

Beacon Lights

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The Carbon Cycle

by John Huizenga

You are probably familiar with the water cycle. Water evaporates into the air and condenses to fall as precipitation filling the rivers, lakes, and oceans to be used by plants and animals. Eventually it evaporates again to complete the cycle. There are other important cycles in the creation as well that reveal the wisdom of God in creation. The cycle we look at in this article is the carbon cycle.

Carbon atoms, like the other kinds of atoms in creation, can attach together like building blocks to make many different things. When carbon atoms are linked together into thin sheets, we have something called graphite that can be used to lubricate squeaky door hinges. When carbon atoms are linked together in a crystalline three-dimensional pattern, we get diamonds.

Carbon is an element of God's creation that is also crucial for our life on earth. When carbon atoms link together with other carbon atoms, hydrogen atoms, and oxygen to form long chains we eat them as carbohydrates. Carbohydrates are found in most of the food we eat. When our bodies digest the carbohydrates, the chains are broken up and the energy that is released is used by our bodies for the work we do. The left over carbon atoms have two oxygen atoms attached and are exhaled as carbon dioxide.

When the carbon dioxide is exhaled from our lungs, the carbon is floating around in the air ready to be used by another creature of God: the plant. Plants take the carbon dioxide into the leaves. The plants also take water (oxygen + 2 hydrogen) and nutrients from the soil. The sun then supplies the energy necessary for the plant to break the two hydrogen atoms off from the water and link the carbon, oxygen, and hydrogen atoms back up into more carbohydrates. In this process called photosynthesis, 6 carbon dioxide molecules + 12 water molecules + energy from the sun makes 1 molecule of sugar (carbohydrate) with 6 molecules of oxygen and 6 molecules of water left over. The oxygen atoms float back into the air again to be used by another person or ani-

mal. The carbon stays in the plant until it is eaten, decays, burns, or is otherwise destroyed.

When the carbohydrate is eaten, the cycle comes full circle. The carbon atoms are then broken apart, the energy in the carbohydrates is released and the carbon is exhaled into the air as carbon dioxide. The process of photosynthesis is reversed. One sugar (carbohydrate) + 6 oxygen molecules makes 6 molecules of carbon dioxide, 6 molecules of water and some energy.

Sometimes the carbon becomes trapped for many years in a tree. Sometimes it is trapped for thousands of years in the ground. During the flood of Noah's time, a tremendous amount of plant life was buried under mud and silt and compressed into coal, oil, and natural gas. The carbohydrates within the plants were broken into smaller parts and arranged into something different: hydrocarbons. Hydrocarbons are like carbohydrates except they do not have any oxygen atoms. They are made only of carbon and hydrogen. We can not eat hydrocarbons but we can burn them and use the energy to heat our homes, power our cars, and supply the industries that make all of our cars, telephones, and aluminum cans, etc.

Burning the hydrocarbons breaks up the carbon chains, just like our bodies break up the chains, and releases carbon dioxide into the air. In fact, hundreds of millions of tons of carbon dioxide are released into the air each year with all of our burning. So much is released that the plants can not use it fast enough. It is building up to levels never recorded before, making the insulating blanket around the earth thicker and keeping the earth warmer. Scientists call this warming the greenhouse effect and warn that it could cause catastrophic problems on the earth.

When we look at the carbon cycle through the spectacles of Scripture we see first of all the great wisdom of God. "And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food" (Genesis 2:9b). God is the one who made the plants and

He caused them to grow and make carbohydrates as they do. God also made the moving creatures to breathe in the oxygen produced by the plants and breathe out the carbon dioxide necessary for the plants to grow. The plants themselves also serve as food for man and the other creatures. God taught the importance of plants and trees for man when he commanded Israel: "When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them: for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down (for the tree of the field is man's life) to employ them in the siege" (Deut. 20:19). Every part of creation is useful for the other parts and together all things glorify the Creator.

When man looks at the carbon cycle, he imagines that plants and animals evolved together in such a way that they needed each other. Looking at the enormous oil, coal, and natural gas supplies, natural man with his evolutionary mindset can only explain it in terms of millions of years of dead plants building up and getting buried and compressed somehow. How so much coal and oil could be deposited in one place will forever remain a mystery to the wicked who refuse to deny the flood sent by God. The Scriptures, however, reveal the almighty power of God in the flood which saved His church. The flood also disrupted the carbon cycle by taking the carbon found in the abundant plant life out of the cycle for a time and burying it.

Today man is taking that carbon out of storage, burning it to run his machines, and spewing it back into the atmosphere. Some fear that the rapid burning of this stored carbon will lead to another global catastrophe - not of water but of heat. It is true, God will burn up this

present creation as we read in II Peter 3:10. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." How God will do this is not important. What is important is the fear which the ungodly have. God puts a fear of global destruction in the heart of the unbeliever even though he denies the Scriptures. We read in Romans 1:20: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:"

The storage of carbon laid up in the flood is an enormous resource of power for man. We can not forget that God is the one who gives this power to man. Wicked man uses it to hasten his development in wickedness, but God uses even the inventions of wicked men as a means to bring the gospel to the ends of the earth.

