Dave perused.

Turning his head towards the window, he looked out for a moment and then closed his eyes. Bowing his head, he prayed softly to God, asking for both forgiveness in his lack of faith and strength in all of his daily struggles. He prayed that God would allow Mary and him to have a child, but only as long as the Lord willed it to be that way. Closing his prayer in thankfulness for God and his everlasting mercy, he opened his eyes and meditated softly on what he had learned.

“I know something now that I cannot forget and that I can share with Mary. My God is truly great; he teaches me daily,” Dave thought. “I should go and see if Mary is home because I want to talk to her about what I’ve been allowed to see. The writing will wait till tomorrow.

As Dave got up to go he said, “Joanne! Thanks for answering my question. It helped me a lot.” Joanne looked up and said, “Oh, you can write now?” While putting on his trenchcoat Dave answered, “No, but I’ve learned something amazing.” He took the blank sheets of paper, and the pencil and stuffed them both in his pocket. Just as he was going to go down the stairs, Joanne called after him, “What did you learn!?” Dave stopped, and looking down the stairs said, “An amazing way in which I can relieve myself of worries and problems. I’ll have to tell you about it.” Joanne looked after him in curiosity and confusion

as he stepped into the stairwell. “I’ll be back to have a coffee sometime soon, and to write. Don’t worry. Thanks,” he said with a grin on his face.

Stepping out into the light rain from the doorway, Dave walked down the street with a comfort that he had never felt or known before. Even now, more than before, Dave wanted to know his God and learn about Him. Walking through the rain and the coming evening, his heart and soul were warm, and the warmth did not fade, in contrast to the surroundings about him. ❖

Russell is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Creation Through the Spectacles of Scripture

The Doctrine of Creation (2)

by Aaron J. Cleveland

In the last article, we briefly explained the theory of evolution and the form, with which we ought to be the most concerned, theistic evolution. Now we will turn our attention to the doctrinal consequences of a belief in theistic evolution.

First of all, we must understand that a belief in theistic evolution requires of us that we do not interpret the first three chapters of Genesis literally. A belief in theistic evolution is not possible with a literal interpretation. In fact, many proponents of theistic evolution argue that Genesis 1-11 are not to be interpreted literally.

If Genesis 1-11 is not a literal, historical account of the beginning of this world and the first years of its history, then how are these chapters to be taken? As a myth, or better yet, as stylized writing, says the theistic evolutionist. The first chapters of God’s Word are to be received as nothing more than a fictional “story”. The ways

of God in the beginning of time are too profound for us to grasp, so it was necessary for God to relate the beginning of all things in an easy-to-understand, storylike manner. This is all Genesis 1-11 is, nothing more. It cannot be taken literally. It is myth.

This explanation ought to immediately strike us as false. Even a child who reads Genesis 1 can discern that it is to be taken literally. When a faith possessing believer reads Genesis 1:1 where we read, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,” he is left with no doubt as to how he ought to interpret this passage. The first chapters of Genesis present themselves as literal history and must be interpreted as literal history. Any other interpretation is false and dangerous.

But we ought not be surprised when men interpret this portion of Genesis as they do. A false view of the doctrine of Scripture has entered most churches. Because

the Bible is not infallible and inerrant, it is open to private interpretation. The Bible is only man's book and is open to any interpretation that satisfies man's fancy. This false view is in flat contradiction to the correct view of the doctrine of Scripture as explained in II Peter 1:20, 21 where we read, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

This denial of a literal interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis is of no small consequence. If the opening chapters of Genesis are indeed mythical as they claim, then it follows that the Fall (Gen. 3) is mythical, the Flood (Gen. 7) is mythical, and the scattering at Babel (Gen. 11) is mythical. To deny the literal Fall is to deny the doctrine of original sin and the guilt which all men have in Adam. To deny the literal Flood is to deny that God will come again and destroy this world with fire and save to Himself a peculiar people. To deny the literal scattering at Babel is to deny God's hand in all the happenings of man throughout history. But these denials are just at the tip of the iceberg of doctrinal rejections and contortions.

The first chapters of Genesis serve as the foundation on which the whole of Scripture rests. These first chapters are packed full of doctrine. These doctrines, set forth for the first time in Genesis, are the same doctrines which are found in the rest of the Bible. To deny these doctrines as they are set forth in God's first dealings with man is to deny these doctrines in all of Scripture. In very simple terms, a denial of the first chapters of Genesis is no less than a denial of all the truths found in Scripture.

One of these truths found in Genesis, and the central truth in all of Scripture is that of the promise of a Savior, as found in Genesis 3:15 where we read that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. This seed of the woman is Christ and His death on the cross would be the head-bruising death-blow to the serpent. Not only would the serpent and his seed be forever destroyed, but right here in Genesis 3:15 redemption from sin and death is promised to the spiritual seed of the woman.

Related to this is the reality of the Fall as described in the first part of Genesis 3. Man is in need of a Savior because he has sinned, and because of this sin he has brought down on himself the curse of God on sin, which is physical and spiritual death. In Genesis 3:19, we read,

"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." But this curse was not limited to Adam only. All of us are guilty in Adam. Romans 5:12 explains this very clearly where we read, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

This truth established in Genesis 3 is very important. To deny Adam's Fall, the curse put upon him because of that Fall, and our guilt in Adam and the curse of death upon us, is to deny our need for the Savior. If there is no sin and death, there need not be a Savior. If man's fall into sin is no more than a myth, then our need for a Savior is nothing more than a myth. What a frightening thought! But this is where theistic evolution leads us.

Just as we are all guilty in Adam, so is Adam "the figure of Him that was to come" (Romans 5:14). Adam is a figure of Christ. If Adam is mythical, so also must Christ be mythical. This is in flat contradiction with the rest of Scripture because Christ and his death and resurrection are surely not a myth. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Cor. 15:21,22). This is just one of many New Testament examples which speak of an actual Adam and a literal Fall.

In addition to all of the preceding doctrinal consequences of a belief in theistic evolution, there are more. Theistic evolution requires a denial of God's six-day creation and His providential governing of it. According to the theistic evolutionist, God's only involvement in the development of things amounted to nothing more than a few special interventions in the evolutionary process. One of these "interventions" was the giving of a soul to man. Another was giving man the image of God. One does not have to ponder for very long to recognize why these two "interventions" would be necessary in order for the theistic evolutionist to remain somewhat Biblical.

If God's hand in this process amounts to nothing more than a few special interventions, then it is evident how the eternal providence of God is denied. These sporadic "interventions" could not be more unbiblical. The Heidelberg Catechism speaks explicitly as to how we ought to view God's work of creation and providence when it asks in Question 26: "What believest thou when thou sayest, 'I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker

of heaven and earth’?” And the answer speaks to the shame of the theistic evolutionists when we read:

That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (who of nothing made heaven and earth, with all that is in them; who likewise upholds and governs the same by his eternal counsel and providence) is for the sake of Christ his Son, my God and Father;...

God was not only involved in every minute detail of the creation of this world, but He has been involved ever since. If it were not for His upholding power, the creation would cease to exist. This truth is set forth in Hebrews 1:3 where we read that God is “upholding all things by the word of His power.” Psalm 115:3 adds to this the words, “But our God is in the heavens; He hath done

whatsoever He hath pleased.” This is a comforting truth for the believer who is assured that nothing happens apart from the counsel of God. The theistic evolutionist is void of this comfort.

In addition to all of these doctrinal denials, the theistic evolutionists, if they are going to maintain that the opening chapters of Genesis are mythical, deny the antithesis, a proper view of the family and marriage, and a proper understanding of work and rest. This we will look at in the next article. From there we will move on to the proper understanding of the doctrine of creation. ❖

Aaron is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Church Family

Where Are Pastors to Warm and Feed Us?

by D. Scott Connerley

Come with me, dear reader, as I sit down in my pew, awaiting the pastor to come to the pulpit. Soon the minister arrives and within minutes we are lifting up our hearts in song to the Lord our God. Afterwards we pray, glorifying His name and pleading His grace and mercy to shine down upon the needs and afflictions of His saints. Then the prayer and singing is finished for a while. The pastor bids us open the Bible with him. After reading from God’s Word, our pastor begins to preach.

