
Beacon Lights

*February
1999*

*Volume LVIII
Number 2*



A Little Cloud in the Sky

by John Huizenga



Nearly two years have gone by since that most wonderful day, the day when the longing, the loneliness, the heartaches, the desire to be married, were all over. Then life began. United in love we walked into a new life to enjoy its beauties, leaving all the troubles of single life behind, never to return. Never again would we have to feel left out on Valentine's Day. Now we had each other.

There were the rumbles of thunder to warn us that married life was not all sunshine and roses: the statistics of a 50 percent divorce rate, the fighting and bickering of those who do stick together, and even the unhappy faces of married couples in the pew next to us in church. Some made half-hearted comments about being tied down with a ball and chain, losing the freedom of single life, etc.

So what is the truth? Is a happy marriage all a delusion? Is a "honeymoon period" the only thing to look forward to? Is there, perhaps, one out of a million marriages that is truly happy; and is it worth the gamble just to get out of single life?

I must confess that I do have one regret being married. I found one dead petal among the roses. There is a little cloud in the otherwise sunny sky. It was not, however, anything that the poker-faced marriage prophets warned us about. It was not the loss of a carefree life. It was not the loss of freedom. It was not any disappointments with the joys of married life. No, the only regret I have is the time and energy I wasted fretting about single life. I wish now that I had used the good gift of single life more carefully.

The time you have as a single man or woman in the church is precious time. Once you get married, some good things are lost for good. Single life is not just an empty time to wait and fill with the pleasures and/or riches of earthly life. It is precious and useful time. It is a time that can be spent either for the building up or for the crumbling of the church. Ironically for myself, and for others I know, it was not until I began to realize the value and usefulness of single life that suddenly God brought a marriage partner into my life and graciously gave us a happy and peaceful marriage. Then it was too late to use that precious single time. The time was gone.

One of the valuable things that you have as a single person is time itself. Perhaps you laugh and say, "are you kidding? I am so busy I hardly have time to read this article." But think about it. Married people are called by God to spend time with one another as well as with the children God may give to them. Time spent with one another is necessary for a strong and happy marriage. Unity in Christ is at the foundation, but the foundation is worthless if no relationship is built upon it. A godly marriage will not survive if the husband spends all his time at his job or pursuing his own interests after work. He needs to spend time at home with his wife and family. The single person does not use his time for these things. This is time that you have at your disposal. You have a serious responsibility to use this time wisely.

The time that partners in a godly marriage spend on the marriage can be spent in many different ways by the single person. First of all, there are many foolish ways to spend that time. You waste your time if you spend it fooling around, hanging out with trouble makers, going to movies, or watching television. Time spent in this manner will hinder your relationships within the body of Christ and produce ignorance of the truth and vain strife. Wasted time is not innocent fooling around during a time in life that does not matter for the future. It is a precious time that always has consequences for the future. Drinking, listening

to rock music, fornication, and pornography will also bring misery in single life as well as married life. These things make you rotten wood in the structure of the church. If you get married, these things will make your family as well as future generations weak if not spiritually dead and cut off from the church.

God calls you to use the time of your single life wisely. This is a time in which you must practice and prepare for life as a member of the body of Christ. Don't fool yourself thinking that you can visit the lonely, help out with meals, or be an elder or deacon later on in life. By then it will be too late. Your patterns of life will have been set and will be very difficult to change. The godly examples of life in the body of Christ such as Abel, Moses, Ruth, David, Samuel, Daniel, Timothy, and others teach us that such life begins early—in your teen years.

Do you have a good job? Have you been offered a position that offers more money but would require more of your time? Consider first how you could best serve God. Does your mind fill with visions of a more luxurious lifestyle, or financial needs in the church? Perhaps your overtime would interfere with volunteer work in the church, society, or other meetings. If it does, be content with less income so that you can be more active in the church.

You go off to college. You may know what you want to study, or you may be unsure. Do you have the body of Christ in mind? When you do, you certainly will not go just to get out from under your parents and have a wild fling. You will not pursue a line of study that will take you away from the church. Take seriously the need for godly teachers and faithful ministers. In all your studies, be diligent to grow in your knowledge and talents.

You like to socialize with friends. The church of Christ suffers terribly with the gossip of those who use their tongues to exalt themselves. Set a good example, stamp out gossip in your conversations as a young person. Practice listening and building others up in their faith. The whole church grows and is strengthened by your godly conversation. If you want to talk profitably, you also need knowledge of God's word and a godly heart. Your tongue is a powerful member, guard it with prayer and understanding. Practice that now, or you will begin traveling a road of grief and misery for the church. The older members who gossip in the church began in their youth and said "I will get serious when I get older."

Your time of being single is put into good use when it is given to instruction in music and singing. Traveling around the world to visit other saints can increase your zeal for mission work and give you valuable insight in consistory, classis, or synod meetings. Learn how to cook with a view to helping the sick or afflicted in their times of need. Pursue an interest in writing for the sake of Christian literature for children, teens, or adults. Volunteer your abilities for treasurer, secretary, or president of society. Devote time to send cards for the sick or special occasions of those in the church. Make yourself available to babysit for a needy family in the church for free. Join the Beacon Lights staff or try your hand at some writing for other young people. Don't wait for someone to ask for your help, offer your help and don't give up when you get little or no response.

Perhaps you want more than anything else to have a godly home of your own. Don't begin by looking for a girl or guy that you are attracted to and then doing all you can to win their attention. You are not on the right track if you have to work so hard at dating that you can't even be yourself. Besides, you may bring yourself into the temptation of fornication which will only bring misery into a marriage. By all means, don't look for a date at a bar, theater, carnival, beach, or a worldly workplace. Look first at your calling as a single member of the church. Learn how to give of your time for others because this is very important in a sound marriage. Remember that a good marriage is such that you can never prepare enough to enjoy fully the marriage bond. Once married, you will always wish you had more love to give. You will never regret diligent careful preparation before marriage.

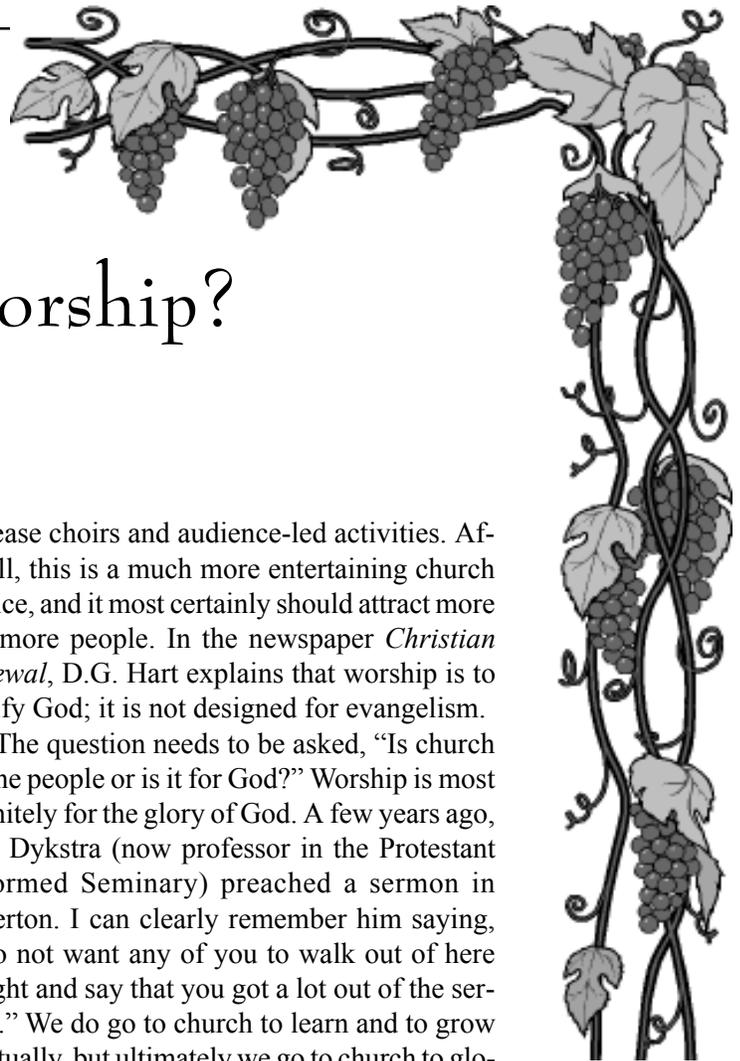
These are some of the things that are more easily done by the single members of the church. Many of these things can be done only with that time which God gives to you in single life. Doing these things will

bring you into the service of the body of Christ and prepare you for your place in the church. That discipline of giving your time and life for the church will also serve you very well in a happy marriage if the Lord is pleased to bring you a partner. By the grace of God you will not have to see that little cloud in the sky or brown rose petal in your marriage.

When your time as a single member of the church is used as God would have you use it, then He will give you the strength to be single and content, or He will give you a marriage partner with whom you will find an abundance of joy and peace in marriage. When the single life is squandered, filled with pleasures and abuses, and despised, then God may give you an empty life of discontent, or He may give you the partner you think you needed, along with much misery.

The church along with the pastors, elders, and deacons needs to express appreciation to those young people who do use their time wisely. May the whole church as a body encourage the single members in that calling which is essential for the future of the church. ❖

Fruitful Branches



How Are We to Worship?

by Shanda Bleyenberg

As time goes by, worship is increasingly changing in many churches. Rev. McAtnee, in an article from *The Outlook*, explains that we all know we worship at church, but we are having a hard time deciding what worship is. The contemporary trend of worship tries to meet the needs of the people. Churches are making their worship services a little bit more attractive so people will come. On the other hand, the traditional approach of worship does not change for the people, but teaches the truth of God.

One major difference between the traditional and contemporary approach to worship is the preaching. Today, so many people want to be physically involved in the church service; they don't want to sit quietly and listen to one man speak. Therefore, churches cut sermons short and

increase choirs and audience-led activities. After all, this is a much more entertaining church service, and it most certainly should attract more and more people. In the newspaper *Christian Renewal*, D.G. Hart explains that worship is to glorify God; it is not designed for evangelism.

The question needs to be asked, "Is church for the people or is it for God?" Worship is most definitely for the glory of God. A few years ago, Rev. Dykstra (now professor in the Protestant Reformed Seminary) preached a sermon in Edgerton. I can clearly remember him saying, "I do not want any of you to walk out of here tonight and say that you got a lot out of the sermon." We do go to church to learn and to grow spiritually, but ultimately we go to church to glorify God's name, for His sake and not our own. So then how do we know what is the right way

to worship? We must look in the infallible Word of God to find the answer. Article Seven in the Belgic Confession explains how the manner of worship is written in the Scriptures. "It is unlawful for anyone to teach otherwise than we are now taught in the Holy Scriptures." The Scriptures are sufficient!

First, we must realize that preaching is the chief means of grace. It must be central in our worship services, and we must preach the pure truth found in the Holy Bible. "Preaching is the very power of God unto salvation" (Rev. Bruinsma). This central preaching is not so evident in the contemporary trend of worship. To keep this preaching in our Protestant Reformed Churches, parents and teachers are called to raise up children in the fear of God. "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). We need to teach children at a young age to sit quietly and listen to the sermons. "As they grow their hearts and minds become trained in this spiritual exercise, and as a result they learn to concentrate on the preaching" (Rev. Bruinsma). In a classroom, the trend is to have cooperative work with visuals and hands-on activities. I think this is good, but teachers must have a balance. Teachers should teach their students to sit quietly, demanding their attention. This will help train them for a worship service.