The wonders of the carbon cycle reveal the wisdom of God. Man has only begun to understand the intricate details of photosynthesis and digestion. He sees the wonder of God but denies the power of God. He brings upon himself the wrath of God and the disruption of the carbon cycle. Sin has thoroughly corrupted man and the creation, but our hope is in Christ. "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Cor. 2:9). ❖

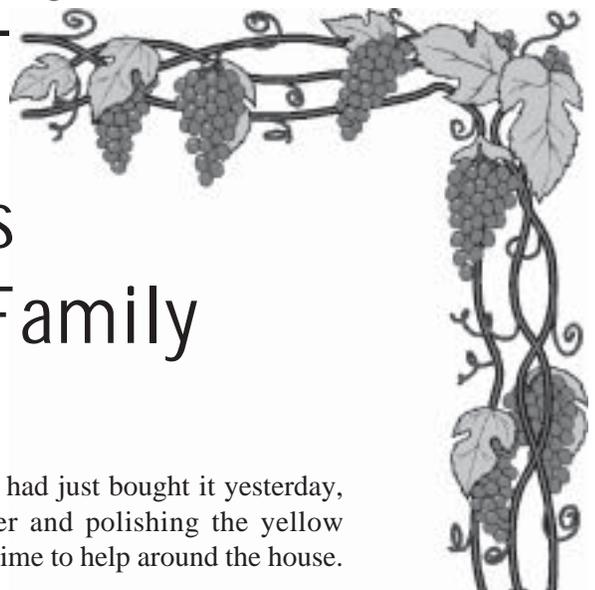
John is a member of Randolph Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin and is the Editor of the Beacon Lights.

Fruitful Branches

Filial Duties in the Christian Family

by Curt Gritters

Collin wiped the last spot of wax off his new Corvette. He had just bought it yesterday, so today he spent hours wiping down the black leather and polishing the yellow fiberglass...hours dedicated to touch-up work, and yet no time to help around the house.



After going back inside, seeing the messy house, watching his mother work, and realizing she was there since six o'clock that morning, Collin ran downstairs to his room. After breakfast mom had scribbled out a small list of jobs for the kids. Each had to clean his own bedroom and do a few more jobs, but the dust on Collin's new car seemed more urgent to him than that on his dresser. Feeling guilty about how he started the day, he ran back upstairs for the vacuum and dust rag. As he cleaned, he thought about a few important things.

He pondered the fact that all people are totally depraved by nature. No man can do anything good without the help of Christ. This must be why he had not obeyed his mom immediately. Every child, by nature, wants to rebel, or at least test the limits of his parents' authority. Seeing his sin, Collin continued dusting around his room, but prayed in his heart.

Through praying, he began to realize what his calling was as a child of God and as a child in a Christian home. His duties must originate in love. In Matthew 22:39, Jesus calls the Christian to love the neighbor as he loves himself. Since "neighbor" refers to those with whom one comes in contact, parents are usually one's closest neighbors. The Christian is commanded to love his parents spiritually. Loving God will work this love of the parents in the child's heart.

If one loves his parents, he will also honor them. Exodus 20:12 cannot be more clear when it commands the child to honor his parents—the second duty of a Christian child. So, as God requires reverence and respect to Himself, He also demands that children honor their parents.

If the Christian child honors his parents, he will also obey them. While Collin finished up the dusting, he remembered the Bible verse which stated, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." This, the first verse of Ephesians 6, commands children not only to listen to their parents, but also to do what their parents require of them. Children need laws from their parents so they can exercise and grow spiritually. This growth comes when children are required to obey every word of their parents. They grow spiritually because, by obeying their parents, they *learn* to obey and *do* obey God. The only reason for disobedience is if parents command their children to disobey God. This exception to the rule should not, however, detract from the importance that God places on obeying parents.

Combining all three of the duties already mentioned, the Christian child is called to submit to his parents.

Submission is a willing obedience based on the foundations of love, honor, and reverence. So submission actually comes down to the Christian attitude behind all obedience. By learning to submit to his parents, the child learns to submit to the will of God. Submitting to God's will in His life, the child will feel God's presence in his life and take refuge in that comfort.

Collin set the dust rag down and began to unwind the vacuum cord when more ideas flooded his mind. He started thinking about how necessary it really was to love, honor, obey, and submit to his parents. Children are the heritage of the Lord, and are placed in the family by God. So God is the supreme law and carries out His divine will through the actions of the parents. Disobedience to the parents shows a lack of honor and submission to *God!* Realizing this, Collin shuddered with guilt. Earlier today he had disobeyed God when he did not obey his mom immediately!

In order to follow God's standard which He set for children, Collin realized that one must look to Christ as an example. In everything that He did, Christ loved, honored, obeyed, and submitted to God, even in His death. As Christ submitted to God, so the child of God must submit to his parents. However, the child must not submit merely because of Christ's example, because God commands it, or because he is afraid of his parents' chastisement. The child must submit out of a thankful heart to God. The child of God will submit to his physical and spiritual father because he is thankful for the love that God first gave him.