Twenty-two minutes later he closes in prayer and we sing a Psalm. Yes, a twenty minute sermon. And on those Sabbaths and in those twenty minutes we may have heard the assurance of God’s election to grace mentioned, but most likely not. We may have heard some exposition of the text, but it was scarcely as thorough as it could have been. We may have gotten a glimpse of the holy God, but rare was the opportunity to stare full into His

glorious face, though through a glass darkly. We leave yet hungry, though we came to be filled; cold, though we came to be warmed.

Let me take you somewhere else. Please—if only for a moment. We stand in another church. Here you and I are warmed and filled. Here the pastor is truly pastoral; he guides his flock to the green pastures and leads them by the still waters. Here Christ spreads out a wondrous banquet table before us. This man, having been before the face of God and well-trained to be a faithful minister of the Word, does not cease from speaking until he has opened the Scriptures to us. For perhaps fifty minutes he speaks, and the only thing to keep me from seeing my blessed Redeemer in that mirror before me is my own weak flesh. But the water is there. It is only I to blame if I do not drink. The meat is before me; woe to me if I do not partake.

Both scenes have been my personal experience. The former is a church which is Reformed in name, but has all but forgotten the Reformation. The latter is my present experience. As I write we have been without a pastor for nearly a year, and yet we have never been denied that blessed preaching. Though without a minister of our own, together we have nearly trekked through the Heidelberg Catechism by means of visiting Protestant Reformed ministers. And what a blessing that preaching has been to me! I feel I have grown by leaps and bounds under such preaching. Others have told me they are growing as well.

If you are a pastor reading this, mark well this note of appreciation. You are necessary, and it is necessary that as you awake each morning you meet with God on our behalf and that you begin your work diligently for our welfare. Such a true pastor is priceless to Christ's church. Yes, God can replace one pastor with another so that one is not more valuable than another. But what I say rather is that humble, diligent and consecrated Reformed pastors are invaluable to us.

If you are a young man, perhaps you met me as a chaperone at our most recent Young Peoples' Convention. I saw many of you there. Some of the few of you I got to know I judged to be mature and consecrated to God. Do you young men ever consider pursuing the pastorate? Do you seriously and prayerfully consider it?

If you are a father, please pause to consider the young men under your roof or even under that of your brother in the congregation. What buds do you see on these olive plants? What seeds sprout in those young hearts that can serve Christ in the ministry of His Word? If the Church could perhaps be served by him in the pulpit, do not defraud the Church of that young man. Nourish him heartily and lead him carefully that Christ through him may feed and lead others. When the books are opened and God demands we give account of our stewardship, let it not be said of us young men that we did not deal with God justly in this matter. May none be ashamed that we did not regard Christ's Church; that we had the means by us in our children or within us ourselves to minister to others a most blessed gift—and we selfishly kept our talents to ourselves.

Once more let me take you with me. Only once more. Stand now with me among many who have fled other churches to this Protestant Reformed congregation. Here they are hopeful. They are hungry. They are cold. Oh, how they huddle here to be warmed and filled! A man walks to the front. You ask me if he is the pastor. No, he

is not. What is that he is pushing, you say? You watch as a box on a cart is now set in place. A cord is unraveled and plugged into the wall. A button is pushed on a remote control. And instantly the room is filled with preaching. Blessed, Reformed preaching; the voice of Christ; able to feed a multitude. But it is second rate. It is not the same. Soon the switch is turned off and the pastor in the box is rolled away. Are you sick? He cannot come from the box to comfort you. Are you tempted? No chastening rebuke; no admonitions to halt you will come. He cannot switch channels when your questions are different from the topic of the sermon. He cannot write letters or books. He cannot lead our catechism class and he cannot join our children in a game of basketball at school. He cannot get on a plane to do true mission work. He cannot go to where others are lonely, cold and unfed.

I ask you young and old alike—Does Christ's Church need preaching? "Of course," you each say, "for by the preaching and by Christian discipline we know the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven are swung wide to the believing, and shut fast against the unbelieving. Without it the church and those within are exposed to the devil! We here and those abroad who hunger will lack that quickening Manna which is Christ!" Amen. Then let not you or I slight the preaching. Rather, let us thank God for our seminary and its fruit and pray for its work. Pray for young men among us to consider the pastorate and then support them who do. The need will never be satisfied as long as there are sheep yet wandering in the world, bleating to be led and to be fed. ❖

Scott is a member of South Holland Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois.

Correction:

The article, "Corporate Responsibility," in the last issue of *Beacon Lights* was mistakenly credited to Rev. Doug Kuiper. The author was actually Rev. Dale Kuiper, pastor of our Southeast Protestant Reformed Church. We apologize to Rev. Kuiper for this error.

Karen Came Back

by J.P. de Klerk

No, there was no scandal to be told in that sleepy town. Not even a whisper. There was only the fact, that in the only bank the town had, there was a new face behind the counter. Nobody knew where that kind, helpful girl came from. It was summertime, there were quite a few tourists passing by, the manager was on holiday, and it had happened before that he got help from elsewhere.

Especially the older people were pleased with the patience she had and the helping hand, filling in certain documents.

Next to her was a small plate that mentioned her name: Karen Fopma. Short and snappy.

She enjoyed her work. In another city she had done the same, but between then and now Karen had been “off the rails.” It had been a nasty experience and it was all her own fault, but God had brought her back, far away from “the forces of darkness” as she called them.

She would never forget the moment, that she sat cold, hungry and lonely in a small room of an old fourth class hotel, in the twilight, her head reeling, and there came suddenly a kind old lady with sandwiches and fruit. She did not know what to say.

She had been in bad company. The kind of “Come on, Karen, what does it matter. Let us make whoopee.” Her father and mother were divorced. Her elder sister married and went to Germany. Her brother was in the army. She didn’t know what to do. She trusted the others, she knew some of them yet from school, but the leader of the group had all kinds of wild ideas about what he called “amusement.” He was a prize fool, drinking, driving like mad, giving her some drugs, stealing in shops, fighting with other daredevils, sometimes dandling her on his knee, never serious, till he ended up in a police cell, and she quickly left. She had worked some time in a bar. She had done some child care. She had



scrubbed floors in an office building. Till she felt out of control, close to the seamy side of life, meaningless, aimless. She did not want to go home, where everything was empty. She wanted to go back to the past, a normal Christian life, but she realized she could not do that. She was running out of money, she prayed, she cried, till that old lady came into her life.

They had a long talk, about the road back, somehow, somewhere.

Karen remembered the name of an elder of the church, who had often visited her parents in the past. Frank Pollard was his name. They found his address in

the telephone book. Mr. Pollard was quite willing to have a talk with her. The old lady, Iris Kidby, went with her. She was optimistic about the whole matter. "God will show us the way," she said. Karen was amazed to see how happy and charming she was. She told Karen, that her life's work was, mostly, helping young people in need, in the nicest possible way. "I always look for the right mix of light and shade, ever since my husband died," she said.

Mr. Pollard and his wife were not familiar with problems like Karen had come through, but they were good listeners. Mr. Pollard made a couple of phone calls and found a solution. Karen could stay with his eldest daughter in a small town and she would help her find a suitable job. She was married and had three children; she gave them Christian home schooling and Karen could give her a helping hand.

So it went. Karen's appearance in the house of family Foote caused scarcely a tremor. Ruth Foote knew the manager of the local bank, because she had worked there herself, before she married. Karen was welcome.

Every Sunday they went to church together. Karen thanked and praised God for His mercy. ❖

J.P. de Klerk is an author and journalist from the Protestant Reformed Church in New Zealand.

God's Creation

*H*ow beautiful are the flowers
That grow in the fields.
The birds that sing
their own song of praise.

*T*he rain that falls
To make things grow.
Snowflakes on the ground
Covering it white.

*A*ll reminds us
of our God
and how awesome He is.

*A*ll the little creatures
That roam the earth
Each different in their own way
And having their place in the Kingdom of God.

*T*he mountains that reach for the Heavens
Showing forth God's majesty.
And the beautiful rainbow
His Glory.