In a classroom, teachers could have students with different beliefs. A child may come to school believing that God loves everybody. In this Post Modern world, it would seem right to say to the class, "Everyone may have their own beliefs. You may believe in a different God than I believe in. After all, we need to be tolerant and accepting of all people and their beliefs." This is so sad. We must not fall into this barrier; we must teach the truth from the Bible. We must not preach or teach for the people, but for God alone.

Singing is another part of worship that is greatly changing in the church. Few churches today sing from the Psalter as our denomination does. Churches are constantly updating their hymns. Many hymns are God-glorifying, but we still do not sing them in our worship service. Why not? The Holy Spirit provided His people a book of Psalms that are sufficient. What better songs could we sing than songs that are inspired by the Holy Spirit? The Psalms bring forth meaning best expressing our faith. Churches are constantly changing their music to be more self-fulfilling, entertaining, and up-beat. We need to sing for God, not ourselves. God wants truthful and precious words sung to Him.

I believe that the classroom is different from a worship service. Children can sing other songs than those from the Psalter. However, teachers need to be very careful about other songs presented to the class. In so many songs today, we see Arminian beliefs. We cannot teach our students songs that portray a God that loves all people when we teach them that this is a false belief. Teachers need to explain to their students how important it is that we sing songs that glorify the one and only true God. Teachers need to make their students realize that the Psalms are truthful and inspired by God.

Wherefore, although we look far and wide and search on every hand, we shall not find better suited to that end than the Psalms of David which the Holy Spirit made and uttered through him. And for this reason, when we sing them we may be certain that God puts the words in our mouths as if Himself sang in us to exalt His glory (John Calvin).

In both the worship service and the classroom, people must realize that God loves faithful and joyful hearts singing to Him. He looks at the heart, not at the voice. Teachers, encourage your students to sing praises unto God; encourage them to memorize songs and keep them in their hearts forever! My nephew, Cody, from the Redlands, California, congregation once said, "We need to memorize songs because some day our enemies might take our Bibles from us. But if we have songs and our Bible in our hearts, they can never take that from us." What child-like faith!

Worship is changing rapidly in this century. It will continue to change. Our calling is to stay strong in the truth. Let us pray for the ministers and teachers of our churches so they may preach and teach the truth from the Scriptures. May we look to God for guidance and realize that our worship is for the glory of God alone!



References

- "Psalm Singing" by Rev. Jason Kortering.
"Questions about the WORSHIP SERVICES in the PRC"
by Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma.
Christian Renewal. "Reformed Worship" by D.G. Hart.
Reformed Confessions
The Holy Bible: King James Version

Shanda is a member of Edgerton Protestant Reformed Church in Edgerton, Minnesota.

Whence Cain's Wife?

by Rev. Moore

Question

I have a question regarding the first two chapters in Genesis. In Genesis 1:26, we read "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over ALL the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

Then in Genesis 2:7, we read, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul," and verse 8, "...and there he put the man whom he had formed (in Eden)." Can I be correct in saying that in the first chapter, God first made a man to have dominion over all the earth (otherwise, how can we explain when Cain was "driven out" [Genesis 4] and found a wife in Nod, there had to be other men on the earth), then in Genesis 2, God made Adam and Eve, our first parents, and placed them in the Garden of Eden?

Answer

If I understand your question, you are asking whether you can maintain that a man was created different from Adam as recorded in Genesis 1. Next, that Adam and Eve were created as our first parents as recorded for us in Genesis 2 as a different creation than is recorded in chapter 1. The basis for this contention being that when Cain was cast out of the garden he found a wife in Nod, giving evidence that other men were found there.

The short answer is no, this cannot be. Now the explanation must follow. In the first place we must understand that Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 are two accounts of the same creation, the latter being given to further explain the former. That they indeed speak of the one creation of God is plain from several things. The first thing we may say is the fact that at the end of the sixth day God ceased His creation work. Genesis 1:31-2:2 "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. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made." This makes clear that all was created, made during the six days of this creation. This includes Adam and Eve. This is clear also from the fact that Genesis 2 continues what was told us in Genesis 1. The heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them, and God ended his work which he had made.

Next, verses three and four of the second chapter make it clear that now the Scripture speaks of that which was done and recorded for us during the creation week. It explains that God placed the plants and creatures in the earth, and that there was no man to till the ground. The Scripture now shows how God created Adam and Eve on the sixth day. This is further definition of that which God did, and explains further how Adam and Eve were made in the image of God, that they may walk as His covenant servants in the creation that He had made, serving God in the dominion that He gave to them over the creation. Further, that it was in the sixth day that Adam and Eve were created is evident from the fifth chapter where we read, "Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created," verse 2.

Now with respect to Cain and his wife. It is not true that Cain found his wife in Nod, the Scripture does not say this, nor does it imply it. What the Scripture does say is the following found in Genesis 4:17 "And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch." The Scripture uses the term "knew" to indicate the coming in of husband to wife that she might conceive and bear a child. It was undoubtedly the case that Cain took with him his wife and children, and others of his household when he was forced of God to be a vagabond and sent out from the people of

God. He and his wife bear other children namely those named in this chapter, as well as others.

All of mankind came out of Adam and Eve. There would be a two-fold seed, one the seed of the woman with whom God established His covenant in Christ. The other would be the seed of the serpent of which was Cain and much of his offspring. Cf. Genesis 3:15.

I trust that this will help.

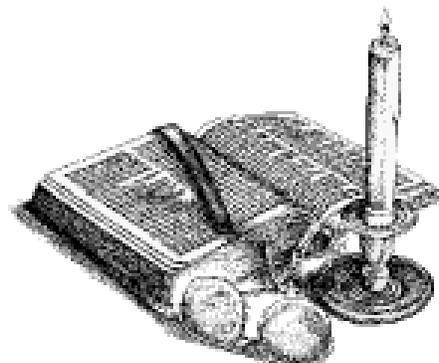
Remember to write your questions to me at revmo@mtc.mtcnet.net. Also feel free to write follow up questions. ❖

Rev. Moore is pastor of Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa.

From the Pastor's Study

Gideon Appointed Under Jehovah's Banner

by Rev. Richard J. Smit



That banner was unfurled over a dark moment in Israel's history. At the time, the Midianites covered the land like a blanket of innumerable grasshoppers (Judges 6:5). Israel had been greatly plundered and oppressed because of the Midianites. What was particularly stinging about the oppression was the fact that this situation was on account of their own sin. That is plain from Judges 6:1 where we read that "the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD." For their sin of turning from Jehovah, the Righteous Jehovah gave Israel into the hand of their enemies. Israel is chastised for their sin.

We learn from the context that after the prophet came to rebuke them (Judges 6:7-11), Israel apparently repented of their sin. In that dark moment of oppression, Jehovah in mercy unfurls His banner of deliverance as seen and confessed by the mouth of Gideon. Jehovah gave a banner to Gideon and His repentant Israel, who feared Jehovah (Psalm 60:4). That banner would be displayed over the battle field for the sake of Jehovah's glory and the salvation of God's people. Under that banner Gideon was commissioned to fight. Under that banner he would go forth to the battle field as one man against thousands.

In Judges 6:11 we find that the Angel of Jehovah went and appeared in a small and insignificant town which was Ophrah. His purpose was to appear to Gideon in order to appoint him to the position of deliverer of Israel. When the Angel of Jehovah appeared to Gideon, Gideon was hiding and secretly threshing wheat in the winepress in order to keep his wheat from being taken by the Midianites. While Gideon is busy with the task at hand, the Angel appeared to him, and announces to Gideon, "The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour!"

How contrary was what the angel said to reality. So thought Gideon as reflected in his immediate response. "Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, "Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us in the hand of the Midianites" (Judges 6:13).

Gideon shows himself a spiritual man who understood the Israel's history very well and in light of that understood the times in which the Israelites lived. Here in Gideon is the evidence of the beginning of the spiritual valour of which the Angel spoke. That response is

the evidence of the working of God's grace and Spirit in his heart and mind.

Again the Angel responds unhesitatingly: "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" (Judges 6:14) Gideon was Jehovah's choice for deliverer and judge over Israel.

He was the correct choice, too. Sometimes a child of God will question improperly Jehovah's choice of him to a particular vocation in life. He may question Jehovah's wisdom in using him in this or that particularly difficult situation in the home, school, or congregation.

Gideon also improperly questions Jehovah's wisdom here. Was he the right choice? Gideon did not think so. He was surprised and gave three reasons why Jehovah's decision made little sense to him (Judges 6:15).

First, he objected that his family was poor. If he were to be leader, he needed power. He needed the power of wealth, prestige, and a good blood line to command the allegiance and abilities of his soldiers. Besides, what kind of enthusiasm could a poor man generate in his troops before an enemy that was without number, both they and their camels (Judges 6:5)? Who would listen to the wisdom of a poor man (Ecclesiastes 9:16)? Gideon appeared to present a valid objection.

In addition, he reminded the Angel of Jehovah that he was from the tribe of Manasseh. What Gideon meant was that according to his knowledge of history a leader ought not come out of Manasseh. Had not the promises which were given to Israel shown that Shiloh would not come out of Manasseh, but out of Judah? Besides, did not the Angel remember from Israel's history that Jacob had put his right hand on Ephraim's head, and not Manasseh's? Was not Joshua from that tribe of Ephraim? What nobility and valiant leaders could Manasseh produce? The Angel of Jehovah had come to Manasseh and in Manasseh had come to Ophrah, which was an insignificant town in the bottom corner of Manasseh's inheritance on the west side of the Jordan. So insignificant and unnoticed it was that we might have problems even finding it on our Bible map today. Perhaps, Gideon had another valid objection.

Finally, Gideon wondered about the wisdom of Jehovah's decision by reminding the Angel of the fact that he was the least in his father's house. Gideon believed that there were others in his family line that were more gifted and far more confident of themselves than he. His family name would have been the last family to

become a household name in Israel. In Gideon's mind, this was strike three. But, were these valid objections?

No. "Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." (Judges 6:16). The Angel of Jehovah affirms without hesitation and without debate the wisdom of God's choice for leading Israel's army under Jehovah's banner against the foe. This was Jehovah's correct choice.

That's true of all of Jehovah's soldiers whom He calls in the church militant to fight under His banner against the enemy. Though outwardly the world scoffs at God's sovereign and wise choice and though we might even improperly question God's wisdom concerning ourselves, nevertheless, it is the truth that Jehovah makes no mistakes. His sovereign wisdom is perfect in selecting us for the warfare of faith, and in selecting Gideon for delivering Israel from under the oppression of the Midianites. The New Testament supports that truth.

Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence. (I Corinthians 1:25-29).

That is why Gideon, who was not very mighty, not noble, and not confident, was Jehovah's correct choice to march under that banner which gives Jehovah alone the glory. God chooses and uses the weak and despised to show the wonder of salvation by Him alone. The subsequent history concerning Gideon which we will examine in the next issues make that truth abundantly clear.