Collin unplugged the vacuum and thought about the real importance of that. God loved His people so much that *He* sacrificed *His Son* so that *we* could live eternally. Now that is genuine love!

So, dusting off his dirty conscience with the clean cloth of prayer, Collin took a new look at life. Now he understood the importance of loving his parents. Now, too, he understood that loving his parents will cause him to honor, obey, and submit to them. With a renewed vigor to obey, Collin set out to do his other jobs. The Corvette sat in the driveway, taking the back seat to Collin's new priority of being a truly Christian child in the home. ❖

Curt is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

In His Will

by Trisha Haak

Suffering. Her life could be summarized in that one word. Suffering. Chisel that word on her gravestone. Anna's life had never been easy, but she had the impression that not all life was easy. There was some element, so heavy, so tedious, that it weighed life down and made all forms of earthly joy mirages and hallucinations.

Anna had discovered long ago what that element was. Depravity, yes, depravity had been the culprit of every horror she had witnessed. She had witnessed the Holocaust. Unfortunately, that was something she could not forget. She would not forget! Her mind had captured those images and placed them in her memory. She thought of them almost everyday.

She could never forget how they came in the middle of the night. They were yelling and screaming at the "Juden! Juden!" Anna and her family did not know that they were Jewish at the time. But later on after the war Anna found out that a little way back in their heritage, there was one Jewish man and for the Gestapo that was enough of a curse for deportation. One just one. That was all it took.

The night they were deported, her father was shot by the Gestapo. For no real reason, he hadn't done anything wrong. They just shot him suddenly, no warning. Maybe some Gestapo didn't like his shoes or his eyes. Her father had always been a man of dignity. His character had earned respect, but that night they shot him down like a dog. Anna's last memory of her father was of him lying on the streets in his own blood. Maybe it had been the mercy of God that her father never reached Auschwitz. Looking back, Anna decided that it had been. When they finally reached the camp, the sun was just beginning to rise. How ironic. Before they entered the camp, they were separated into groups. That was the last Anna saw of her two brothers. They were both shot to death when they attempted to escape. Escaping back to a life that was theirs by right of birth. After that Anna's group stood in front of a man who decided who would die and who would live for a couple months before they died. Anna was chosen to live because she was young and strong. Her sister and mother however, were sent to

the gas chambers. At night, when Anna would lie awake and listen to the cries of agony that escaped the lips of the near dead, she would think of heaven. She didn't know what heaven was like. She just knew that this camp of horror, where death, pain, and suffering were one's only companions, wasn't it.

Anna closed her eyes, she couldn't think of her experience of the Holocaust anymore. There were some days that Anna believed she had never really escaped Auschwitz.

God *had* been good to her. In 1948, she immigrated to America. There was nothing left for her in Germany but bitter feelings. She had met and married her husband and they had had a good life together. They had children and grandchildren.

Yet recently, ghosts of her past had come back to haunt her. A week ago her granddaughter, Rose, had been diagnosed with leukemia. Rose was only seventeen. It had been a difficult time for the family. For Anna it had been a test of faith.

A knock on the door interrupted Anna's thoughts. She opened the door to the brilliant face of her granddaughter Rose.

"Rose what a nice surprise," Anna smiled. She always loved visits from her grandchildren.

"I hope you are not too busy grandma. I thought I would stop over to say hello."

"You're welcome over anytime. Come in and sit down. Would you like anything to drink?" Anna offered. "No thank you" replied Rose. There was a pause of awkwardness hanging over them.

"Are you alright grandma?" asked Rose.

"Oh Rose I am just so worried about you. Tomorrow you start your chemo. What time do you check in at the hospital?"

"Seven, and we begin right away." Rose replied.

"Are you afraid Rose?" she asked quietly.

Rose looked her grandmother directly in the eyes. "Grandma I am very afraid" replied Rose.

Anna got up out of her chair and walked over to the sink. She looked out of the window through teary eyes. No, she mustn't cry. She had promised herself that she

would be strong for Rose. Rose would be able to depend on her.

Rose walked over to stand beside her. “Grandma, you mustn’t cry.”

“I am sorry ... I meant to be strong for you.” Anna sobbed.

“I meant to be strong too grandma and I failed, but God didn’t. I am afraid but I am not alone. He *is* with me, I am sure of it and that is the only thing that keeps me going; knowing that God holds me in His hands.”

“No,” Anna cried back, “you are so young. It is a mistake Rose, the doctors made a mistake. They read your test wrong. You are not supposed to have cancer.”

“Grandma, God doesn’t make mistakes.”

Anna grew frustrated and angry. How could Rose be so calm when nothing in her life would ever be the same.

“Yes, Rose, but what if you die?” Anna could barely get the words out of her mouth.

“Then I die grandma. And I am certain of my reward. Whether I die tomorrow or fifty years from now, is all in God’s will and that is so comforting. I have cancer for a reason and everything in God’s will has a reason. If I had cancer for no reason at all but just because

it was by chance, then I would feel hopeless, as if my life was decided by nothing but a mere throw of dice. But in Christ there is hope. Hope that destroys all the pain and misery of earthly life.”