*A*gain remind us
of our God
and how awesome He is.

by Julie A. Bergman



The Song of Zion

by the *Beacon Lights* Staff

A Psalter-Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God

February 1-12 by Mike Feenstra

February 1 Read Psalm 44:1-8; Psalm 44:1-2

“Yea, for Thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.” This is the evaluation of Israel by the Psalmist in Psalm 44. How could this be since God had promised Israel that He would give them Canaan for an everlasting inheritance? Had God forgotten His covenant? Had he delivered Israel from Egypt and planted them in Canaan only to let them be overrun and mocked by the surrounding nations? How could God let this happen to His chosen people? Was not His own Name at stake? These and many other related questions often rise in our hearts when we read in Scripture of the church amid persecution. And from Psalm 44, we know that the Psalmist had the same questions. What are the answers to these questions? In our devotionals on Psalm 44, we will seek the answers to these critical questions which have troubled the Church of Christ for ages. Try to find the answers from Scripture for yourself as we go along. Sing Psalter 121:1.

February 2 Read Psalm 80; Psalm 44:3

The inspired Psalmist begins our Psalm with a wonderful confession of God’s covenant faithfulness toward Israel. He knows the covenant which God established with his fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He knows that God promised to Israel the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession. How does he know all this? The answer is that he was taught by his fathers of Israel’s victories through God’s outstretched arm. We sing of those victories in Psalter 121:1 with these words, “The nations were crushed and expelled by Thy hand, Cast out that Thy people might dwell in their land.” How is this possible? Only in Jehovah God: “But Thy right hand saved and the light of Thy face, Because of Thy favor and wonderful grace” (St. 2). Indeed, only through God’s sovereign grace do we defeat our foes including those that persecute us. Sing Psalter 121:2.

February 3 Read I Samuel 17:38-50; Psalm 44:4-5

By recounting before God his past favor toward Israel, the Psalmist in verse 4 cries to God to deliver Israel again for His

Name’s sake. His cry to God is one that the Church has always made, and one that we will also make in the last days. It is this: “God, Thou hast established Thy covenant with our fathers and Thou hast delivered them. Now we are persecuted because we confess Thy Name as our fathers did. Why dost Thou allow the wicked to persecute us and drag Thy Name in the mud?” (See vs. 13,14; Cp. Psalm 74). We find the answer in David’s defeat of Goliath. There God showed to all the world that He will not tolerate the mocking of His Name. He will assuredly glorify His Name by delivering us from the derision of our persecutors. Let this be our comfort in the dark days to come. Sing Psalter 121:3.

February 4 Read Joshua 6; Psalm 44:6-8

Jericho, Gideon and the Midianites, and Hezekiah and Sennacherib (Josh. 6, Jud. 7, & 2 Kings 19 resp.). All monumental victories given to Israel directly by Jehovah. Truly, Israel could sing, “No trust will I place in my strength to defend, Nor yet on my sword as a safeguard depend; In Thee, Who hast saved us and put them to shame, We boast all the day, ever praising Thy Name.” We can be sure that the Psalmist knew the history of these victories well. And even though he was under sore persecution, he boasted in God’s grace and praised Him for His goodness. Is this our attitude when we are afflicted by God? Let us learn from this Psalm patience and trust in God. Sing Psalter 121:4.

February 5 Read Psalm 44:9-19; Psalm 9:9-10

In vs. 9 and following, we read of the persecution that Israel endured for God’s sake. Israel was mocked and reproached by the surrounding nations. They were the byword of their neighbors as Job was. They were as sheep ready to be killed. What a difference from the Israel spoken of in verses 1-8! Why? Why were they afflicted even though they were following His way? This was the same question the Psalmist asked when he stated, “But Thou hast cast off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies” (vs. 9). Had God really cast off His people? Did He forget their affliction and oppression? Surely He did not for God never ceases to watch over His people (Cp. Psalm 94:14). Nevertheless, at that time God

did not help them in their affliction and persecution for this reason, so that they would look to Him alone for help. Israel needed to learn to wait on the Lord, and so do we. Sing Psalter 122:1.

February 6 Read Psalm 39; Psalm 44:11-12

In verses 11-12 the Psalmist continues to lay before God the persecution of Israel. The Psalmist illustrates this when He states: "Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat" (Cp. vs. 22). But, note that he recognizes God as the One Who did it, that is, he confesses that God is sovereign over persecution and evil. Many in the church world today will not make this confession. "God does not will affliction and persecution, Satan does!" they say. By this statement they deny the sovereignty of God over evil, the very doctrine that has given the saints of all ages peace in their suffering. Do we love this doctrine as they did? Then, let us defend it even though the vast majority of the churches resist us. Sing Psalter 122:2.

February 7 Read Job 30; Psalm 44:13-14

We read in Psalm 44:13 that Israel was the laughingstock of the heathen round about because those nations knew that Israel was chosen of God. While Israel writhed in pain, the mockers around derided them and blasphemed God's Name. It is easy for us here to condemn the heathen for their wickedness, but what about us? Are we copying the wicked by persecuting our fellow believers? We do this whenever we mock a brother in Christ who stands up for God. Young People, you do this when you snicker at the good confession of a peer in the society room. This type of persecution stings the heart of the child of God. Therefore, let us be on our guard lest we partake in the evil deeds of the wicked. Sing Psalter 122:3.

February 8 Read John 15:18-27; Psalm 44:15-16

"The voice of blasphemers and scoffers I hear, The foe and avenger against me appear." The question is: Why? Why are we persecuted? John 15:18-27 provides the answer. It is because we have been chosen out of this world by God and ingrafted into Christ. The world hates us because the world hates Christ. Israel's wicked neighbors hated them because they were the chosen nation who had Christ in them. If the world hates and persecutes us it only means that we belong to Christ! That is the testimony of John 15:19! Have you ever thought about that! Let this be our assurance when doubt arises in our hearts in the midst of persecution. Sing Psalter 122:4.

February 9 Read 2 Corinthians 4:8-18; Psalm 44:17-19

Fellow believers, do you have a heavy burden to bear? Does it sometimes seem as if you are "crushed amid ruins and under death shade"? Do you sometimes wonder why God sends affliction even though you are following His statutes? The Psalmist had these same questions and his afflictions were far worse than ours, because he was severely persecuted. The Apostle Paul answers these questions in II Corinthians 4:18 where he says, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment,

worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Light! Our afflictions are light? How can that be? It can only be because of the work of Christ on the cross, for through that He gave unto us eternal life. The weight of that eternal life is so infinitely heavy that the afflictions and persecution of this life are as nothing! Hallelujah! Sing Psalter 122:5.

February 10 Read Psalm 44:20-26; Psalm 44:20,21,26

The final section of Psalm 44 records for us the Psalmist's cry to God for deliverance. He begins in verses 20-21 with this declaration: "If we have forgotten the Name of our God... Shall not God search this out?" By these words the Psalmist states by implication that Israel was not afflicted for their sin, but because they were confessing God's Name. We can see this also by what he says in verse 22: "Yea for Thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter." Amid these troubles the Psalmist cries, "Arise for our help, and redeem us for Thy mercies' sake." The Psalmist does this with the confidence that God will surely save them. Even when it seems as if God is hiding His face from us, let us also have confidence that He will save us. Sing Psalter 123:1.

February 11 Read Romans 8:28-36; Psalm 44:22,23,26

"Arise, cast us not off for ever." Such was the cry of the Psalmist in verse 23. How often have you felt this way when afflictions rose up against you? During those afflictions did it feel as if God forgot you? In that difficult time, what was one of the Scripture passages that comforted your soul? Was it Romans 8:28-39? I venture to say that it was, for in Romans 8 Paul writes that no affliction or persecution can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. What a comfort! God, Who elected us before the foundations of the world, has promised to us that He will preserve us to the end. That preservation He has accomplished through the death of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Who shall separate us from the love of God? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Absolutely nothing! And this because Christ has ingrafted us into Himself forever to remain! Sing Psalter 123:2.

February 12 Read Romans 8:37-39; Psalm 44:24-26

In our text for today we find the Psalmist lying with his face down in the dirt, unable to rise because of the oppression of the enemy. In this adversity he asks God, "Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression? (vs. 24)" This is a cry that many saints have made during the fires of persecution when the cause of Christ seemed to have been lost. This is a cry that we will make to God at the end of time when the persecution will be worse than at any time in history. Are we getting ready for those days? Are we seeking to find the answers to the problems of persecution and affliction? Then let us pray to God for His Spirit to lead us in the truth of His Scriptures. And let us call on God to save and preserve us in those last days. Let us do that because we know that in Him we are more than conquerors! Sing Psalter 123:3.