However, Gideon was not so sure of his appointment to be the earthly general in Jehovah's army in Israel. He seeks a sign that his commission is really true and that Jehovah will be with him against that huge host of the Midianites. He seeks as he said "a sign that thou talkest with me." He wanted to know for certain that what the angel said to him was indeed true. So, Gideon proposes that the angel wait until Gideon bring forth a present (a meat offering). Gideon returns with a prepared kid, unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour in a basket, and with a kettle of broth. This he puts under the oak tree upon the rock as directed by the Angel. In fact, the

Angel commands him to lay the bread and the meat upon the rock, and pour out the broth upon the meat and bread on the rock under the oak tree.

Then the Angel gives Gideon the sign which he requested. The Angel of Jehovah with the end of His rod touches the Gideon's meat offering, and immediately the offering is consumed. While fire rose up out of the rock to consume completely the meat offering, the Angel disappeared.

Unmistakably Gideon knew Who that man was. That was no mere man or prophet, but that was the Lord Jehovah! Jehovah had spoken with him. Gideon feared for his life! He had seen the Angel of Jehovah face to face! He expected to be consumed with fire like that meat offering on the rock under the oak tree.

But, behold, Jehovah comforts the heart of Gideon, "Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die!"

What is Jehovah saying? "Gideon you will not be consumed by Me. You will live. You have peace. You will not die because I am with thee, Gideon. That is true because another will die in your place and in His blood you are covered in My sight so that the fire of my wrath will consume Him and not you. He will remove that wrath which you and Israel do deserve. Because of that great work to come, that is why Israel is not consumed. That is why you, Gideon, are not consumed."

Yes, Jehovah has made peace with His chosen people in the blood of the Lamb whose blood was shed on Calvary. That is the blood of the everlasting Covenant of peace with Jehovah.

In the confession of that principle, Gideon builds an altar and calls the Name of that place where Jehovah reveals Himself, *Jehovah-Shalom*. That was the banner which Jehovah unfurled. Now, under that banner which was unfurled before his spiritual eyes and confessed with his believing heart, Gideon must now go forward in faith into the battlefield against the Midianite horde.

We in the New Testament march under the same banner. We are given the banner of Christ crucified and risen again. It is the truth that our sins are forgiven in the blood of Christ, the Captain of our salvation. It is the truth that Christ died on the cross and by that death conquered the dominion of darkness. It is the truth that Christ arose in victory and reigns in His people by His Word and Spirit. Thus, Jehovah gives us also the banner of peace, Jehovah-shalom! That is the banner of our Lord Jesus Christ Who is our peace (Ephesians 2:14) and who made that peace through the blood of His cross (Colossians 1:20).

What is that peace? It is not an earthly peace. It does not mean earthly life without conflict. Gideon would immediately be shown that reality as we will see in more detail next time. He would learn that fighting under the banner of Jehovah-shalom, did not mean family peace or compromise. It would mean conflict. True peace is spiritual. The peace of Jehovah is essentially peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ by His Spirit who works peace in our hearts and consciences. It is peace founded on the truth and enjoyed in the faithful confession of the truth. Under that banner, Jehovah commissions Gideon to lead forth His people to battle the Midianites.

Notice that Jehovah chooses and uses an unconfident, insignificant, and unknown Gideon to lead His people. But, does not Jehovah do the same today?

Jehovah has given us the glorious banner of the Reformed Faith. Yet, under that banner, Jehovah commissions men to fight the battle of faith. He commissions in the church officebearers and the individual believer anointed with the Spirit to fight under that banner. But, it is plainly clear that Jehovah has gathered around His Great Standard an army of weak soldiers. Jehovah gathers the uneducated, poor, despised, and sinners around His standard. Looking at ourselves, we would say, "Surely, we will be defeated! It is a lost cause right from the get-go!"

We learn that because this is Jehovah's banner, the battle is also Jehovah's. He uses us who are weak that no flesh will glory in His presence, but that all the glory of the victory is to Him alone. Thus, Jehovah reminds us that we have nothing to fear because Jesus Christ is the Captain of our salvation and the Captain Who fights in and through us by His Spirit. Because that is true, the God of peace, will bruise Satan and his dominion under *your* feet (Romans 16:20). Yes, *our feet* by the sovereign grace and Spirit of Christ will march on the battlefield of faith to stand firmly on the neck of our enemies. We shall receive the victory in full.

Upon that sure promise and in a tranquil trust in Jehovah, both young soldiers and veteran soldiers of the church militant must fight the battle of faith. Though we fight in an age of spiritual darkness and against mighty enemies, Jehovah has unfurled His Banner over us, *Jehovah-Shalom*! Under that banner, He commissions His church militant to fight.

Since Jehovah is for us, who can be against us? ❖

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

A Christian Inventor

by J.P. de Klerk

Most people know that Samuel Finley Breese Morse (1791-1872) was the man who invented the Morse alphabet (in 1836) used by the telegraph system.

But his contemporaries called him the American Leonardo da Vinci, because he was a gifted author, painter, inventor and professor.

However, most important is that Morse was a Christian who gave God the glory for all that he ever did with the talents which he had received. It is known that his father was a minister of religion who showed his son the right way to go.

When Samuel Morse was a boy, he was usually called "Finley," which was his second name.

He went to a traditional Christian school in the place where he lived. He was a bit difficult for his teachers because he was never out of mischief, but he was brilliant in the English language, Bible study and drawing portraits. Later he went to Yale University.

There he became famous because of what he did with the walls of his room. He carefully cleaned and prepared them, after which he started to make the most beautiful paintings on them. Several of the paintings were of stories from the Bible, as well as others like "wrestling students climbing the rock of knowledge." Everybody in the building came to see them.

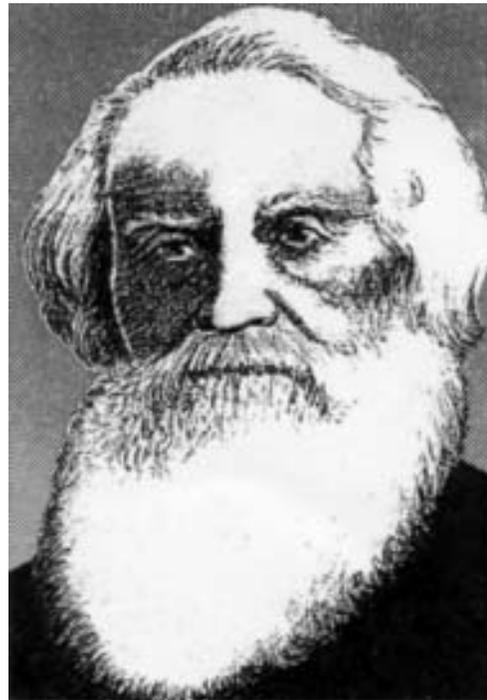
The result was that he received orders to make portrait-paintings for many important people in the city. With the money he got he financed his studies.

After he got a degree he went to England, where he developed further his skill in making paintings using old techniques.

In his spare time he assisted a group of young Christians, who went to towns and villages spreading the Gospel.

Back in the USA he became famous as a portrait painter in Washington D.C. and had a big studio there. President Monroe and members of the government sat for him.

Later he moved to Concord, New Hampshire, where he met a Christian girl named Lucretia Pickering Walker. They married and started a Christian family.



When Morse paid a visit to Paris, he saw there for the first time a *semaphore*, which sent signals from one mountaintop to another. He found that fascinating, and he considered that it could be done more quickly with electricity.

But, back in the USA, he was appointed a Professor in sculpture and the art of painting, at the University of the City of New York. There, in the laboratory, he started with his experiments.

One young man, Alfred Vail, who had just finished his studies, became interested and offered to assist him (also financially). Morse and Vail had the same religious background.

In 1838 they went to the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia and did there a number of tests which went very well. In 1840 Morse was granted a patent in the USA; two years later also in France.

In March 1843 the American Congress asked him to make a telegraph system in the city of Washington D.C., with cables in the soil under the streets. That was not

(yet) possible, because reliable isolation material did not exist. Morse decided therefore to lead wire over poles, and to use the necks of bottles he had broken off for isolation.

On May 24, 1844, Morse and Vail sent for the first time a message to each other from Washington to Baltimore. Morse had chosen from his Bible, Numbers 23, clearly stating that God had made it, that He was the origin of the idea. The whole matter was a triumph for Morse nevertheless

But, within a few days 62 people came forward, saying that they had invented the same already much earlier, and so Morse had to defend his patent again and again in the Courts.

To journalists Morse said, "I stick to what is said in the 37th Psalm about not to become angry at those who do injustice against you."

In the meantime he wrote several books about orthodox (old-fashioned) Protestant faith, and also quite a few pamphlets, which were used for evangelism inside and outside the USA. Morse was involved in the building of a number of churches and two Christian high schools.

His talents and work were widely recognized by high distinctions (medals, honorary titles, and gifts) from France, Austria, Denmark, Italy, Portugal, Germany, Spain and Turkey. When a journalist asked him about this, he answered "There are more important things waiting for those who belong to Jesus Christ. The treasures of God never fade away." ❖

J.P. de Klerk is an author and journalist from Ashhurst, New Zealand.

Gem of the Month

Christian Friendship

*IT'S GREAT TO HAVE A FRIEND LIKE YOU
While traveling on life's road,
For when I'm weak and weary
You help me bear my load.*

*IT'S GREAT TO HAVE A FRIEND LIKE YOU
While I journey through the years,
To share my joys and sorrows with,
My gladness and my tears.*

*IT'S GREAT TO HAVE A FRIEND LIKE YOU
While I walk the narrow way,
Who will in love reprove me
If I should go astray.*

*IT'S GREAT TO HAVE A FRIEND LIKE YOU
While I struggle hard with sin.
Together we battle temptations
And strengthen our friendship again.*

*IT'S GREAT TO HAVE A FRIEND LIKE YOU,
You make me more assured,
For when I doubt and might ask, "Why?"
You point me to God's Word.*

*IT'S GREAT TO HAVE A FRIEND LIKE YOU,
I know you're always there.
I thank you now for all you do
Our friendship is so rare.*

*IT'S GREAT TO HAVE A FRIEND LIKE YOU,
For such is hard to find.
For friendships rooted in the Lord
Are of the rarest kind.*

*IT'S GREAT TO HAVE A FRIEND LIKE YOU,
The world sees it too,
They see the light of Jesus Christ
Come shining through in you.*

*IT'S GREAT TO HAVE A FRIEND LIKE YOU,
As I journey to life's end.
I only pray that as I go,
I, too, am such a friend.*

—Sherry Koole

The Christian's Attitude Toward Government (1)

by Prof. Robert Decker

The following is the text of a lecture given in the First Protestant Reformed Church, Holland, MI, November 6, 1998.

The question before us tonight is occasioned by the scandalous behavior of our nation's president. For the second time in a little over twenty years the House of Representatives is considering whether to impeach our president. There's no disputing what the president did. He admitted finally that he repeatedly transgressed the 7th commandment of God's Law and that he had lied to the nation.

It is my opinion that his behavior renders the president unfit to continue in the high office of the presidency of the United States. He ought to resign. If he does not resign, the president ought to be impeached by the House of Representatives and put out of office by the Senate.

But, the question is what must be our attitude toward Mr. Clinton? Must we still honor and obey him?

This is a real and serious question also in countries where saints are persecuted. Must the persecuted saints be subject toward their persecuting government?