Anna stared in the sink as the faucet rhythmically dripped drops of water. She felt confused. Rose was so sure of herself, so sure that God was always there.

“Oh, Rose can you really mean that? What about all those people that I watched die in the Holocaust? All those innocent men, women and children. All those innocent lives! And now I have to watch my granddaughter suffer! Why does God do this Rose? Why?”

“God doesn’t give use anymore than we can handle. His grace *is* sufficient grandma,” Rose whispered, “He assures me of this.”

Anna looked at Rose through eyes of wonder. Through her teary eyes, she looked at Rose’s beautiful hair, the hair that would soon fall out. Yet she felt peace. And she remembered the words that she was taught as a child. *Not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my heavenly father*, Anna thought. Not a hair. ❖

Trisha is a short story contest winner from South Holland Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois.

Church Family

Fleeing Sin (2)

by Aaron J. Cleveland

We ended last time with a brief overview of repentance. We saw that repentance involved sorrow for sin, hatred of sin, a loathing of ourselves because of our evil natures, and an acknowledgment of the seriousness of sin. Now we will see from Scripture how the child of God lives continually in repentance.

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continually in repentance.

It is a common misunderstanding to speak of repentance as an activity which takes place only during certain times in the life of the child of God; that the child of God repents only when he has committed a grievous sin. Knowing that repentance is a continuing activity (fleeing from sin and turning to God), it is better to speak of repentance in that manner. While there may be times in the life of the child of God that there is no fleeing from sin, this is not the general rule. God uses means to bring us to repentance and the normal state of the child of God is that he is, throughout his life, growing in repentance.

After reading Psalm 51, which gets to the heart of the matter concerning repentance, we can see the on-

going activity of repentance. David confesses in verse 3, “My sin is ever before me.” This Psalm was written by David after Nathan the prophet came to him and admonished him concerning his sins of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah. These sins were not something that crossed his mind once and were quickly forgotten, rather they burdened his thoughts continually. Elsewhere, in Psalm 25:7, David prays, “Remember not the sins of my youth.” David still grieved over the sins he had committed years ago; not because he doubted that they were forgiven (that would have been unbelief), but because they were sins against a just God and David recognized the abiding evilness of his nature. “Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight” (51:4). David, living a life of repentance, came more and more to loathe himself according to his evil nature.

Another very important truth concerning repentance is learned from Psalm 51. This Psalm clearly teaches that repentance is a work of the Spirit which begins in the “inward parts” (vs. 6). Repentance is not something which is a mere outward act and confession. It is not a mere outward conformity to the law of God. If this were the case, we would not bother ourselves with repentance and we would have no need of the Spirit. The unregenerated man is capable of putting on an outward “show” of repentance. But God looks beyond the actions and the words to the “inward parts”, from which proceeds true repentance.

In verse 7 of Psalm 51 we read of the “purging” and the “washing” performed in the heart of David. It is David’s prayer that this happen. In verse 10 we read, “Create in me a clean heart, O God.” This is the desire of David and God promises to us and certainly performs this operation continually by His Spirit (vs. 11, 12) in us. It is only by this work of the Spirit within us that we are able to walk a godly walk of repentance. This truth also is evident from the Psalm in verses 12-19. When the heart is clean, the “tongue” will sing of God’s “righteousness” (vs. 14). When the heart is clean, “transgressors” will be taught the ways of God (vs. 13). When the heart is clean, there will be a “broken spirit” and a “contrite heart” (vs. 17).

A summary of what we have briefly discussed concerning repentance can be found in verses 16 and 17 of Isaiah 1. In those two verses we read, “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead

for the widow.” Repentance at its heart is a continual ceasing from evil and learning to do well, and this only by the work of Christ in and through us.

Another aspect of repentance which is well worth discussing is the relationship between repentance and close communion with God, fellowship with Him, and walking in the truth. The two go hand-in-hand. It is impossible for one to be living impenitently and having fellowship with God. Likewise, those who are living in covenant fellowship with God will find that they more and more flee from sin and impenitent sinners. Two

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be living impenitently and
having fellowship with God.**

Psalms (as well as others) demonstrate this relationship. It is from the viewpoint of separation from the unrepentant that it is good to read Psalm 26 and Psalm 1.

Before we continue, it is good that we read these two Psalms. They are very comforting concerning the promise of God to those who walk in the truth. They are also very sharp concerning our antithetical walk. It is hard to imagine hearing these Psalms being read by most today in false and departing churches. In times of “tolerance” and “love” and “let’s be nice” theology, these Psalms (as well as others) simply don’t fit into the “nice” category of what people want to hear. Neither do they want to sing these truths any more. Nevertheless, it is good that we take a little closer look at Psalm 26.

Early in the Psalm (vs.2), we see again how this life of separation from sin and impenitent sinners proceeds from the heart. The “heart” and especially the “reins” referred to in verse 2 speak of that which is the most inward part of man. And it is that inner man from which proceeds this kind of life.

In verses 3 of this Psalm, David says, “For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth.” It is clear from this confession of David that he is living in close communion with God. The confession of David in verses 4 and 5 demonstrates how fellowship with God and separation from the ungodly go together. David says, “I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. I have HATED the congregation of evil doers; and I will not sit with the wicked.” And not only will David separate himself from the wicked, but he will “compass” the Lord’s altar (vs.