February 13-28 by John Huizenga

February 13 Read Psalm 45; Psalter 124:1

Our Psalter clearly lays out the meaning of this beautiful Psalm in the numbers 124 and 125. The first part of the Psalm is about Christ as King and the second part of the Psalm is about the Church as the bride of Christ. The inspired writer of this Psalm was glad to write down the wonderful revelation of God's covenant fellowship with His people, the Church, which, as we noticed in Psalm 44, is persecuted and troubled in this world. The word of God revealed to us is so wonderful, it is a shame that everyone in church each Sunday does not sit at the edge of their pew with overflowing hearts and tongues eager to sing God's praises. We must fight against sin because sin makes us dull and blind. Pray that God opens your eyes today that you might know the majesty and glory of our King. Sing the Psalter.

February 14 Read Psalm 45:2; Psltr. 124:2; John 1:1-14

This verse directs our attention to the beauty of Christ our King, especially that beauty which is found in the words which He speaks. Christ is the Word of God. By the Word of God were all things created. By His Word, God made known to his people His eternal good pleasure to bring His people into covenant fellowship with Himself by grace in Christ. Do you see the beauty of Christ? The beauty of Christ comes out in the pure preaching of salvation by grace alone. Be diligent in your study of God's Word. Pray for the working of His Spirit to enlighten your heart and mind. May Christ be beautiful in your eyes today. Sing the Psalter.

February 15 Read Ps. 45:3; Psltr. 124:3; Rev. 1:12-18

Christ our majestic King is wonderful in His words of grace. He is also equipped with a sword to defend His people from the enemy. He is the One promised to Adam and Eve who would crush the head of the serpent. He has killed death and arose from the grave in victory. He has ascended to the right hand of God in glory. The sun shines with brilliance and fierce heat beyond our comprehension, but it is as nothing compared to the glory of Christ. Today He guards His people from every attempt of Satan to take them from the fold. He preserves His church in the midst of a world swarming with devils. When we see Him come again in judgment, we will stand in awe of His majesty and filled with joy at His coming. Sing the Psalter.

February 16 Read Ps. 45:4; Psltr. 124:4; I Thes. 2:11-20

Only God can ride forth in battle with supreme might destroying in fierce anger the wicked, and at the same time gather the elect in gentle meekness. What a different God we see here from the arminian god who pleads with men to accept salvation! God sends forth the preachers of His word into the world to gather His people. He equips them with the two edged-sword of His word, and by the power of His Spirit, He turns the hearts of His people who hear away from sin and unto Himself. Christ rides forth in royal majesty to gather His people. He is doing so right now. Pray for the ministers of His

word and for the raising up of young men called unto that work. Sing the Psalter.

February 17 Read Ps. 45:5; Psltr. 124:5; Acts 7:54-60

A sharp blade is deadly in the hand of the murderer but can preserve life in the hands of the skilled surgeon. So is the sword of Christ which pricks the hearts of men: the reprobate gnash their teeth, but the elect are humbled and ask "how must we be saved?" As Christ rides to the ends of the earth throughout every nation, He destroys the enemy and gathers His church. Every member of His body, every stone of His temple must be gathered. He also defends His church against the constant attack of the wicked who want to destroy it. Let us humbly submit to His holy will as we see the sword destroy those round about us. Sing the Psalter.

February 18 Read Ps. 45:6; Psltr. 124:6; Hebrews 1:1-9

Hebrews 1:8 is a quote from Psalm 45:6. This New Testament text makes it plain that the Psalm speaks of Christ and that Christ is truly God. So many today who even call themselves Christians would have us believe that Jesus is really not the God who is the Creator of all things and Savior of the world. For them God is no more than the desire for peace which Jesus has given to men by His example and the supposed power in man to attain peace. But God makes it clear that Jesus is His Only Begotten Son. He is God. He reigns supreme and His throne is forever. May the true knowledge of God and His salvation never depart from our midst. Sing the Psalter.

February 19 Read Ps. 45:7; Psltr. 124:7; Heb. 1:8-14

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ reigns in perfect joy. He does not sorrow when so many who hear the gospel of salvation reject it because He has determined all things and all things happen according to His sovereign will. Perfect joy awaits all those who are found sinless. Sorrow is the result of sin. Christ imputes to us His righteousness, and we begin to experience this joy, but so long as we live in this earth our sinful nature clings to us. Do you look forward to the day when we will reign with Christ? Though earthly ties and the awful reality of death make it difficult to leave this life, we must pray for the swift return of Christ. Sing the Psalter.

February 20 Read Psalm 45:8; Psalter 124:8; Song of Solomon 3:4-11

The Psalm has revealed unto us Christ the King who conquers and rules over all and now brings us to the goal of His activity: the day of marriage with His bride. The word of God is not cold and abstract. God gives unto us the gift of marriage and uses this relationship to reveal in earthly language the wonderful relationship which God has in store for His people. Christ comes to His bride with everything to make the union most wonderful and glorious. He comes with the sweet perfumes of His grace and the music of the gospel. God brings us into perfect fellowship and a glorious salvation. How can we begin to give thanks to Him? We are so unworthy in ourselves. Sing the Psalter.

February 21 Read Ps. 45:9; Psltr. 124:9; Rev. 19:6-9

In this verse the attention turns to the bride of the king. She is the church gathered from every nation of the earth and made into a glorious body. She has been raised from her former shame and sin, cleansed, and made glorious, perfectly suited for the King. God makes the Church for Himself. He has determined in His eternal council to dwell forever with His people, redeemed from sin and death. Though the church appears to our earthly eyes to be filled with strife and division, the church as cleansed by the blood of Christ is beautiful in the eyes of God. We can only rejoice in the knowledge that God so loved His people that He sent His only Begotten Son. Sing the Psalter.

February 22 Read Ps. 45:10; Psltr 125:1; II Cor. 5:14-21

The Royal Bride, the church, is now called to give her full devotion to Christ, her husband. Just as an earthly bride is called to devote herself to her husband and forsake relationships which interfere, so the Church is called to separate herself from the world of sin, death, and slavery out of which she is taken. She belongs to Christ. Every believer is made new in Christ. Together as the church believers serve Christ. Are you ready to give up earthly pleasures and seek first the kingdom of heaven? This is something we can do only by the power of God's grace. Pray to God for a willing heart to serve Him faithfully today. Sing the Psalter.

February 23 Read Ps. 45:11; Psltr. 125:2; Col. 1:12-20

The Church is the body of Christ. She is loved and cherished by Christ. Christ is her head. He rules over her in love as her Lord. The relationship between Christ and the church is one of perfect love and glory as He rules over all His creation. Husbands and wives, do you seek to be a picture of this relationship in your marriage? Children and young people, do you know what the relationship between Christ and His church is like when you see your parents? We fall far short, but we must continue to strive for a marriage which reflects the perfect marriage. Young people, do you see a partner with whom you desire to reflect the marriage of Christ and His church? Pray that our families may be blessed with godly marriages. Sing the Psalter.

February 24 Read Ps. 45:12; Psltr. 125:3; Isa. 60:1-12

The gathering of the people of God is a glorious thing indeed. The church is not to be found in the glory of earthly buildings nor in the riches of the Roman Catholic Church. The church is the gathering together of believers as the body of Christ; it is a glorious temple made with living stones. Like precious stones gathered from every region of the earth God's people are added daily to the church. Every believer is given the riches of Christ which he or she brings into the service of Christ. God is well-pleased with Christ and His bride, but to the world, the church is not beautiful at all. May we seek the honor and praise of God and not men. Sing the Psalter.

February 25 Read Psalm 45:13; Psltr. 125:4; Isaiah 61

The church is clothed with the garments of righteousness. It is the righteousness imputed unto her by Christ her head. He has borne the burden of her guilt and made her whiter than snow. True righteousness alone is pleasing to our holy God and He loves us in Christ. No matter how lovely you may think you can make yourself in the eyes of God, every work of man is corrupt. The robe of righteousness cleansed in the blood of Christ alone makes us beautiful before God. The truth of sovereign grace alone is woven throughout the whole of Scripture for we must know this truth to be saved. Give thanks to God for the faithful preaching of the whole counsel of God. Sing the Psalter.