In regard to the Christian's calling toward the civil government, the Bible speaks clearly. In Romans 13:1-7, Scripture requires that we obey the government. There can be no doubt about the fact that this passage speaks of the civil government. The passage speaks of the "higher powers." "Powers" is really "authorities." And, authority has to do with the right to rule or govern. "Higher" means to be superior in rank, to stand over others. That these superior authorities refer to the civil government is obvious from the reference to their bearing the sword (verse 4). And they are called "rulers" (verse 3). It is obvious as well from the fact that we need

to pay them tribute, i.e. we must pay taxes to them (verses 6 and 7).

In this connection we note too that Scripture nowhere sanctions a particular form of government: an oligarchy, a monarchy, or a democracy. Hence, regardless of the form of government, every soul must be subject to the superior authorities.

The Christian, therefore, must not resist the authority! To resist is to range in battle against, or to line oneself up against the authority. It's to oppose the authority. We may not do this. To do this would be just plain disobedience to the clearly expressed will of God.

Positively, the passage says, "Let every soul be subject to the superior authorities. To be subject means to arrange under, to be submissive to another. In plain language it means to obey the superior authorities. We must live our lives in harmony with the laws which the superior authorities promulgate and enforce. This is true for "every soul," i.e., for every person, every citizen. No one is exempt. But, especially does the inspired apostle mean every Christian. He's writing to the church in Rome. Of all citizens it is especially important that the Christians be obedient to the superior authorities.

**Of all citizens it is
especially important that
the Christians be obedient
to the superior authorities.**

Being subject, obeying the superior authorities means we do not do evil. If we do evil we have every

reason to be afraid of the authorities, for they must avenge evil and they bear not the sword in vain. Rather we do good: out of faith, according to the law of God, and to God's glory. That's doing good. This is obeying the authorities.

This is God's command. Here we have no options. We must be subject, submissive, obedient to the superior authorities. This is a divine imperative! God requires this of us.

That this is the case is emphasized in Scripture. Titus, the preacher in Crete, is instructed to remind God's people to be "subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates" (Titus 3:1). In I Peter 2:13-17, God's Word demands that we submit "to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king, as supreme or unto governors sent by the king to punish evildoers," and we are to, "fear God and honor the king."

This, first of all, is the Christian's calling with respect to the civil government. We are to obey the superior authorities.

Second, Christians must pay their taxes. Holy Scripture is perfectly clear on this matter. Verses 6 and 7 of

Christians must pay their taxes

Romans 13 clearly state that we must pay tribute to the authorities. Tribute is tax. And, we must render to all their dues (what is owed them) tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, and honor to whom honor. Both tribute and custom are forms of taxes. Jesus taught the same. The Savior instructed Peter on the necessity of paying tribute or tax (Matthew 17:24-27). Jesus also told the wicked Pharisees, "Render, therefore, unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:15-22).

Scripture tells us why we need to pay taxes. The authorities are God's ministers/servants who "attend continually on this very thing." They work full time at maintaining good order in society, at ruling. For this reason they deserve our support. We pay tribute or taxes to maintain the civil government which God has ordained.

Thirdly, our calling as Christians is to pray for those in authority over us. This is the teaching of I Timothy 2:1-4. The inspired Apostle writes, "I exhort," in other words,

our calling as Christians is to pray for those in authority over us

this is a command from God to Timothy. This is what Timothy must do. He must make supplications or entreaties, prayers (a more general term, all types of prayers), intercessions, i.e., he must ask God to help and guide those in authority. And, Timothy must do all this along with "giving of thanks." Thanksgiving is part of all true prayer. This Timothy must do "for kings and for all in authority." Still more, the passage says that Timothy must do this, "first of all." This is a priority! So important is it that it's first!

We in the Protestant Reformed Churches are not very good at this. We need to take this to heart and do it. In our congregational and other public prayers, in our family devotions and in our personal prayers, we should pray for those in authority over us.

Why do we need to do this? Because God demands that we do so. "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior." And, we must do this for the sake of the church, "That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." Everything exists, also the civil government, for the sake of the church and her salvation.

This then is the threefold calling of the Christian with regard to the civil government. We must be subject to the superior authorities, not resist, but obey them. We must pay our tribute or taxes to support and maintain the government. And, we must pray for those in authority over us. (cont.) ❖

Prof. Decker is professor at the Protestant Reformed Seminary in Grandville, Michigan.



The Song of Zion

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

Devotionals on Psalm 84 by Susan Adams

February 1 Read Psalm 84: 8, 9; Psalm 4.

What does it mean that God is our Shield? He is our defender, and we can ask of Him like a little child of its father. We lean on Him without any fear or doubt. When David asks God to look at His Anointed, this is speaking typically of Christ as our Mediator. God can hear us sinners because Christ's perfect work covers us! That is why we often say at the end our prayers, "For Jesus' sake." We can be sure we are accepted with God. Read & sing Psalters 226:1, 228:1, 229:4.

February 2 Read Psalm 84:10; Psalm 122.

Like David, our true satisfaction comes from living constantly in God's presence. Yet we so easily lose the sense of God's favor as we get drawn into empty pleasure-seeking and satisfying our carnal desires. Remember these words of David, that he would rather have the humblest work in God's temple than have everything the world can offer. Do you find yourself longing throughout the week for the active spiritual rest you experience on the Sabbath? When we die we will finally live in God's courts forever. Read & sing Psalters 226:2, 228:2 and 229:5.

February 3 Read Psalm 84: 11, 12; Romans 8: 28-39.

What a comfort that the Bible tells us the LORD will not withhold any good thing from those who walk uprightly. Whether God does or doesn't give you a spouse, children, financial security, or whatever else you may think you need, He is not denying you anything!! You don't have the right to withhold any thankfulness from Him! The happiness we receive comes as we trust Him. Read & sing Psalters 226:3, 228:3, 229:6.

Devotionals on Psalm 85 by Mike Feenstra

February 4 Read Psalm 85, Ezra 3; Psalm 85:1-2

In Psalm 85 we find the Psalmist rejoicing in the restoration of Jacob and exulting in God for His promised salvation in Christ. From out of the depths of trouble, the Psalmist beseeches God to remember that He had brought back His people from captivity. Therefore, he pleads that God might remember His covenant and turn His people to see His salvation. Then, with great confidence, the Psalmist ends with a beautiful confession of the promised Messiah. Although there is some dis-

agreement as to when this Psalm was written, most commentators agree that the Psalmist is speaking of the return from Babylon. Recall what a wonderful salvation that was for God's people (Ezra 3). While the old people cried when they saw the foundations of the new temple, the people shouted for joy because God had brought back their captive band. When we are in trouble, let us with the Psalmist remember those former mercies of God in our prayers for deliverance. Sing Psalter 230:1, 231:1.

February 5 Read Ezekiel 39:23-29; Psalm 85:3-4.

We sing in Psalter 230:2 the following words: "in grace Thy people, Lord, return." What do these words mean? The idea is this: the Psalmist asked God to turn His people to Himself. That is, the Psalmist confessed that God *alone* works repentance. This truth is abundantly clear in Ezekiel 39:23-29, the passage which records the promise of the restoration of Judah. There, God powerfully declared, "*Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel.*" In our Psalm, we find that God had fulfilled that promise. God had covered the sins of His people. He had brought them back from captivity and into covenant fellowship with Him in the promised land of Canaan. Yet, after this restoration we learn that Israel had sinned. As a result, they were under the heavy hand of God. Therefore, the Psalmist asked God to "let His wrath no longer burn" by turning His people to Himself. My fellow young people, when we feel the heat of God's anger over our sin, let us also pray to God that He might turn us from our sins and cause His face to shine on us. Sing Psalter 230:2.

February 6 Read Psalm 30; Psalm 85:5-6.

"Wilt Thou be angry with us for ever? Wilt Thou draw out Thine anger to all generations?" Such words reveal that Israel did not have God's smiling face beaming down on them. Because of their sin, they did not feel the warmth of fellowship with the living God. Therefore, on behalf of Israel, the Psalmist came boldly before God's presence, beseeching Him to revive His people. Although it sounds as if these godly Jews (who were represented by the Psalmist) were finding fault with God, Calvin says they were seeking to find "hope of relief from the contemplation of the nature of God; as if they laid it down as a fixed principle, that it is impossible for Him to be angry for ever" (Cf. Psalm 30:5). Therefore, the

Psalmist's questions and petitions in Psalm 85:5-6 were statements of hope based solidly on God's promise that He would make His people rejoice in His covenant presence. The only foundation for this promise is Jesus Christ. Apart from Him, Israel (and we) would forever be under God's wrath even as the wicked! (Cf. Psalm 5:5, 7:11). Praise God for His covenant mercies! Sing Psalter 230:3, 231:2.

February 7 Read Psalm 85:8-13; Psalm 85:7-8.

After we lay our petitions before the Living God, we ought to be ready to hear what the Lord will speak. That speech of God will not come to us by some "inner voice" that tells us exactly what God's will is. Neither will it come through reading all kinds of works by the "experts" of this world. Rather, God's voice is heard, powerfully, where He has prescribed: in the Scriptures and in the faithful preaching of the Word. Here is where God speaks the blessed words of the gospel to His people. Here is where God will "answer us in peace." In thankfulness for His Word of salvation, let us therefore go up to God's house in this day and show forth His praise by walking according to His commandments and not turning again unto folly. Sing Psalter 230:4, 231:3.

February 8 Read I Kings 6-7; Psalm 85:9.

Have you ever contemplated the beauty of the city of Jerusalem during Solomon's reign? While you were reading the passage from I Kings, were you awed by the splendor of the beautifully carved flowers and the golden presence of the temple? Truly, glory dwelled in the land of Israel during the reign of King Solomon! However, that former glory had faded away when the Psalmist wrote our verse. After their long captivity, God's people had returned to a land which was desolate when compared to the glory of Solomon's reign. In that state, the Psalmist confidently proclaimed, "Surely His salvation is nigh them that fear Him; that glory may dwell in all our land." The glory of which the Psalmist spoke is ultimately the glory of the New Jerusalem described for us in Revelation 21 and 22. Take a few moments to compare the infinite majesty of this New Jerusalem with its type—the glory of the Old Jerusalem. Such a study can only make us yearn for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ so that we might exult in the glory of our God for ever and ever. Sing Psalter 230:5.

February 9 Read Heid. Catechism, LD 4-6; Psalm 85:10-11.

The glorious kingdom spoken of in verses nine and eleven is realized only because of what we read in verse ten: "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." In this vivid example of friendship, God illustrates to us the work of Christ. It is Christ who has made truth to agree with mercy. It is Christ who has reconciled law and peace. He is that Mediator spoken of in Question and Answer 18. Away with the false doctrine that God is *only* a God of love! Our God is a God not only of love, mercy, and peace but also of righteousness and truth! Our Christ is the One who makes these attributes to embrace each other! Therefore, let us give thanks not only by living a godly life but also by defending the truth about God and Christ explained in Lord's Day 4-6. Sing Psalter 230:6, 232:3.

February 10 Read Psalm 85; Psalm 85:11-13.