6). It is also interesting to note from this Psalm that David says a number of times that he desires to be in God's house and among His people. Along with the "compassing of the altar" David confesses that he loves the habitation of God's house (vs. 8) and that in the congregations he will bless the Lord (vs. 12). Not only does he shun the company of God's enemies, but he desires and seeks out the fellowship of God and His people.

John Calvin, in his explanation of verses 4 and 5 of this Psalm, writes,

The words *sitting* and *walking*, denote *sharing in counsel and fellowship in working*, according to what is said in the first Psalm.

Psalm 1 also shows to us the sharp antithesis between delight and meditation on the law of the Lord and keeping the society of the wicked. First, after reading this Psalm it is evident that one will not be found delighting and meditating on the law of God and at the same time "fellowshipping" with the ungodly. Secondly, this Psalm shows us the two distinctly different outcomes of both activities. There is a reward for the man who delights in the law of the Lord. Similarly, there is a reward for the man who delights himself among the ungodly. The "ungodly" are like the "chaff which the wind driveth away." They shall "perish." The blessed man is like a tree planted by a river which brings forth fruit in season. He is prospered in all he does.

John Calvin, commenting on this Psalm, points out that one cannot apply himself to the meditation of God's

law, "who has not separated himself from the society of the ungodly." How true this is. When we are immersed in the pleasures of this world, sometimes the farthest thing from our mind is God and His law. This becomes

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all the more true when we are involved in the pleasures of this world with those who hate God, for they design their pleasures so that they might put all thoughts of God out of their minds.

Finally, it is important to notice the progression of intimacy with the ungodly, pointed out in verse 1 of Psalm 1. First one "walks." Then he "stands." At last, he "sits." As one becomes more ensnared as he associates with the wicked, he is drawn closer into the bosom of the world and farther from the fellowship of God. This the Psalm warns against. "Blessed is the man" that delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on the Word.

Next time, Lord willing, we will look further at our calling to separate from those who are living in sin. ❖

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

Letter to the Editor

A Barren Womb—A Reader Responds

by Arlis Hoekstra

To: Beacon Lights

Concerning the "Gem of the Month"—"A Barren Womb." To the women who wrote this, I have felt your pain and sense of loss. I was "infertile" as they say. It's hard to explain the loss that is involved with this, the anger, the depression, the feeling that everyone around you is going to have a baby except you! Especially hard was Christmas and Mother's Day, days when you just felt like you wanted to just die,

for who could understand? Not your friends with 3 or 4 children, although they'd try their best to.

After much prayer and thought, we found that God led us to adopt. We had been married for five years at this time, and we wondered if that child would ever be in our arms. Then, God in His infinite wisdom and mercy answered our prayer. On November 2, our baby boy was placed in our arms, and also in June of 1991 a little girl became a part of our family! We were truly blessed!

But, God wasn't "finished"—so to speak with us. In March of 1993, we found it to be true that we would have a biological child! It was a prayer that had been answered not in our time, but in God's time. The comment that you hear people say then is "just adopt, that's all it took, happens almost all the time." This is so false! It only happens in less than 5% of couples that adopt and there are *many* couples that do adopt, either through an organization, private or state.

Now, it's 1999, and we are blessed and over-joyed to find out that in March of 2000, we will have a baby—the Lord willing—"healthy."

So this is to all the infertile couples. God is listening. He *does* hear your prayers and see all those tears that are shed. There is a blessing from such a trial. It's hard to see with a human eye, but going through infertility, you become more aware of the needs of people around you, not just your own.

For all the couples that are going through this, our prayers are with you. You are not alone. A type of support would be an infertility support group, or a group in a church where there are couples that could meet, talk out the frustrations, anger, and all the other emotions that go with this. We feel it would be a good idea for preachers to get more educated on this matter. It's very important that they can also be of support and guidance for couples going through this.

There's so much more we can say about this, perhaps later. For now, may God bless all the couples out there who are going through this. Be patient, for your prayers will be answered.

Thank you. ❖

Arlis is a member of Doon Protestant Reformed Church in Doon, Iowa. She is the mother of 3, the 4th will follow, the Lord willing, in March.

Heavenly Mansions

Thelma Westra

*h Father's heav'nly home
Are many mansions bright;
He has prepared these for His own
Who in His ways delight.
While in this vale of tears
We grief and sorrow know,
Our pathway's strewn with rocks and thorns
And many a deadly foe.*

*This world is not our home:
We're pilgrims trav'ling here.
This life equips us for our place
Somewhere beyond this sphere.
And so we must prepare
Before we reach that land;
Our hearts and minds must follow Him
Who has this journey planned.*

*The riches here below
Will never satisfy:
They can't compare with blessedness
Awaiting us on high.
The pleasures of this world
Are empty, gaunt, and bare,
While purest joy and ecstasy
Await us over there!*



The Song of Zion

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

by Skip Hunter

January 1 Read Psalm 119:25-32

Psalm 119:25-26 Today is the beginning of the year 2000. How many of us thought that we would see this day? Now that we are here, what must we do? We must do what we have been called to do all the days of our lives. We must glorify our covenant God with our whole being. The verses for today speak of someone who is distressed. They are a prayer of that person. It is a prayer of confidence that God will hear his request and will answer Him according to the promises of the Bible. As we face the year 2000, let us pray to God no matter what our condition in this life. Let us ask Him to keep His promises knowing that He will bring them to pass. We can have the assurance that He will answer us and give to us according to His Word. Sing Psalter 324:1.