February 26 Read Psalm 45:14-15; Psalter 125:5; II Corinthians 11:1-6

In this verse the Church enters into the King's palace. She comes as a pure virgin. Purity before marriage is a picture of the Church prepared for Christ. Paul uses the language of this Psalm to exhort the young church to remain pure in the doctrine of Christ. The church is always susceptible to the lies of Satan as false preachers bring new ideas to fill itching ears. By nature man is not satisfied with the gospel, and the gospel has not changed since its announcement to Adam and Eve. Salvation is by grace alone. Are you content with the Word of God alone? Do not give your ear to the seducing lies of the enemy. Stand up and defend the truth when it is under attack. We are called to remain pure and holy before our God. Sing the Psalter.

February 27 Read Ps. 45:16; Psltr. 125:6; Gal. 3:21-29

The Scriptures speak of the church, the body of believers, as the bride of Christ, and individual believers as children of Christ and the church. We are the spiritual seed of Abraham, sons of heavenly birth, a chosen generation, princes in all the earth, heirs according to the promise, the elect of God. What beautiful pictures God uses to describe His people! Though we may be poor and lowly from an earthly point of view, we belong to the royal family. We are united to Christ by faith alone. Do you value your royal lineage? May the pleasures and riches of this earth not distract you from your calling as a heavenly prince. Sing the Psalter.

February 28 Read Ps 45:17; Psltr 125:7; I Cor. 11:23-29

Yesterday's verse and today's verse turn again to Christ. He is the King of a royal race: the elect. He rules over all things and His name shall be remembered throughout all generations. Christ Himself instituted the Lord's Supper as a means whereby His name should be remembered. It is very important, therefore, that the Lord's Supper be honored and understood clearly so that Christ be remembered properly. His Name is also proclaimed in the preaching throughout the whole world. When all the elect have been gathered and Christ returns, then the church will give Him praise forever in heaven. Sing the Psalter.

Psalter 353— Divine Deliverance

by Mike Feenstra

Imagine that you are fishing in a picturesque canyon river in a remote part of the United States, surrounded by majestic mountains on either side. The combination of water, wildlife, and trees provide you with a breathtaking view. As you wade a few feet over and cast a line down river, you think that everything seems perfectly peaceful. When suddenly you hear a faint rumble in the distance. "It is just a plane or maybe a distant thunder," you think, shrugging off any possibility of danger. Then over the next couple minutes you notice that the sound of the rumble is increasing until you turn around and see a wall of surging water crashing down the canyon. "It's a flood!" you exclaim. To your utter dismay you find that there is absolutely no place to run so that finally the leaping waves of the raging stream grab hold of your life. You realize that you are completely powerless, as if you are a lamb within the jaws of a ferocious lion or a bird caught in the fowler's net. Then out of nowhere you are plucked up out of the swelling tide by a rescue helicopter and placed on the safety of a high mountain, where the waters can not reach. What would you say to the person who saved you out of the flood? I am sure that your thanksgiving would never cease.

We, the church of Jesus Christ, are continually in similar circumstances spiritually. The Devil, our own sinful flesh, and the wicked world are constantly trying to drag us down into the pit of hell. Indeed, the Devil, "walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8). Left to ourselves, we would be no match to the traps and stratagems of these evil enemies. In an instant we would be overwhelmed by them were it not for Jeho-

vah. For He alone, not any man, is able to save us from the spiritual flood of temptation and persecution, the power of which is infinitely greater than any natural flood.

Therefore, we must praise God as David does in Psalm 124, as versified in Psalter #353, stanza 1: "If that the Lord had not with us remained, When cruel men

against us rose to strive, We surely had been swallowed up alive." How is this possible when it seems as if every moment we are going to be brought down?

To answer this question we must remember that this whole Psalm rests on the foundation of the sovereign providence of Jehovah as is beautifully confessed by David in verse 8. There he declares, "Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth." In this confession, we along with David acknowledge that Israel, the church, is saved from the surging flood because God is the Mighty Creator of the universe. What a wonderful comfort this is! But there is more! Jehovah not only has created the universe but He also preserves and rules the world by the Word of His power. He controls

all of our enemies so that they will never pluck us out of His hand. "Blessed be Jehovah, Who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth," because He controls their every move so that through their persecution and temptations we are made ready to live with our Lord. Praise Jehovah! ❖

353 Divine Deliverance
PSALM 124:1b One Verse General Psalm

1. How in - sa - di may say, and that is true, If that the
 2. You, when their wrath a - galed us fears - ly rose, The swell - ing
 3. Bless be the Lord Who made us out their prey; As from the
 Lord had not our right main - tened, If that the Lord had
 did had o'er us spread its wrath, The rag - ing stream had
 score a hand us - up - sth tree, Their net is rent and
 not with us re - mained, When cru - el men a - galed us rose to
 then in - come our gear, The rag - ing flood, in proud - ly swell - ing
 do - at - eged us was; Our - so - ly help is in Je - ho - vah's
 strive, We sur - ly had been swal - lowed up a - live,
 still, Most sur - ly then had a - rec - wholst our soul,
 Name, Who made the earth and all the heav'n - ly frame.

Mike is a member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

“Shouldest Thou...Love Them that Hate the LORD?”

by Rev. Richard Smit

Introduction

A prophet walked into the beautiful palace in Jerusalem. When summoned by the king into the throne room, the prophet boldly proclaimed the Word of the LORD, “Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD.”¹ What had the king done wrong to receive this Word of judgment? Could the king have done wrong in loving the enemies of God when Jesus said, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you.”² What is proper love and proper hatred towards the enemies of God?

The Setting

The king that was on the throne as the prophet Jehu spoke was Jehoshaphat. He had just returned to Jerusalem from a battle with the Syrians at Ramothgilead. This city was east of the Jordan about 50 miles to the northeast from Jerusalem. To Jehoshaphat this did not pose as great a threat, as it did to Israel and King Ahab. The presence of the Syrians within the inheritance of the tribe of Gad urged Ahab to reclaim it.³ Because he did not have the strength to keep the Syrians out of Ramothgilead, he recognized that he had no strength to drive them out. Ahab turns to Jehoshaphat for military assistance.

According to II Chronicles 18:1-3, Ahab puts on a show of sincere religion to attract and entice Jehoshaphat into an alliance. Ahab’s many sacrifices and show of religion did attract Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat made a full-fledged alliance with Ahab to fight the Syrians. Jehoshaphat said, “I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee in the war” (vs. 3). We must realize that this friendship did not happen over-

night, but was something that was in the works for a while. According to verse 1, we learn that Jehoshaphat had “joined affinity (i.e. a close relationship) with Ahab” years earlier. Jehoshaphat sealed that relationship by the marriage of his son, Jehoram, to the wicked daughter, Athaliah, of evil Jezebel.⁴ Because of that earlier marriage, Jehoshaphat’s cooperation with Ahab now was only the fruit of a growing relationship between the two kings.

Jehoshaphat and Ahab immediately went to war against the Syrians. In that war, Ahab is killed by the God-guided arrow of a Syrian archer. Jehoshaphat very nearly lost his life, but returns to Jerusalem in safety. As soon as he returns, the prophet Jehu is ready with the Word of the LORD.

Wrong Love

From man’s viewpoint, Jehoshaphat’s assistance was very noble. He used his honor and riches to help out a neighbor who was oppressed by the Syrians. Jehoshaphat risked his neck in a battle against an enemy which only remotely affected the security and peace of Judah. In a war museum, Jehoshaphat would have been remembered for his valor and unselfishness.

However, Jehovah views Jehoshaphat’s alliance with Ahab much differently. Jehoshaphat had loved the enemies of Jehovah. Jehoshaphat had forgotten that nice and pious Ahab was the bitter foe of God. Ahab hated God. He had refused to remove Baal worship from Israel even after Elijah had plainly shown on Mt. Carmel that Jehovah He is the God, and that He alone must be worshipped as He has commanded in His Word. Ahab had led Israel into further apostasy than any of the other kings before him. Further, Jehovah hated Ahab. Jeho-

vah showed that hatred in sending Syria to take Ramothgilead. Jehovah showed His hatred against Ahab in his sin and impenitence by slaying Ahab with that Syrian arrow. Jehovah fulfilled His word of the curse through Micaiah⁵ against His enemy, Ahab.

In light of that truth, Jehu righteously rebukes Jehoshaphat for seeking to become a friend of the enemy of God. Scripture throughout declares that such an act is sin. In particular, James 4:2 teaches, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” In addition to that, Psalm 139:21-22 teaches that Covenant friendship with God inevitably demands that the Covenant child of God hate those who are the enemies of God. “Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? Am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with a perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.”