We have seen that this Psalm is a plea to God to remember His covenant and to remember how He had brought back His people from the captivity of Babylon. The cries of the Psalmist to God on behalf of Israel showed that Israel was experiencing God's anger. Yet, we saw that the Psalmist was confident that salvation would appear to God's people because God had promised it in Christ. Surely, exclaimed the Psalmist in verses 11-13, this Messiah would cause the land to yield her increase. Truth would spring forth out of that land. Righteousness would shine brightly from the heavens. Yet, the land spoken of is not a future kingdom on this earth. Therefore, we should not look for this good land in a golden age of a literal one thousand year reign. Rather, we must believe that the good land of Psalm 85, the land which is permeated with truth and righteousness, is a spiritual kingdom with Christ as the King. Sing Psalter 230:7, 232:3.

Devotionals on Psalms 86-88 by John Huizenga

February 11 Read Deuteronomy 7:1-10; Psalm 86:1-2.

The titles of the Psalter numbers for Psalm 86 emphasize the confidence that the believer has in coming to God. The sinner, burdened with the knowledge of his or her weakness, frailty, and guilt before God comes to God and says, "help me because I am needy and also holy and therefore worthy of help." How can the sinner come with such confidence? The passage we read from Deuteronomy gives the answer which is fulfilled in Christ. God has chosen His people. He determined from eternity to love them. He makes them holy in Christ. He reveals his great love and mercy in the way of delivering us from our sins and troubles. Let us sing with thankful praise Psalter 233, 235:1.

February 12 Read Luke 11:5-13; Psalm 86:3-4.

As we noticed yesterday, the basis of our confidence in coming to God in prayer is the gracious and sovereign love of God which has the power to make us His people. In the verses we read today, emphasis is placed upon the covenant relationship of God with His people. God is our Lord and we are servants. The covenant relationship we have with God is the fruit of sovereign election from eternity. Our consciousness of being a servant and covenant friend of God also gives us confidence in our approach to God in prayer. We know God will not send us evil when we ask for those things which the child of God needs. Let us rejoice in the comfort God has given to us. Sing Psalter 233:2, 235:1.

February 13 Read I John 4; Psalm 86:5.

The love of God is at the heart of the covenant that He has established with His chosen people. God loved them from eternity, and because of His love for them, He reveals Himself to them and makes them holy and fit to live with Him forever. Even the way in which he makes us holy, by the sacrifice of His Son, reveals that love. Knowing this truth, we come to Him with our every need confident that He will care for us. But how can we know that we are children of God?

The love of God within us is manifest in our love for one another and our testimony of the truth. Do you love your brother and sister in the Lord? Do you study the word of God so that you are able and willing to testify of the truth? Then you also will have the confidence to come to God in prayer. Sing Psalter 233:3, 235:2.

February 14 Read **Jonah 2; Psalm 86:6, 7.**

Sometimes we wonder whether or not God will hear us in our times of need especially when our sinful walk has brought the trouble we have. Jonah disobeyed the direct command of God to go preach in Ninevah and soon he found himself in the belly of a great fish. Yet he turned to the Lord. He repented and prayed to God for deliverance. This does not mean we willfully sin for our enjoyment thinking we can pray to God any time we get in trouble. This is not how the believer thinks. Sin is the enemy. We must fight against it. When we slip into sin, it makes us feel sick. The believer does not want to sin, but when he does, he goes straight to God in prayer. Each time this happens, we experience a little more of God's love and we grow in our faith. Sing Psalter 233:4, 235:3.

February 15 Read **Daniel 3; Psalm 86:8, 9.**

Man tries so hard to avoid the one and only God. It is quite amazing to think that man being a creature made by God Himself, living within a world created by God, does not confess God. Instead, he worships all sorts of things that clearly have no power in themselves to create the world or uphold life. This fact demonstrates how wicked man really is. It is not until God sends something that shakes the hard hearts of men that they acknowledge the one and only God. Even so, God has created all men and all the different nations with a view to gathering from among them a people who have been changed by the power of His grace. God gathers a people who do not merely confess Him out of fear, but out of love for Him. Let us show today by our walk of life that we confess God as the one and only God. Sing Psalter 233:5; 236:1.

February 16 Read **John 6:30-45; Psalm 86:10, 11.**

"Teach me thy way, O Lord;...unite my heart to fear thy name." These are the words of a child of God that knows his own inability to love and obey God. Some would argue that this shows the ability of sinful man to accept God by his own will and thereby receive salvation. But it is clear that these words are from a mature Christian, not one who decides to go seek the truth. Jesus uses the same language: "taught of God," and then explains that one does not even seek to be taught until God draws him. Popular Christianity loves to glorify man with his fervent seeking of God and coming forth to accept him. The true doctrines of grace call us to a fervent seeking of God after God has first drawn us into His light. May we pray every day that God teach us and unite us as we grow spiritually in our knowledge and for His glory. Sing Psalter 233:6; 236:2.

February 17 Read **I Thessalonians 1; Psalm 86:12, 13.**

Eternal praise to God with our whole heart is the only thing we can rightfully do. Anything else is sin. We owe everything

we have and are to God. Why do we owe such total and complete devotion to God? The Word of God in the Psalm says that it is because God is merciful and has delivered us from the lowest hell. That lowest hell is the experiencing of the wrath of God for sin. This wrath, we read in I Thessalonians, was suffered by Christ for our sake. In this life, we have only a small beginning of living perfectly before God. So much of our living is for our glory; but we do grow, and in this way of fighting sin, we see more clearly the mercy and love of God. In heaven our abilities, talents, and personalities will be used in perfect service to God. Sing Psalter 234:1; 236:3.

February 18 Read **Acts 4:23-31; Psalm 86:14.**

It is bad enough when one person rises up against you to bring some accusation or misery into your life. The fear and suffering is multiplied when assemblies and even leaders of nations rise up against us. What hope do we have when even the laws of the land and authorities are against you? Even murderers have "rights" in our country, but the antichristian powers have no tolerance for the believer. We need never despair, however, because the God who governs even the rising up of wicked assemblies does it for the service of His people. Never was this more clear than when they delivered up Christ to be crucified. The devil's attempt to destroy Christ was in itself the salvation of all the elect. May we also with the early Church described in the book of Acts go forth with boldness and sing praise to our God. Sing Psalter 234:2; 236:3.

February 19 Read **Ephesians 2:1-10; Psalm 86:15.**

"Full" and "Plenteous" are words that express an abundance of something. Nothing more can be added without overflowing. The full capacity has been reached. God has no bounds and therefore these words express perfection in God. God's mercy is perfect. Nothing could make it better or fuller. The measure of God's mercy and compassion can only be measured in terms of the effect they have on finite creatures like us. Our sins are heinous and putrid and we stand in ourselves without a shred of goodness before God. God's mercy is His desire and purpose to make us His friend servants and take away our sins. The more we see how sinful we are, the more we come to know the greatness of God's love and mercy. We see the greatness of our sin and misery when we see the righteousness and justice of God as he poured out his wrath against sin in Christ. Sing Psalter 234:3, 236:4.

February 20 Read **Ephesians 3:1-19; Psalm 86:16.**

A wonderful gift it is to have the very power of God within us that we might know the love of God. We ask for strength from God to help us through trials in life, but strength from God is also necessary for new spiritual growth as we see from the text in Ephesians. Natural man, man fallen in sin and unredeemed, is not able to know and love God. He can only hate and despise God. God so works in our mind and soul that our eyes and ears are opened to see and hear the word of God and comprehend something of the love of God. This is something for which we must pray. We do not receive this power of God apart from the word of God, however. God gives us the power to know, and he also gives us his word

upon which to exercise the power we have. Sing Psalter 234:4, 236:5.

February 21 Read Micah 7:1-13; Psalm 86:17.

In this verse the Psalmist asks for some token or sign that proves to the wicked that God is with him. From the outside, the Christian does not appear to be any better off than the wicked. You can not do a scientific study to find any distinction between the believer and unbeliever that would show clearly that God loves the believer and hates the unbeliever. This distinction will not be made clear to the wicked until the final day of judgment when God shows to them how He has redeemed them from sin and brings them into covenant fellowship. Until then, the wicked will try to explain away and dispute any claims we have of the particular love of God. Yet for this token we pray. The Lord has taught us to pray for this in the Lord's Prayer when we say "Thy kingdom come." Sing Psalter 234:5, 236:5.

February 22 Read I Peter 2:1-10; Psalm 87:1-3.

Though the individual believer and the church from an earthy perspective may seem weak, battered, and torn with strife, the true church which is the people of God gathered from the beginning of the world, is strong and glorious. In the Old Testament, Zion was the earthly place where God chose to dwell with His people. Zion was placed upon an immovable mountain. These things were pictures of the Church. Christ is the foundation. His work of salvation can not be moved. The elect will certainly be gathered to live with God forever in heaven. Though we can not see the glory of the whole picture, we know that the foundation is sure and that the sovereign God is the builder. Let us rejoice in this knowledge. Sing Psalter 237-239:1.

February 23 Read Acts 13:44-52; Psalm 87:4-5.

The cities and countries named in Psalm 4 and 5 were enemy nations to Israel. By the revelation of God to the Psalmist, he was given a glimpse of the plan of God to turn the hearts of the enemy to repentance and salvation. This was known to the Israelites, but many Jews at the time of the apostles would have none of it. They thought God chose the Jews because of something special within them. They refused to acknowledge the wisdom and power of God's grace to save from every nation. We must rejoice with the Psalmist when the gospel goes out to other nations. We must support and encourage those men who leave their familiar life and church in obedience to the call of God to bring the gospel to other nations. Give praise to God as you sing Psalter 237:2, 238:2, 239:1.

February 24 Read Revelation 14:1-13; Psalm 87:6-7.

The great truths summed up in this Psalm can be listed as follows: 1) As the great Shepherd counting His sheep, so God will count every one of His chosen. Not one will be forgotten. The number will be complete and perfect. 2) The church will be gathered by the preaching of the word from every tribe, tongue, and nation. 3) The church raised to eternal glory will sing praises to God that no other person can sing. We will

sing a song that will testify of the great work of salvation within us. We will sing forever of the truth that all our salvation came from God alone. Salvation by grace alone is a truth we must hold dear in our churches because it is the song we will sing forever in glory. Sing Psalter 237:3, 238:3, 239:2.

February 25 Read II Corinthians 13; Psalm 88:1-5.

Psalm 87 was filled with joy and gladness for the work of God as He gathers His church. Psalm 88 is an outpouring of sorrow. Often the individual saints in the church are filled with sorrow, but God has placed us within the body of Christ that we might receive strength from fellow saints and the preaching of the word. The psalmist says in verse 4 "I am as a man that hath no strength." The apostle in his letter to the Corinthians reveals that Christ was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. Our weakness always turns our attention to the almighty God. He is never weak. The power of God is our only strength. Let us come to Him with our every need. Sing Psalter 240:1.

February 26 Read Rom. 2:1-9; I Pet. 2:19-25; Psalm 88:6-8.

The psalmist confesses before God that the sorrow he has was given him by God. In fact, the sorrow is a result of the wrath of God against him. God laid him in the deepest pit. God took away all his friends. God pours out His wrath because of sin. Sorrow does not come from the Devil or anyone else. Romans 2 instructs us that God pours out wrath upon those who are impenitent and disobedient. When the wrath of God is poured out upon us, we are truly dead in sin. Apart from Christ we will find no hope of life. In Christ is the only hope because he bore the wrath of God due unto those sins. God brings us sorrow. God brings us joy in Christ. He is sovereign in our salvation. Sing Psalter 240:2.