January 2 Read I Samuel 20:1-10

Psalm 119:27-28 David certainly knew what it meant to be oppressed by the wicked. He had done all he could for Saul and still Saul wanted to kill him. In the weakness of his sins, he cries to Jonathan, "What have I done?" We, too, can be oppressed by those about us. We, too, can cry in despair that we are all alone. But we must know that God will help us and "that right early." He helps us by the way of His Word. It must be our prayer that God will open to us His Word so that we can see the way that He has ordained for us in this life. As we worshipped today, was this our desire? Did we drink from the fountain of life eagerly? After drinking did we talk of the wonderful works that God had done for us? Let this be our goal in this week, in this month, and in this new year. Sing Psalter 324:2.

January 3 Read Proverbs 30:7-14

Psalm 119:29-30 Children, do you lie to your parents, teachers, and friends? David knew of this sin. He was no different than we are and was guilty of lying. Children, you must do as David did and ask God to remove this sin from your lives. Sometimes it seems that the easiest and the best way out of a situation is to lie. Then our parents and teachers will not get angry with us, we will escape punishment, and peace will be restored. Or will it? Do you have peace in your souls when you cover your faults with lying? God will not give you that peace. He will prick your conscience and cause you no peace. Young people, these verses are meant for you as well. You cannot live lives of untruthfulness and expect to find peace with God. You cannot make a confession of faith, and then live a life that shows that you really do not mean what you said before the consistory and the congregation. Parents, you must help your children and young people in this matter. You cannot help them cover up their sins by lying with them

or for them. God is not mocked. He gives no peace to those who walk continually in sin. Sing Psalter 324:3.

January 4 Read Psalm 119:25-32

Psalm 119:31-32 Can we say that we have "stuck" on God's commandments? Have we always run in the way of the commandments? This was the psalmist's confession in these two verses. These are powerful statements. Are we convinced enough of our position to make them? Are we willing to make them and then suffer the consequences because of making such confessions? Many make New Years "resolutions". Many of those are broken soon after they are made. But what about our confessions of faith? Do we hold to them? Are we stuck on them? Let us pray that God will enlarge our hearts in the way of our walking holily in His commandments. Sing Psalters 324:4.

January 5 Read Psalm 119:33-40

Psalm 119:33-34 Notice the construction of these two verses. The first statement of each is imperative, that is it is a command. "Teach me..." and "Give me..." Do we pray this daily? Do we want God to teach us His Word? Sometimes His school is not run the way that we might think it should go. Do we still pray, "Teach us, O Lord"? The second part of each stanza is declarative. It states what the psalmist will do. He is not making a deal with God. He knows that the only way he can keep God's law is that he be taught how to do it by the supreme teacher. He knows that of himself that he cannot keep the law with even part of his heart. He must have God's help. Are these our prayers and desires? Let them be and we will enjoy the favor of God. Sing Psalter 325:1.

January 6 Read Luke 12:13-21

Psalm 119:35-36 In each verse of this section of this most beautiful Psalm, we see that the psalmist is concerned with his inner life. Here, he wishes to have the sin of covetousness removed from him. He knows that he is prone by nature to want to break every commandment of God in thought, word, and in deed. He knows that he does not want to keep any of God's commandments by nature. Therefore he asks God to help him to go in the path of the commandments so that he can delight in them. People of God, is this our desire? Do we really want to walk in the law of God? Young people, do you really want to flee sin, or do you want to do that which you consider fun? Meditate upon these two verses before you make your decisions. Sing Psalter 325:2.

January 7 Read James 1:19-27

Psalm 119:37-38 Solomon in his book Ecclesiastes proclaims often, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." This is not hard for us to see as we look at the world around us.

How much of advertising is based on the vanity of man? How many of our purchases have vanity as their root? The child of God must daily fight against this sin. He must work hard at escaping its clutches. We must ignore advertising. We must help our children and young people to do so as well. How many advertising jingles do they know? How many Psalter numbers do they know as well as they know those jingles? Let us pray for the help we need at overcoming vanity and letting our lives be ruled by a love for God's Word. In doing this we can be assured that we will walk in His ways and with His approval. Sing Psalter 325:3.

January 8 Read Psalm 119:33-40

Psalm 119:39-40 People of God, do you long after God's precepts? Are you showing this by your use of today in readying yourself for tomorrow? If we properly prepare for the Sabbath, we can be assured that we will enjoy the benefits of a properly used Sabbath. When we do this, we will partake of God's good Word. Then we will be able to confess that His judgments are good. Oh, we may face reproach because of our stand. The world may laugh at us for preparing for Sunday. Christ was laughed at and mocked as well. Whose approval do we wish? Christ's or the world's? Sing Psalter 325:4.