We learn from Scripture then that there can be no true, spiritual friendship between God’s people and God’s enemies. No friendship between Christ and Antichrist, the Church and the world, light and darkness, holiness and sin, and the truth and false doctrine. No denominational friendship between the true church and the false church. No making of alliances with those who despite faithful rebuke have willingly abandoned the moorings of the Reformed Faith as set forth in our Three Forms of Unity. The child of God cannot love in a bond of true friendship those that hate the Lord, but can only love the Lord and his fellow saint in the bond of true spiritual and covenantal love.

Proper Love

However, it seems that the words of Jesus justify Jehoshaphat’s actions. Jesus said, “Love your enemies.” Does Jehoshaphat receive too harsh a rebuke from Jehu?

We must remember that Jehoshaphat was attempting to make a true friendship with wicked Ahab. This he had no right to do. Israel and Ahab had continued in Jeroboam’s sin of forsaking the Messiah Who would come in the line of David. In that light, it was improper for Jehoshaphat to seek friendship with one who had forsaken the Covenant promise of the Messiah. The love that Jesus speaks about surely is not a love whereby we seek Covenant friendship with those who outwardly show that they hate Christ. Without Christ and the truth as the basis of friendship, there can be no friendship of love possible, nor permitted. Jehoshaphat by joining with Ahab was denying his Lord in that unholy alliance.

The love concerning which Jesus speaks is not a love which ignores ungodly practices or doctrines which deny Christ. It is not a love which seeks unity on the basis of feelings, projects, common earthly goals, or such general and vague statements of doctrine with which no one can disagree. The love concerning which Jesus speaks is not a love which glosses over sins, ignores them, and never speaks to the neighbor about those sins in some prudent and effective way. The love towards the enemy does not ignore the enemies’ sins for the sake of our financial gain or earthly pleasure.

Who is your enemy? Your enemy is the wicked man, who according to his works, walks the broad way to destruction. His ungodliness is an offense to us as we have earthly contact with him. He may persecute us or heap reproach upon us for our godliness. Because he walks in that sin without repentance, he lives as our enemy and the enemy of God. The enemy who despises the Word of God, the preaching, the Church, and anything to do with Christ and God, lives as an enemy of God. Such is our enemy who might even be found in a congregation.

The love for the enemy seeks his salvation. That love is demonstrated in our wise and prudent rebukes of their error and sin on the basis of God’s Word. It is our desire that they be rescued from the slippery slope of the broad way. We love them by not tolerating their evil and immoral jokes or immoral lifestyle on their way down the slope to the fire of hell. We love them by praying for their repentance and deliverance if the Lord wills. We love them by praying that if God wills, He turn them in repentance to confess their sin and to seek forgiveness and salvation by faith in Christ Jesus.

In light of that, what then should Jehoshaphat have done? He should have stayed home in Jerusalem. He should have found a godly wife for his son, not a wife of the seed of the serpent. He should have sent heralds to rebuke Ahab and to remind him of the word of God through Elijah on Mt. Carmel: “Ahab, how long halt ye between two opinions? Jehovah, He is the God. Serve Him! I will help you, Ahab, but only if you repent of your image worship, idol worship, and apostasy. Return Israel to serving the God I serve! Then, I will join with you to fight the Syrians.” That’s what he should have done rather than trying to side with the enemy of God to fight the enemies of God.

The Example to Follow

Jesus gives us the general example to follow in Matthew 5:45ff. In this passage, Jesus teaches that God’s providence causes earthly gifts to fall on the righteous

and the unrighteous. Just as God in His providence gives earthly prosperity to those who hate Him, so we must show outward, earthly kindness to our enemy: bless them that curse us, pray for them that persecute us, let them take our earthly possessions unforbidden,⁶ and give them a cup of cold water when they ask.

Does Jesus teach in Matthew 5 that God loves all men and that we ought to love all men in the same way? No, God does not love all men. God has no universal love. One cannot teach on the basis of Matthew 5:44ff and Luke 6:27ff that because God gives earthly gifts to the unrighteous, God loves all men including the unrighteous. Psalm 73:18 teaches that God gives the unrighteous earthly prosperity to destroy them. His earthly gifts are evidence of His hatred to those never chosen and justified in Christ, our Mediator.

The example we must follow is that God gives earthly gifts to those who hate Him. So we must do likewise. We must do so seeking that God's will be done. His will may be that either our kindness will serve to condemn our enemy or our outward kindness will serve to convert our enemy unto salvation.

Furthermore, as we consider our duty to love our enemies, we must remember the example of God's love toward His enemies. God's love is capable of being kind and merciful to His enemies. No, I did not say that God loves *all* His enemies. God loves only those and those alone of His enemies for whom He sent Christ to die. While we were yet enemies of God in our sin and guilt, God so loved us that He sent His only begotten Son. While we were yet enemies of God, Christ died for us to make us the friends of God and the enemies of Satan and his dominion. While we by nature crucified Him, Christ loved His enemies by praying for us, His elect, that we might be forgiven. For us Christ endured God's eternal hatred against our sin in order that His love might be shed abroad in our hearts. The result is that we enjoy His love even now as His Covenant friends.

Our love for the enemy reflects the love of God revealed to us in Jesus Christ. No, our love is not all-knowing and sovereign so that we will know at first glance that a wicked man is elect or reprobate. All we can do is try the spirit and judge the fruits of a man's life. By that we may determine that the enemy is walking the pathway unto everlasting destruction. It may be that our outward love is shown towards an enemy whom God destroys on that broad way. We will bless those that curse us, pray for them that persecute us, give a cup of cold

water, and give an admonition to those whom God hates and destroys.

On the other hand, it may be God's will to convert our enemy who is walking the broad way to destruction. If it is God's will, having prayed for our enemy, blessed the one who cursed us, showed kindness to our enemy, and rebuked him in his ungodliness, that one may be gained to Christ through the work of the Spirit into a godly life where he knows true friendship of perfect love with us and our God.

Conclusion

The love that Christ requires of us is a love of the enemy which unashamedly shows our hatred for sin and hatred for those who hate the Lord in their ungodly practices and confession of heresy. It will not participate in his rudeness, pride, boasting, selfishness, frivolity, and foolishness. At the same time it is a love which shows outward kindness to the enemy. Such love will be mingled with godly rebukes, but will not verbally abuse or poke fun of the enemy. Such proper love will seek the salvation of the enemy without tolerating his life which denies the Covenant God and His Christ. That love of the enemy honors our Father Who has loved us in Christ from eternity. That love is only possible in us by the grace and mercy of our God. That is what King Jehoshaphat also learned by experience through his sin and repentance. ❖

¹II Chronicles 19:2b

²Matthew 5:44

³I Kings 22:3

⁴II Chronicles 21:6. This occurred about nine years before the formal military alliance between Jehoshaphat and Ahab.

⁵II Chronicles 18:27

⁶Luke 6:27-36

Rev. Smit is pastor of Doon Protestant Reformed Church in Doon, Iowa.

Why Is Pride the Deadliest?

by Shari Vaalburg

Pride causes people to rationalize their sins and in some cases the sins of ones they love. Pride makes people cover up their sins instead of confessing them. Pride answers a valid rebuke with an attack. Pride holds grudges and blocks forgiveness. Pride makes it impossible for people to see their own sins. Because of all this, pride keeps a person from believing in salvation through Jesus Christ alone...even if he or she seems to profess it. Those with pride are allowed head knowledge of the scriptures, but not heart knowledge.

We all have too much pride. Pray for the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts that we might be saved from pride and the devil and acknowledge as in Philippians 4:13 that; "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." This verse rightly implies that we should do nothing outside of Christ. If we do, nothing good will come out of it. ❖

Shari is a member of Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church in Byron Center, Michigan.

Church History

Through Strife to Victory

Chapter 1

by Rev. C. Hanko

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, composed in England in 1647, begins with the question: "What is the chief end of man?" To that the answer is given: "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever."

That applies also to God's church. For God shows forth the riches of His glory in and through the church. Our Sabbath services are worship services. Sound preaching is God-centered. The entire service, including our prayers and singing, must be to the glory of God. For God bestows His blessing there.