February 27 Read Romans 9:1-18; Psalm 88:9-13.

Yesterday we meditated upon the truth of God's sovereignty in salvation. In the Psalm read today, we read of the psalmist taking action to ask God for salvation. Does this teach us that we have a part our salvation? We must not forget that the very fact that the psalmist is crying out to God is evidence of a godly heart that is sorrowing under chastisement. Romans 9:18 teaches that God hardens the heart of the wicked. Being hard, they do not cry out to God for salvation. Sorrow like that of the psalmist is a terrible thing, but the beauty of Christ is revealed in a repentant sinner. Sing Psalter 240:3.

February 28 Read Matthew 27:39-49; Psalm 88:13-18.

In our weakness and frailty as a creature of God, we ask God "why?" Even Christ, having taken upon himself our human nature and all our sins cried out in His darkest moment, "my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" God is a God of infinite wisdom. We will never know the depths of the riches of His knowledge. When things seem so contrary to our human understanding of what is right, we say "why?" Yet we have hope in the victory of Christ. After He said "why," He commended his Spirit to God and God gave Him the victory. In glory the questions we have will be answered. Let us be content to wait upon him in hope. Sing Psalter 240:4, 5.

Psalter 387— Our Only Saviour

by Beth DeVries

Our Only Saviour, what an appropriate title for this versification of Psalm 142! We are again reminded that we must trust in God alone and He will preserve us. This Psalm was written when David was fleeing from Saul and hiding in a cave. Saul continually was seeking to kill David despite the fact that David had fought for Saul and defended the people of Israel. David at this time was forced to find

shelter and protection in small places. David had with him an army of people as well as families; therefore, finding safe shelter for them all was difficult. David was quite troubled about his needing to flee when he was anointed to be king of Israel, but God taught him that in all things he must trust in God. We see in the first stanza how David pleads with God for help in his trouble and woe. We should also take note of the fact that it is with

387 **Our Only Saviour**
 PSALM 142 L. M. HAMBURG Arranged by Lowell Mason

1. To God my ear - nest voice I raise, To God my voice im - plor - ing prays;
 2. When gloom and sor - row com - pass me, The path I take is known to Thee,
 3. All un - pro - tect - ed, lo, I stand, No friend - ly guard - ian at my hand,
 4. O Lord, my Sav - iour, now to Thee, With - out a hope be - sides, I flee,
 5. Be Thou my help when troub - les throng, For I am weak and foes are strong;
 6. The righteous then shall gath - er round To share the bless - ing I have found,

Be - fore His face my grief I show And tell my troub - le and my woe.
 And all the toils that foes do lay To snare Thy serv - ant in his way.
 No place of flight or ref - uge near, And none to whom my soul is dear.
 To Thee, my shel - ter 'from the strife, My por - tion in the land of life,
 My cap - tive soul from pris - on bring, And thank - ful prais - es I will sing.
 Their hearts made glad because they see How rich - ly God has dealt with me.

earnestness that he prays to God, not quickly or flip-pantly as we frequently do. We can learn from this, the way in which David prays, to enrich our prayer life also.

David speaks in the second stanza about the gloom and sorrow that compasses him. When we consider that David was being pursued only because he was the chosen of the Lord we realize that his state was quite possibly more difficult than any in which we find ourselves. In the United States of America, we are not persecuted at this time for our belief in God and I do not think that we can truly understand the gloom which this can bring upon the child of God. We should remember in our prayers the people of God in this world who are persecuted for righteousness sake. We do experience difficulties in this life and often feel that we also can make this cry to God for help. We find comfort in knowing that our path is known of God. Even when foes assail against us and attempt to trap us, we will be protected by our God.

In the third stanza, we sing of David feeling alone and friendless. We know that David was not alone in the cave, but he was not finding spiritual strength from those that were with him. David's spiritual friend on the earth, Jonathan, was not able to be with him to encourage and strengthen David. David finally flees to the shelter of trust in God as we read in stanza four. God is always our shelter and gives us our life. There are times in our lives when we feel all alone even though we are within the church. It is at times like these when God strengthens our trust in Him alone. We remember the life that He has given us and the shelter that God provides for us.

We know the truth that God will be with and protect us. He will not allow the enemy to defeat us because Christ defeated Satan on the cross and earned for God's people eternal life. We sing of this in the fifth stanza as it speaks of troubles thronging and foes being strong. We tend to feel helpless, and, in our earthly state, we are helpless but through God's grace we are made strong.

There is great comfort in the sixth stanza that the righteous gather around us and strengthen us. Even when we feel alone on this earth, we are blessed to have the church with us. God also has given to us many faithful friends to help us in our sojourn in this earth. God sent Jonathan to David at times when he was fleeing to strengthen and encourage him (I Samuel 23:16-18). God, too, sends friends to us to strengthen us in the battles set before us. When we dwell together in brotherhood, we all know and experience the blessings that God has given to us. We are again reminded that our faithful earnest prayer to God will be heard and answered. God will not forsake His people. We sing the versification of this Psalm in thankfulness to God that He has delivered us from our enemies and will some day take us to glory to be with Him. May we always put our trust in Him and thank Him for His many gifts to us. ❖

Beth is a member of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Standale, Michigan.

Sing Praises with Understanding

by Aaron J. Cleveland

When churches push aside Psalm singing and congregational singing for hymns, contemporary music, and choirs, one can be sure that diligent growth in the knowledge of God

and His Word do not accompany the trend. In fact, quite the opposite is true. The gradual pushing aside of the Psalms and replacing them with hymns and contemporary music is actually only the symptom of something far

worse. The trend indicates that the church in which this is happening is sick with a deadly illness. This deadly illness is an intolerance for true doctrine and a distaste for the knowledge of God as He has revealed Himself in His Word.

At the time of the Reformation, the Reformers, John Calvin among them, put qualified men to work putting the Psalms into singing form for the congregations to sing during worship services. This had to be done, because the Roman Catholic Church had done away with Psalm singing and had replaced congregational singing with choirs in their worship. Not only did the Reformers see to it that Psalm singing was reinstated in the churches, but they also made sure the children and the elderly were instructed in the Psalms.

Today, we sing versifications of the Psalms during our worship services in the Protestant Reformed Churches. Article 69 of our Church Order reads: "In the churches only the 150 Psalms of David, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Twelve Articles of Faith, the Songs of Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon, the Morning and Evening Hymns, and the Hymn of Prayer before the sermon shall be sung."

It is important to note that we do not sing the Psalms only because this has been the tradition of Reformation churches, although this is important. Rather, we sing the Psalms during our worship services because this is biblical. This is how God has commanded us to worship Him. Two new testament passages indicate that this was the practice of the Church at the time of the apostles. These passages are Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 which reads, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Therefore, every church which worships God as He has commanded sings the Psalms as part of their worship. The Spirit of Truth has led the true Church throughout all of history to sing the Psalms. Prior to the Reformation, Psalm singing had been almost completely extinguished.

We must be careful to see from the history of the church that a departure from Psalm singing and apostasy are connected. As a church slowly departs from the truth, the Psalms are slowly pushed aside and replaced with music that fits the lie which is gnawing away at the truth. Two brief examples from church history illustrate this connection. The first occurred about two hundred years ago in the Dutch churches. For nearly two centuries after the Synod of Dort 1618-19, the churches sang only

As a church slowly departs from the truth, the Psalms are slowly pushed aside and replaced with music that fits the lie which is gnawing away at the truth.

the Psalms and a few hymns which were direct reproductions of parts of the Bible. However, in 1807, 192 hymns were introduced for singing in the churches, many of which contained doctrinal errors. Not long after, along with other growing apostasy in the churches, the singing of these hymns was made mandatory. This corruption of the worship of God along with other apostasy was one of the factors leading to the Secession of 1834.

The second example is more recent and hits closer to home. In 1932, shortly after the formation of the Protestant Reformed Churches, the CRC changed their Church Order, Article 69, allowing for the use of approved hymns to be sung during worship. In 1934, a large number of these hymns were approved. A few years earlier, in 1926, the Christian Reformed synod allowed for choir singing during worship services. Both of these decisions were made by a church, which only a few years earlier, had rejected the doctrine of God's particular grace through its approval of the false doctrine of common grace. Ever since 1924, and the adoption of the doctrine of common grace, the CRC has been departing from the truths of Scripture at an increasing rate. If one looks at the Psalter Hymnal used by the CRC today, it is apparent that hymns have pushed aside the Psalms. The Psalms no longer play an important role during the worship services of the CRC. It is also the case that the Psalms no longer play an important role in the lives of the members of the churches where hymns have pushed aside the Psalms.

It is not difficult to see why these churches and individuals no longer want to sing the Psalms. This is because the inspired Psalms speak the truth of the Word of God and those churches and individuals who have gone after the lie don't want to be confronted with the truth of God and His works contained in the Psalms. Instead, they have invented their own songs which complement

the false doctrines they are espousing. While it is true that not every hymn contains false doctrine, it is also true that hymns do not express the truth as sharply as the Psalms do and hymns are not inspired as the Psalms are.

The fact that the Psalms are the inspired word of God and given to us by God for His worship is the main argument that the Reformed believer has against hymn singing during the worship of God. Beyond this, the Reformed believer recognizes the Psalms as deeply spiritual, unlike hymns. Most hymns are shallow and do not require as much spiritual understanding and experience as the Psalms do. It is also true that many false ideas have entered the hearts and thinking of God's people through the singing of pleasing, but faulty hymns.

The Reformed believer also sees the need for the Psalms to be sung not only during the official worship of God, but also at every occasion that is appropriate for the singing of God's praises with understanding. Reformed believers, including adults, young people, and children, are those who desire to sing the Psalms at every opportunity they have: in church, at school, in the home, in the car, during choir programs and special numbers, and even at work.

In Psalm 47:6,7 we read, "Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding." We are to sing these praises, Psalms, in the words of Matthew Henry, "intelligently" and "instructively." "Intelligently; as those that do yourselves understand why and for what reasons you praise God and what is the meaning of the service. Instructively, as those that desire to make others understand God's glorious perfections, and to teach them to praise Him." In Psalm 47 we have many reasons for the praise of God. In verse 2 the reason for our praise is God's majesty. In verse 2, as well as verses 7-9 we praise God for his sovereignty and dominion. In verses 3-5 we praise God for His care of us. All 150 Psalms are full of matter for the praise of God, and we ought to sing them as those who desire to grow in our knowledge of God and His works and as those who desire to teach others of the great works of God.

It is for this reason that we reject all music that seeks to obscure the great works of God and all music which perverts the truth of God with the lie. The Reformed believer, adult, young person, and child alike has no use for and despises the so-called Christian rock music popu-

**The Reformed believer,
adult, young person, and
child alike has no use for
and despises the so-called
Christian rock music**

lar today, and played on such radio stations as WJQ, 99.3 in the Grand Rapids area. The believer does so for a number of reasons. First of all, the lyrics of this type music are not Christian at all, but anti-Christian. One only has to listen to this music for a short time to realize (if the lyrics of the song are intelligible) that the music raises man to the level of God, and the works and power of the One True God are cast aside. Secondly, we ought to despise this music because it blurs the sharp antithesis between the Church and the world. How is it possible to put the words of God to the music of the devil? How can it be that the words of faithfulness, obedience, justice, and judgment could ever be sung to the music which the world uses to sing of adultery, rebellion, chaos, and lawlessness? Thirdly, we ought to run from this music because it is an attempt to draw God's people away from good music towards worldly music under the disguise of the word "Christian."