January 9 Read Psalm 119:41-48

Psalm 119:41-42 These two verses are a continuation of the thought started in yesterday's section. The psalmist has been bothered by someone who has been bringing blame upon him. The psalmist knows that his salvation from such reproach cannot be found in himself. He knows that salvation is from the Lord. This must be our conviction as we enter God's house today. We do not go there out of mere custom or habit, but rather we know that we are drawn there by the irresistible grace of God. In trusting in God's Word, we know that we will be able to stand up for our faith. Let us have this confidence and let us pray for God's grace in this matter. Sing Psalter 326:1.

January 10 Read 2 Chronicles 34:14-21

Psalm 119:43-44 Is the Word of God's truth in our mouths continually? Do those around us know this? Young people, do your friends know who you are? Can they tell it from your speech and from the songs that you sing? Adults, when you are at work, do those in the work place know who you are? Do your words betray you, even as Peter's speech betrayed him? This is a must for the child of God. There must be no doubt in anyone's mind who we are. We must be Reformed in our speech. All those who come into contact with us must have no doubt of our faith. Sing Psalter 326:2.

January 11 Read Acts 25:10-21

Psalm 119:45-46 Are you ready to defend and explain your faith before men—any kind of men? Saints in both the Old and New Dispensations have even stood before kings and confessed that God was God. Could we do that? In order to do this, first of all we must have knowledge of God. We must explore the Scriptures in order to know them. Secondly we need to pray for help from the Spirit to stand before anyone and confess our faith in Christ. He has promised to be with us. Finally we must do this and not be ashamed. This may be the hardest of all. Sometimes compromising our principles to save embarrassment is the easy course for us to take. Because we walk in the liberty of God, we can and must proclaim His Word before anyone. Let us do that today and every day. Sing Psalter 326:3.

January 12 Read Psalm 119:41-48

Psalm 119:47-48 In the first part of this section, the psalmist prays for help as he must face those who reproach him. In our exploration of these verses we noted that we, too, are reproached by those who hate God and His commandments. Then we progressed to see that we must defend our faith before all kinds of men. In these last two verses we see that because we feel God's approval upon our confessing His name, we feel delight in that word. Is this our experience? Are we moved to pray about such things? Do we pray these prayers, privately, with our families, or publicly? God's Word must be a delight to us. Therefore we must be constantly found studying and using it. Let us make this our prayer for today. Sing Psalter 326:4.

January 13 Read Psalm 119:49-56

Psalm 119:49-50 God's people are a people of affliction. This could be the afflictions that they bring on themselves because of sin. It could also be the afflictions of sickness or old age. Whatever the cause, we have this comfort. God's Word will help us. Is this your experience people of God? If it is not, is it because we do not spend enough time with our Bibles? If a doctor prescribes some medicine that will help us, will we not take it? God's medicine is His Word. Should not we take the recommended daily dosage? That Word has hope for our spiritual health, but we must use it daily. We must use it often each day. Find the comfort for every affliction in the Word of God. Sing Psalter 327:1.

January 14 Read Jeremiah 15:15-21

Psalm 119:51-52 Jeremiah was a man who knew affliction. If you read the two books of the Bible that he wrote, you can come to no other conclusion. But these books are in the canon of holy Scripture for more than the recounting of a single man's afflictions. These books are to help us see the way to salvation as well as to provide for us comfort in our afflictions. By immersing ourselves in Scripture, we can be afforded great comfort. By looking back at the judgments of God ordained for those who afflicted His people, we can gain great comfort. Let us strengthen ourselves in our afflictions and seek the God of all comfort. Sing Psalter 327:2.

January 15 Read Acts 16:19-26

Psalm 119:53-54 Yesterday we saw that Jeremiah knew affliction. Today we look at the life of another of God's servants who definitely knew affliction. Paul was mocked, scorned, ridiculed, and physically harmed. And that was by his own countrymen! Then when he went to do mission work he faced more of the same at the hands of the heathen. What was his response? While lying in a prison, in the worst possible cell, beaten and bruised, he and his companion break into song. Not into the songs of the world but into the songs of the very God for whom they were suffering affliction. What about us? Are we willing to face some affliction for our faith? What kind of songs are heard in our office? What are we humming as we walk down the halls of school? What music emanates from our dorm rooms? With what music do we face affliction? How about it people of God, can we obey like Jeremiah and Paul? Sing Psalter 327:3.

January 16 Read Psalm 119:49-56

Psalm 119:55-56 Do we remember God's name in the night? What about your Friday or Saturday nights' activities, young people? Do you remember God's name as you were out with your

friend or friends? Did you hallow that name? Did you wear it proudly on your chest as you wear other names? Did those who saw you know that you were a Christian? What about it parents? What were you doing the last two nights? Were you examples for your children? Did you do things that you hoped they did not hear about? What about God's precepts, people of God? How were we in keeping them? We go to church this morning and evening. Are we assured of God's blessing as we sit under the proclamation of His name? If we are not, let us seek forgiveness of our sins, and seek to walk a new holy life. Let us remember God's name in the night and feel His blessed assurance during the day. Sing Psalter 327:4.