It is with that in mind that we sing in our worship services:

*Zion, founded on the mountains,
God, thy Maker, loves thee well;
He has chosen thee, most precious,
He delights in thee to dwell;
God's own city, God's own city
Who can all thy glory tell?*

Psalter 237

How true it is that, "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God" (Psalm 87:3). Yet there are times in the history of God's church when the bitter complaint is raised: "Shameful things of thee are spoken, O city of God." Gradually but surely, even unawares, heresies creep into the church. False doctrines are taught in the

seminary, preached from the pulpit, fed to the children in the catechism class and in the schools, and spread abroad through the church papers.

Basically the error has always been that the emphasis falls less and less upon God and more and more on man. God is forced to the background and man is placed on the foreground. The teaching and preaching becomes *man-centered* instead of *God-centered*.

This was the sin of Adam and Eve in paradise. The devil had assured them that by eating of the forbidden tree they would be as God, knowing good and evil. The sin of the entire human race is that every one wants to be independent, self-sufficient, seeking the praise of men rather than the glory of God.

This was often the sin of Old Testament Israel. They went through periods of apostasy, in which the people preferred to choose the God whom they would serve. They chose the idols above the living God. Yet, God loved His beloved children. Therefore, God, in His just judgment, gave them over to the oppression of the enemy, and through the oppression of the enemy, which was nothing less than God's judgment, He brought them to repentance. This judgment caused them to see their weakness apart from Him and cry out for deliverance. This cry God heard, and, for the elect remnant's sake, He delivered them. This history repeated itself time and again.

This sin was evident even after the Babylonian captivity when the sects of the Sadducees and Pharisees arose, which crucified the Christ. God's judgment came upon them, but the church experienced the blessedness of the Pentecost.

The history of the new dispensation is no different. Already in the days of the apostles, the sinful lauding of man crept into the church. After the apostles' death, there was especially the error of Pelagius, who taught that mankind is not completely dead in sin, but can save itself with the aid of God's grace if he will only persevere and strive to overcome sin. God raised the church father Augustine to oppose him and to maintain the truth of God's sovereignty over all. Soon after, at the time of Gottschalk, the semi-pelagians tried to take over.

Thereupon the people found themselves bound in the shackles of the Roman Catholic Church and the power of the pope. Now all emphasis fell on a salvation by works. By penance, by self-denial and devotion to the church one can be saved, for the church had the power to save. In the 16th century God brought about

the great Reformation by raising such men as Luther and Calvin, who led them back to the Word.

It was not long after, that Arminius lifted his head with his subtle attempt to introduce once more the error of Pelagius in a more refined form. Over against his deception the church formulated the five points of Calvinism as adopted by the Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-19: total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace and the preservation of the saints.

Gradually a spirit of dead orthodoxy and spiritual laxity fell upon the church. It was the 'common folk' who hungered for the Word, and God raised men like De Cock, Van Velzen, Van Raalte, Scholte and others to bring about the Afscheiding, the Secession in 1834, whereby many were drawn out of the State Church to form their own denomination.

Another large segment withdrew from the State Church under the leadership of Dr. Abraham Kuyper in 1886. In 1892 these two groups joined into the Gereformeerde (Reformed) Church in the Netherlands. Since as churches we have our roots in the Netherlands, we shall have occasion to refer to these two groups later.

Repeatedly, the church had departed from a God-centered gospel and taught a heresy that appeals to man's carnal nature. One cannot fail to notice that always the truth of God's sovereign grace was attacked, and that too, with first a silencing of the truth of predestination, and then an outright denial of it, especially of reprobation.

Our purpose now is to acquaint you through the eye of an observer with the background of the reformation that took place in 1924 and that brought about the rise of the Protestant Reformed Churches under the leadership of Rev. Herman Hoeksema.* ❖

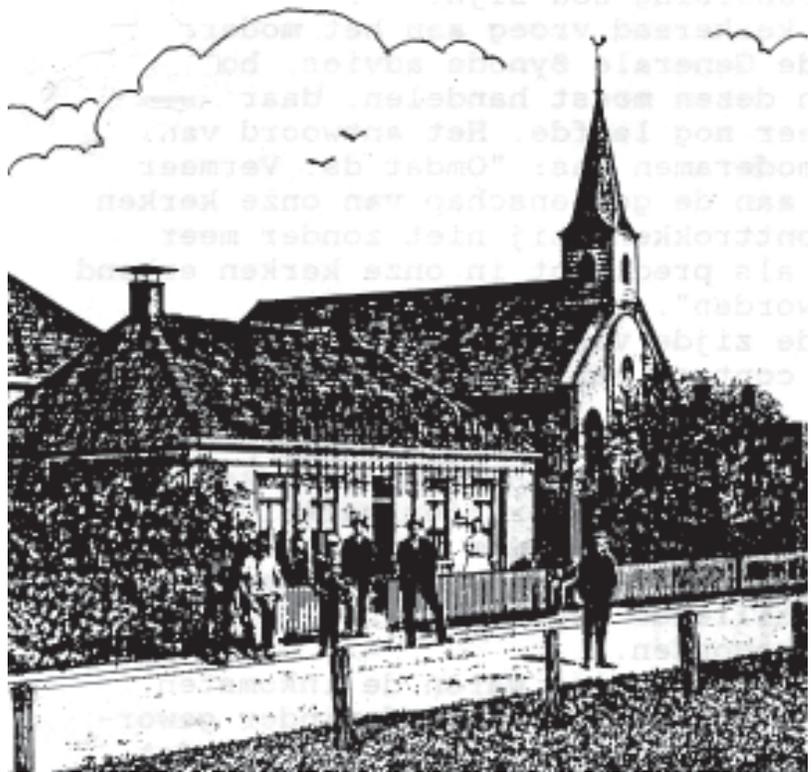
**For a much more thorough and extensive acquaintance with what happened in this period we recommend that you read "Watered Garden" by Mrs. Gertrude Hoeksema, obtainable at the Reformed Book Outlet in Hudsonville.*

Rev. Hanko is an emeritus minister of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America and is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

The Church of Otdemirdtjm

by J.P. de Klerk

The village of Oudemirdum is to be found in the Dutch province of Friesland. The Synodal-Reformed Church was built in March 1889. Before that the congregation had gathered in a farmhouse. One of the elders was acting-minister. His name was R. Kuyper. There was a manse available, but sixteen times the Church called in vain a minister. Finally a Rev. M. L. Wijnia, from Zevenhoven (in the province of South Holland) was willing to come (with a big family) on March 12, 1894, and remained there till May 24, 1921. The yearly salary was 900 Guilders, so that he was often in debt (paid by the Church). There were 270 members in those days. In 1912 a Christian school was built and in 1926 enlarged. After twelve calls the Church received in 1923 a new minister ; his name was S. P. Vermeer (he came straight from the seminary). Three years later the minister was leaving because of the so-called “Geelkerken-Conflict” the beginning of modernist influences in the Synodal Reformed Churches. In 1944 a number of Church members left and joined the Liberated Reformed Church (Prof. K. Schilder). The Synodal Reformed Church of Oudemirdum is now part of the “Samen-OpWeg” (together on our way) process with the State Reformed Church and the modern Lutherans. Several members do not agree. Over the years the building has been renovated several times.