Finally, this music ought to alarm us because it is promoted by those who have long since departed from the truth and have gone after the lie.

At this time of musical upheaval in the church world, let us hold fast to the Rock of God's Word. Let us sing the Psalms with the gladness, knowledge, and hope which we have in Christ. We carry on a precious heritage. ❖

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

The Escape

reviewed by Lisa and Carol Baldwin

The Escape is about three Huguenot children who flee persecution in France and their struggle to survive. Early in the story, John and Manette's father is taken away because of his Christian beliefs. He is taken prisoner and forced to work on a galley ship. Their mother dies and John must live with his aunt and uncle who are practicing Roman Catholics. Manette is taken away to Paris to be raised as a Roman Catholic and to be a servant.

Sixteen-year-old John escapes from his aunt and uncle and goes to his old home and finds two things, which are extremely helpful on his journey. (You can find out what these are when you read the book.) He wants to find Manette and his father, as well as escape to Holland. On the way John also meets a boy named Camille who is also a fleeing Huguenot. On their diffi-

cult journey they meet many troubles. In spite of sickness, pain, hunger, and imprisonment, John trusts the Lord.

The sequel to *The Escape* is *The Secret Mission* and also an exciting book. Both incorporate historical facts into the stories.

Both books are written by A. Van Der Jagt. *The Escape* is published by Inheritance Publications; *The Secret Mission* is published by Christian Reading Materials. I recommend *The Escape* for people of all ages. I think the book is well written and I learned a lot about the Huguenots. ❖

Lisa Baldwin is a fifth grader at Carmel Christian School in Charlotte, NC. Her mother, Carol, also enjoyed The Escape and learning about Huguenot history.

Church Family

Confession of Faith (7)

by Rev. Ronald Cammenga

Reprinted from the Standard Bearer Vol. 63 pp. 413-415.

In the past several articles we have discussed public confession of faith. We have used as our guide the three questions that are asked of those who

make confession of faith. We want to conclude this discussion by calling attention to certain responsibilities which a confessing member of God's church has. Some of these we have already referred to in passing.

An Unreproachable Life

Perhaps the most important calling of a confessing member of the church is to live an unreproachable life in the midst of the world. Even the world must behold the good works of the people of God in order that God may be glorified in the day of visitation, I Peter 2:12. Never must the believer give the enemies of God's cause an occasion to blaspheme.

Are you living this kind of life, young people? Are you able to say that by your conduct you are a witness of Jesus Christ? Are those with whom you come into contact on the job or at college able to discern that you are a Christian? Do you refrain from taking God's name in vain? Do you refuse to attend the movie, listen to rock music, and participate in wild partying and dancing? Do you keep yourself from fellowship with unbelievers? An important part of the unreproachable life of the believing young person concerns dating and marriage. The

An important part of the unreproachable life of the believing young person concerns dating and marriage.

young people ought to have a concern for the continuation of God's covenant, and therefore ought to have serious thoughts towards dating and marriage. Are you seeking a wife or husband? What kind of wife or husband are you seeking? Is it of the utmost importance to you that your prospective spouse be a believer? Is it a concern of yours that that prospective wife or husband be or become a member of the Protestant Reformed Churches?

The Christian of himself is not able to live this good life in the world which is pleasing to God. In order to do

There ought to be time every day in the life of the Christian young person for private devotions.

this, he needs strength from God Himself. God gives His child that strength day by day through the reading of the Scriptures and prayer. Do you read God's Word and do you pray? There ought to be time every day in the life of the Christian young person for private devotions. You ought to read a few chapters of the Bible. By reading three chapters a day, you will be able to read through the entire Bible in about a year. And you ought to pray, formulating your own prayer in which you confess your sins and lay your needs before God's throne of grace.

Support of the Ministry and the Poor

An important calling of the confessing member of the church is to contribute to the support of the gospel

An important calling of the confessing member of the church is to contribute to the support of the gospel ministry and the poor.

ministry and the poor. Do the young people recognize this calling? Does the cause of God and His kingdom come first in their lives, before their own needs and pleasures?

It is the calling of every member of the church to contribute to the support of the ministry of the Word. In most churches this is done by paying the budget. I believe the budget system to be very worthwhile, nor have I ever heard a valid objection lodged against it. The confessing member of the church must fulfill his responsibility by paying his budget, and by doing so before buying groceries, gas for his car, or indulging in recreation. This is simply obedience to the Word of Christ, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God..." (Matt. 6:33).

Many passages of Scripture bind upon the child of God the duty, a blessed duty, we might add, to support the ministry. One of the most outstanding passages is found in I Corinthians 9. There the apostle teaches that those who sow spiritual things ought to share in the carnal things of the people of God, and those who minister about holy things ought to be partakers of the altar. He sums up the matter in verse 14, "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

In addition to supporting the ministry, the member of the church has the responsibility to contribute to the

relief of his poor fellow brothers and sisters in the church. Passages of God's Word which speak of this calling are simply too numerous to mention. In connection with giving to the poor, the Apostle Paul says in I Corinthians 16:2, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him...."

Besides the cause of the support of the ministry and the poor, the members of the church are privileged to support other aspects of God's kingdom. Contributions may be made to the Christian schools, to missions, to various Christian institutions of mercy, or to such causes as the *Standard Bearer* and the *Beacon Lights*.

If the young person is going to be able to contribute to these causes as he should, it is important that he learn to be a good steward and exercise the necessary self-discipline to put first things first in his life.

Congregational Meetings

Because Reformed churches adhere to Presbyterian principles of church government, the members of the church share in the government of the church. An important aspect of this is attendance at and participation in congregational meetings.

This applies only to the male confessing members of the church. It is our position as churches, a position that is expressed in our Church Order, that only men are to participate in the congregational meetings of the church. Many churches which in the past followed this same practice have abandoned it. These same churches today are opening the offices to women. History has shown that allowing women to participate in congregational meetings has led to the opening of the offices to the women, and in fact has been used as an argument in favor of allowing the women to serve in the offices.

Biblical principles move us to forbid women the right to vote at the congregational meetings of the church. The congregational meeting is an official gathering of the church. For a woman to vote at a congregational meeting is for a woman to exercise some authority and to enter into the government of the church. This is prohibited.

The young men who make confession of faith ought to take seriously their responsibility to attend the congregational meetings. At times only routine matters appear on the agenda and it becomes easy to get into the habit of skipping these meetings. We ought not to do this. It is a sacred privilege to be able to participate in the affairs of the church, a privilege that saints of God in other ages did not enjoy as we do today.

The young men who make confession of faith ought to take seriously their responsibility to attend the congregational meetings.

Even though the calling of the young women in the church is not the calling to hold office in the church or to exercise authority, this does not imply that they have no calling, or that their calling is not important. Ordinarily, God's will for the young women of the church is that they marry, bare children, and guide the household (I Tim. 5: 14). Are the young women content with this position which God has given them? What is their attitude toward marriage, motherhood, and being a housewife? Do they look forward to these things? Do they understand the important place God has given them in the continuation of His covenant in the line of the generations of His people?

Maintaining The Unity Of The Church

One of the most important callings of the member of the church is to maintain the unity of the church. It is easy enough to tear the church down, to live in bitterness or open hostility towards certain members of the church. The member of the church is called to preserve the peace and unity of the church.

The Apostle Paul expresses this calling in Eph. 4:3, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." He goes on to point out that if we are going to keep the church's unity it will be necessary for us to be lowly and meek, longsuffering towards one another, forbearing one another in love.

It is important for the member of the church to recognize that he is only one member of the body of Christ, which is made up of many other and different members. He is called to live not only to the glory of Christ Who is the Head of this body, but he is also called to live in harmony with all the other members of this body.

An important aspect of this calling to maintain the unity of the church is the willingness on the part of the members of the church to go the way of Matthew 18 if a brother or sister in the church has sinned against them. Do you know the way of Matthew 18? And are you determined to follow the way of Matthew 18 if you are sinned against?

As simple as it is to understand the instructions of the Lord in Matthew 18, it is one of the hardest things in the world to carry out. It is very difficult to go to the brother when he has sinned and confront him with his sin, and do it in the right way. Instead, what usually happens is that we back-bite and slander, or simply ignore the sin and pretend that it never happened. If we love the

If we love the brother and if
we love the church, we
must be faithful to carry out
the steps of Matthew 18.

brother and if we love the church, we must be faithful to carry out the steps of Matthew 18. This will gain the brother, and this will restore the unity of the church which has been broken by sin.

Now may God bless all the young people of His church who have made confession of faith or who are contemplating making confession of faith. May you be blessed and may you be a blessing in the life of our churches. Through you may the cause of our churches, which is the cause of Christ, be preserved in the years to come! ❖

Rev. Cammenga is pastor of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

Church History

Through Strife to Victory

Chapter 13

The Beginning of a New Denomination

by Rev. C. Hanko

The three congregations that remained faithful to the truth as proclaimed by their deposed pastors formed a temporary organization under the name: "THE PROTESTING CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCHES IN AMERICA." Since the consistories of these congregations were appealing their case to the Synod of 1926, it was impossible at this date to form a permanent organization.

Ninety-two members of the Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church broke with the congregation and remained members of the Christian Reformed denomination. Since this splinter group also claimed the right

to the church property the case was brought to court. For approximately a year, while the case was pending in the civil courts, Rev. Hoeksema and his congregation remained in the property located on Eastern Avenue. On December 22, 1925, just three days before Christmas, a decision was handed down from the Supreme Court in Lansing, giving the right to the property to the 92 dissident members, who were considered to have remained faithful to the Christian Reformed denomination. As soon as this decision became known, even before the official announcement had been made, these individuals took



First Protestant Reformed Church, built in 1926.

over the church, placed a deputy at the door, and changed the locks.

As soon as the word had spread that the court had given the church property to the opposition both they and we gathered in quite a large number at the church. We found that a guard had already been placed at the only open door to bar any of us from entering. There was a lot of commotion, but to the best of my knowledge everything remained peaceful. There was one small incident, which was greatly blown out of proportion later. One of our men took hold of the overcoat of one of the opposition. When the man pulled away all the buttons of his coat were torn off and fell in the snow.

Immediately steps were taken by the consistory of the Protestant congregation to obtain a meeting place for the Christmas holiday and thereafter. When the day arrived, the members of the flock plowed through the snow to the community hall in Franklin Park, now known as the Martin Luther King Jr. Park. This building was so crowded at every service that many men stood up throughout the entire period of worship.