The Church of Marrum

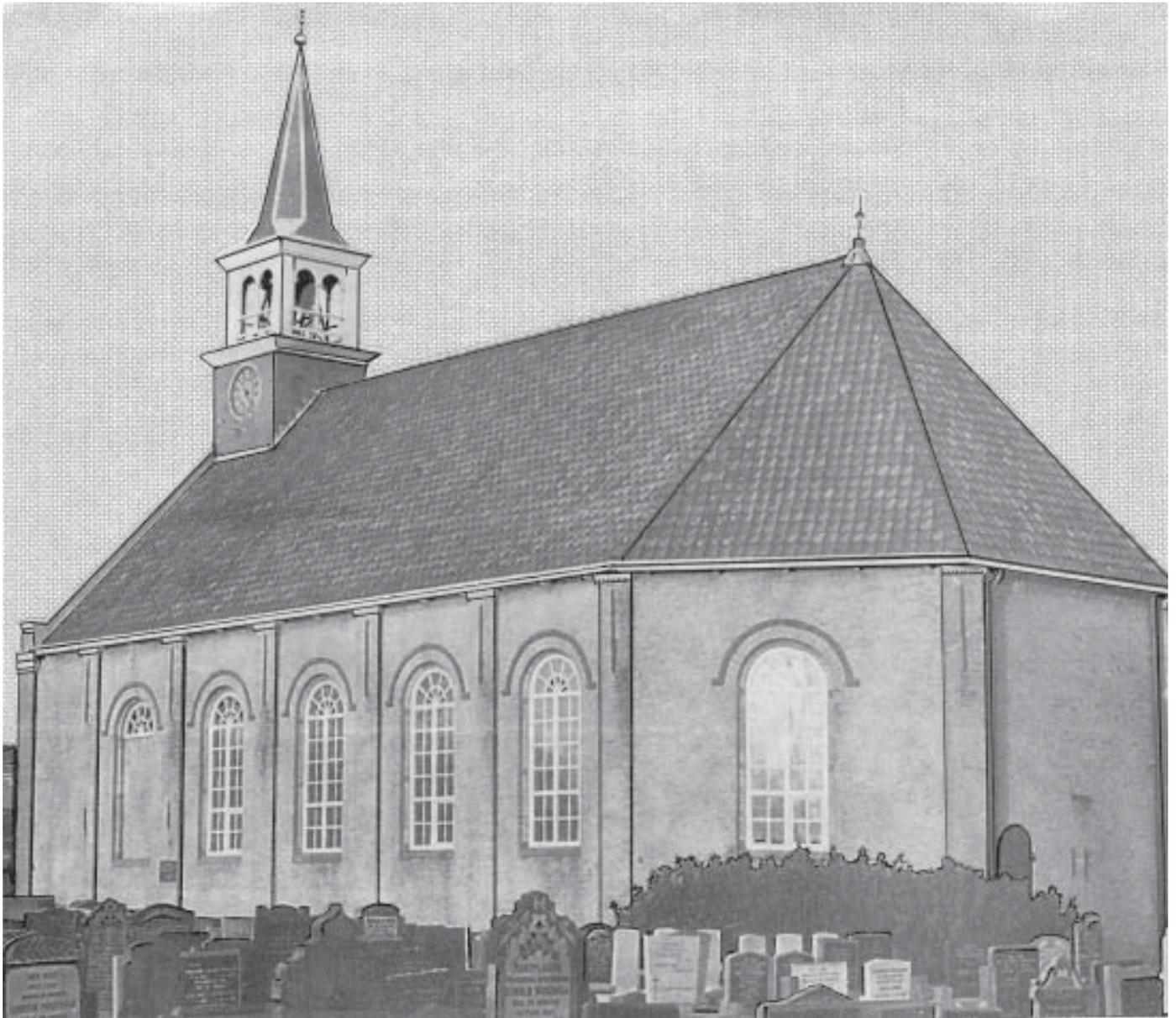
In the Northern part of the Dutch province of Friesland, not far from the Waddensee (the Shallows and the Frisian Islands), you find the old village of Marrum. There is this State Reformed Church amidst a big cemetery with hundreds of headstones, tombstones and sepulchral monuments, surrounded by willow-trees. The Church is often restored and altered, and it seems almost nothing is known about its history. The electric clock is useful for the farmers passing by with their tools and products. The soil is a mixture of sand and peat. The province of Friesland has become a prosperous part of The Netherlands, and, in general, the inhabitants have got the reputation to be very reliable and close to the House of Orange. The population has never made high demands upon comfortable living, and is, in general, content as long as there is no bureaucratic pressure from the central government. After the Second World War many people of Friesland have emigrated to other countries, because there was not enough work for them. This was also visible in Marrum.



In West Friesland

Few of these traditional farm houses are left in West Friesland, which is part of the Dutch province of North Holland (from Alkmaar to Enkhuizen, including the former lakes named Schermer, Beemster and Wieringermeer which were made dry by windmills). Most of the farmers are State Reformed. Here you see a living room, where the lady of the house sits next to the fire. Above it is a copper kettle for boiling water. She wears the simple house-dress, traditional for indoors, with a purse on a chain; she wears a lace cap. The tiles of the mantel piece are all handmade and glazed, centuries old.





The Church of Hemelum

Hemelum is one of nine Dutch villages, brought together under the name Hemelumer-Oldeferd, in the province of Friesland.

The Church is State Reformed and 63% were registered as members, before the “Samen Op Weg” (together on our way) started with the Synodal Reformed Church (which had 21% known members). The townhall is situated in Koudum. There are many small lakes in this area

and two big ones, the Fluessen and the Morra. Most of the soil is clay and peat-bog.

There is one historic fact, that is still celebrated by the Friesian population, and that is, that Count William IV of Holland was killed here in 1345 (between Warns and Stavoren, at the beach); he tried to force heathen people to become Christians with his sword and traveled a lot with his army.

Hemelum is a farmers village and not much is known about the Church, except that it is surrounded by many graves since centuries. ❖

J.P. de Klerk is an author and journalist from the Protestant Reformed Church in New Zealand.

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

Watching for the Signs (6)

A Picture of Faithfulness (Conclusion)

Lydia, Nathan, and little Anna loved to visit their grandmother, even though the journey to her house was far. Grandmother always had special surprises and treats waiting for them, and this trip was no exception.

"Welcome, welcome! Come inside!" she said as they were joyfully reunited.

"Oh, Grandma," said Lydia, "Where did you find this?"

"I was going through a closet and found this old photo album. I thought you might like to look at it."

As soon as the family was settled in, Lydia went to the album and carefully turned each brittle page. "Wow, this looks like a lot of work.

Who is there with the ax by that huge pile of wood? And look here, there's a big kettle over an open fire and a group of ladies all around."

"Hm," Grandma leaned over Lydia's shoulder, "that's your great-uncle Paul by the wood. And this here is my mother with her sisters making apple butter. That was a lot of work, too."

Lydia shook her head and muttered about "all the work" as she viewed the rest of the photographs. By now the whole family was interested in the album.

"Yes, just taking care of basic necessities back then was a lot of work," Grandma mused.

"But we have much work to do in these days, too," Father joined in, and then added, "—these last days."

"Ah, I see what you mean," said Mother. "On the way here, we were talking about the parable of the ten virgins and the signs of Christ's coming," she explained to Grandma. "In the very next parable, it was the faithful servants who worked and did their jobs as their master had given each of them to do while he was away.

They worked so hard that they doubled their master's money! We must be so faithful in what God calls us to do now, too, as we await Christ's return."

Grandma nodded and pointed to the album, "All these people worked hard in their callings."

"A picture of faithfulness," commented Father. "May we be as those faithful servants."



Read the parable of the faithful servants in Matt. 25:14-30.

Parables in Scripture are pictures that God has given to us to teach us about the kingdom of heaven. Lydia, Nathan, and their family have seen some of the truths in these pictures, not only as they've read of them in Scripture, but even as they've seen them applied in their own lives.

May we ever be looking for and gazing upon the pictures of the kingdom of heaven—the kingdom that is our hope and our joy! ❖

Connie is the mother of 5 children and attends Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.

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Church News

BAPTISMS

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

Mark 16:16

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Hayley Jo, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. DJ Bultema—Byron Center, MI
Jeremy Mark, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mark Cnossen—Byron Center, MI
Abigail Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Bob Knott—Byron Center, MI
Pamela Jo, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jim Regnerus—Doon, IA
Zachary McInerney, son of Mr. & Mrs. Les VanDenTop—Doon, IA
Katelyn Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Michael Bosveld—Hope, MI
Travis Jay, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tom Miedema—Hudsonville, MI
Dillon Peter, son of Mr. & Mrs. Lane Brummel—Hull, IA
Shayne Rianne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Chad Andringa—Hull, IA
Paul Brian, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brian Dykema—Grandville, MI
Jeremy Joshua, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Baker—Grandville, MI
Jonathan Charles, son of Mr. & Mrs. John Moore—Loveland, CO
Joel Ethan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dave Moore—Peace, IL

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

"...and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Romans 10:10

Public profession of faith in our Lord Jesus

Christ was made by:

Jason Boer—Georgetown, MI
Eric Bouma—Georgetown, MI
Michael DeBoer—Grandville, MI
Bradley Kuiper—Grandville, MI
Eric Yonker—Holland, MI
Amanda Flikkema—Southeast, MI
Chad Kooienga—Southeast, MI
Barry Korhorn—Southeast, MI
Dave Korhorn—Southeast, MI
Lindsay Pipe—Southeast, MI
John Pipe—Southeast, MI

MARRIAGES *"...and they twain shall be one flesh."*

Matthew 19:5

United in the bonds of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Dave Moelker and Miss Pamela Kuiper—Hope, MI