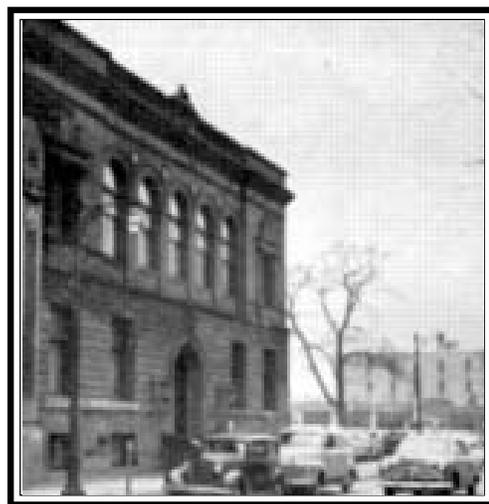
As soon as possible the congregation moved to the St. Cecilia building downtown. Since automobiles were

still not very common, most of the congregation walked three miles to attend the services, and another three miles to return home. In fact, since three services were held on Sunday, there were some who attended all three, requiring a day's travel of eighteen miles. Yet no complaint was heard, because there were always along the way traveling companions who were filled with the same enthusiasm.

The St. Cecilia building was also crowded; the entire platform, the window seats, and even the balcony from which the minister could not be seen, were occupied. Every service was faithfully attended. There was a renewed zeal for the truth, a hunger for the preaching of the Word, and an enthusiasm such as is rarely found anywhere. The communion of saints took on a new meaning. A period of anxiety and strife was past, there were painful breaks with members of the family and with friends, but unity in the bond of faith and love was once more experienced. True, the words of

the Psalter came to mind, "Friend and lover are departed, dark and lonely is my way"; yet at the same time there was an internal joy and peace in the assurance that a reformation had finally come.

Soon after, lots were purchased on the corner of Fuller Avenue and Franklin Street for the purpose of



The St. Cecilia building, temporary place of worship after eviction.

building a place of worship. This was one block west of Calvin College, which at that time was located on Franklin between Benjamin and Giddings. This was also the end of the Franklin Street car line.

The members of the congregation gave generously, some in fact, almost beyond their means. The work began. Horses with plows dragged out dirt from day to day. Men with shovels worked diligently. Forms were set up for the cement to be poured. Soon the foundation of the building was laid and the church began to take shape and form.

In due time the basement of the new church edifice under construction at Fuller and Franklin was made suitable for worship services and a temporary roof was placed over the basement. Pillars took the place of the inside walls, making an auditorium large enough to hold the entire congregation. A number of folding chairs were obtained, some of which are still scattered throughout our churches, and once more the congregation met under its own roof, such as it was. Besides the still crowded conditions, whenever it rained water dripped from the not too tightly sealed roof, creating a bit of disturbance in various parts of the auditorium.

In February of 1927 the church edifice was completed and dedicatory services were held.

In Hope the part of the congregation that remained with their minister, Rev. George Martin Ophoff, now met in a school house, across from the Christian Reformed Church. One Sunday morning one of our seminary students made the mistake of going to the consistory room of the Christian Reformed Church, and discovered only



Left to right: Reverends Verhil and Vos, initial seminary graduates.

just before the service was to begin that he was in the wrong building, and was awaited across the road.

In June of 1925, as soon as the school term was finished in Calvin, our seminary opened its doors with three professors and ten students. For a short time the school met in the basement of the Eastern Avenue Church. Rev. Hoeksema taught four subjects on Monday afternoon and Rev. Ophoff taught four subjects on Wednesday afternoon. Rev. Henry Danhof taught eight subjects Friday. Since Rev. Danhof had to come all the way from Kalamazoo by interurban, he preferred to take up the whole day for teaching which accounts for the numerous subjects taught by him, in distinction from the four taught by the other ministers. Because there was an ever increasing demand for preachers, the professors were eager to prepare men for the ministry as soon as possible.

Throughout the country there were many who could not reconcile themselves with the decisions of the Synod of 1924 on the theory of common grace, nor could they understand the hasty deposition of men who were declared to be fundamentally Reformed. Calls came from various areas requesting that Rev. Hoeksema come and explain to them the recent controversy and the truth of Scripture and the Confessions in regard to the issue of the day. In a comparatively short time churches were organized in Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, and California. Later others, like Lynden, Washington in 1950 were added to the denomination.

It may be added here, that Rev. Henry Danhof remained with the churches only during the temporary organization, but when they organized as THE PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES IN AMERICA, his congregation remained an independent church.

Two of our older men, Rev. Gerrit Vos and Rev. William Verhil, were made eligible for a call after being two years in the seminary, with the understanding that as soon as possible they would return to finish their studies. Rev. Vos served for two years in Sioux Center, Iowa, and Rev. Verhil served for two years in Hull, Iowa.

After four years the first class of six students graduated from the seminary and obtained charges in our churches. Since that time a large number of students have been trained and prepared for the ministry, many of whom are still serving our churches. ❖

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.

Christians in the Ukraine

by J.P. de Klerk

The history of the Ukraine begins somewhere in the eleventh century. The name means “Russian frontier country” but it is very nationalistic and independent. For this it had to fight many wars to defend itself against numerous enemies. With that it had also to defend the Christian religion. Before it became one people it had to defend itself already against armies on horseback from Iran (seven centuries before Christ), and after them they were terrorized by other armies, and occupied. In 375 after Christ came the Huns (from Asia), the Bulgars, Hungarians, etc.

Finally, the city of Kiev was founded, which became the center of the nation. Attacks by neighboring peoples continued. The Church once had to defend itself against the Poles, who wanted to force the Ukrainians to become Roman Catholic, but they refused. In their Orthodox Christian religion they try to follow in the footsteps of Peter and Paul as disciples of Jesus Christ. There are many paintings of these two Apostles, inside and outside of their Churches. They are well maintained, as decorations.

The central Church of Kiev, which you see in the picture, is a good example. This building is at the same time a seminary (with dormitory). The Orthodox Church has about six million members.



There are also Russian Orthodox Churches, which are still under Communist control. Their head is Metropolitan Filaret, who is *not* a religious man and works together with Communist activists, who demand of the ministers that they must preach against the Jews. They have refused to do that. The people who go to the Churches are often molested by activists. The promised religious freedom has become a lie.

In the Western part of the Ukraine exist some Roman Catholic Churches (a minority of Russians and people of Polish descent).

The capital Kiev has seven universities, with branches in the city of Lvov. Half of the Russian navy lies in the harbors of the Ukraine (Odessa, Nikolajev, Sebastopol, Kertsj and Zjdanov). There are also the nuclear weapons. ❖



J.P. de Klerk is an author and journalist from Ashhurst, New Zealand.

Church News

Church News

BAPTISMS

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

Mark 16:16

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Richard Shawn, son of Mr. & Mrs. Rick Van Baren—Faith, MI

Colten Henry, son of Mr. & Mrs. Todd Miedema—Georgetown, MI

Zachary Scott, son of Mr. & Mrs. Scott Lubbers—Georgetown, MI

Ruth Esther, daughter of Mr. Jim Koerner—Southeast, MI

Leah Ann, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Don Kuiper—Southeast, MI

Jack Robert, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dirk Westra—Southwest, MI

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:

Jean Wodzinski—Bethel, IL

Mrs. Mary Flint—Lynden, WA

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

Matthew 19:5

United in the bonds of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Scott DeJong and Miss Jill Te Grotenhuis—Hull, IA

Mr. Jay Kalsbeek and Miss Lora Campbell—Loveland, CO

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

The Folly of Pride

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

I am the best—
o'er all the rest.

I win the game—
though cheaters blame.

I know the most—
'tis not a boast.

I even see—
best dressed is me!

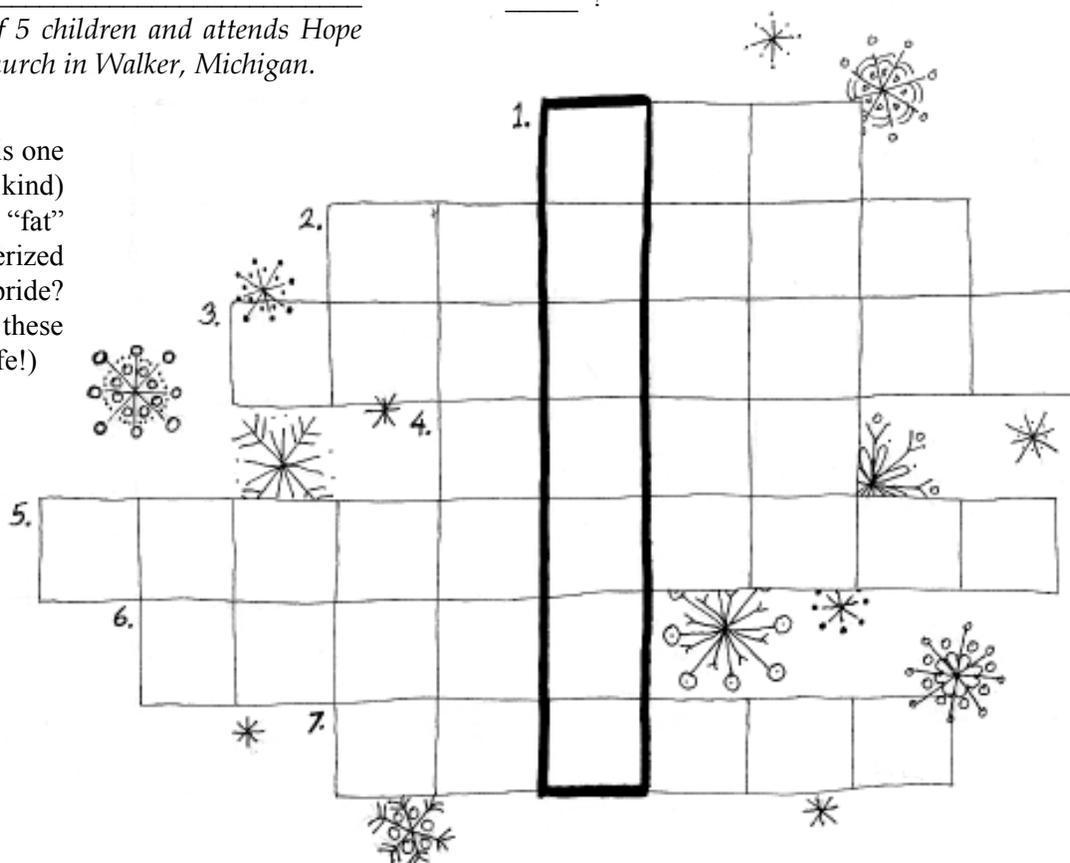
Though truly writ,
how can be it,
this poem ends—

I have no friends? ❖

1. In Proverbs 28:25, "...he that putteth his trust in the Lord shall be made _____"?
2. In Proverbs 28:25, he who has "...a proud heart stirreth up _____"?
3. & 4. In Proverbs 22:4, "By _____ and the _____ of the Lord are riches, and honor, and life."
5. In Proverbs 13:10, "...by pride cometh _____"?
6. In Proverbs 21:4, what kind of heart is sin?
7. In Proverbs 13:10, "...with the well advised is _____"?

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

Outlined Word: What is one thing (the God-fearing kind) you might be "rich" or "fat" in if your life is characterized by humility instead of pride? (Hint: You don't make these with contention and strife!)



BEACON LIGHTS

P.O. BOX 375
Jenison, MI 49428

Periodical
Postage
paid at
Jenison, MI
(UPSS046-840)

1999 Convention



Redlands, CA August 16-20

READY TO GIVE AN ANSWER

- Knowing the Truth
- Witnessing & Testifying of the Truth
- Our Hope & Comfort in the Truth

For more info contact Jonathan den Hartog at jonspc@juno.com or (909) 792-0907