January 17 Read Psalm 119:57-64

Psalm 119:57-58 This section begins with instruction in prayer. We need this instruction. Many in the church world today have reduced prayer to a trite conversation between friends. We must know that we must pray to the almighty God who is the sovereign God. This must direct our attitude in prayer. First of all, we must confess that He is our God. Secondly, we must positively state that we will keep His Word. Thirdly, we must fall upon our knees and ask Him for His grace. Finally, we must seek His mercy. We can do this because He has promised to hear us. He has done this in His Word. By our knowledge of His Word and our confidence in His promises, we can go to Him in prayer and ask what we need in accordance to His will. Let us do this often throughout the day. Sing Psalter 328:1.

January 18 Read Luke 15:11-19

Psalm 119:59-60 What does it take to cause us to ponder Jehovah's ways? Does it take God bringing us into some despair? Must we sit at or in a hospital bed and face disease? Must we face the consequences of our sins to cause us to examine the way of God and see that it is good for us? The psalmist had to do this. The prodigal son had to do this. Sometimes we, too, must be brought into some dire place before we see the way of the Lord. When we see our error, let us hurry and correct our fault. Let us fall upon our knees and ask forgiveness of our heavenly Father who is merciful and full of lovingkindness. The more quickly our feet find the path of righteousness, the more quickly we will find peace for our souls. Sing Psalter 328:2.

January 19 Read Joshua 1:1-9

Psalm 119:61-62 Can you imagine suddenly being put in charge of a large group of people? Can you imagine that this group of people is known to cause trouble? Can you imagine that God Himself would be giving directions about how to carry out your work? This is what Joshua faced. He probably had some sleepless nights for a while after taking over from Moses. But God had given to him the same advice He gives to us. Learn His law, keep His law, and walk in His law. Joshua knew of the rightness of that law. He had experienced it all throughout the wilderness. He knew how to keep it. He was one of the two men who would enter Caanan from the original group of adults who left Egypt. But yet God had to give to him courage. We need the same assurance. We have the same assurance. People of God, read His Word, study His Word, and live His Word. By doing this we can give thanks unto Him no matter what hour of the day or night that it is. Sing Psalter 328:3.

January 20 Read Psalm 119:57-64

Psalm 119:63-64 Young people, who are your friends? Who do you hang around with? Can you make the same statement as the psalmist in the first of these two verses? Do your friends fear God and keep His precepts? Your answer cannot be "some of the time," or "kinda," or any other vague answer that we may give our parents when they ask this question. Parents, what about you? Do you serve as good examples for your children? Do you say in this matter do as I say and not as I do? Who do you spend your time with socially? The people of God need to associate with each other often. Of course this does not mean that we become isolationists in our lives, but rather that we seek those who love God to be our friends. This will be good for the church and serve to glorify God. We also will have marriages that please Him. Sing Psalter 328:4.

January 21 Read Psalm 119:65-72

Psalm 119:65-66 The confession in verse 65 needs much thought by us. Are we always ready to say such a thing? Do we consider that God has dealt well with us as we sit with family members in the hospital or at the funeral home? Is this our confession when things do not seem to be going so well financially? Notice the last part of the verse. God deals well with us even as He has stated in His Word. Do we know what His Word is for us? Do we seek to find out what that Word is? If we need help here, verse 66 will help us. Our prayer is that God will teach us what is in His Word concerning his commandments for us. Let us make the confession and let us live the life the asks God for help in understanding His commandments. Sing Psalter 329:1.

January 22 Read II Chronicles 33:9-20

Psalm 119:67-68 Manasseh's long reign is a reign of contrasts. From our point of view we can see God carrying out His counsel in this king's life. First he lives a life of sin. As chastisement for that sin God causes him to go into cruel captivity. Then by the operation of the Holy Spirit, God gives to Manasseh the need for repentance. By God's grace he repents of his sin and is restored to his throne. We truly see that affliction was for Manasseh's profit. Do we examine our lives when we are in affliction? Do we examine them in the light of God's revelation to us, His Word? We need to do this all of the time of course, but we need to spend extra time when we are in affliction. God is speaking; will we listen and answer? Will we confess that God is good even when we walk in the way of affliction? Sing Psalter 329:2.

January 23 Read Luke 12:13-21

Psalm 119:69-70 In these two verses we have a construction known as antithetical parallelism. This is a Hebrew poetical device used to illustrate a truth. The opposites illustrated in these verses are the proud and those who love God and His law. In the immediate context the proud is someone who hates God and claims all glory for himself. This is also illustrated by today's reading. But we, the people of God, also fall into this sin. We sometimes are proud and claim glory for ourselves. Sometimes we even want to claim part of the glory for our salvation. We must fight this sin daily. How? We do this by taking heed to God's law and delighting in it. Then we will be able to fight the sin of pride and give all glory to God. Sing Psalter 329:3.

January 24 Read Psalm 119:65-72

Psalm 119:71-72 Are we willing to say what is said in verse 72? Are we willing to live this? Is worshipping God on Sunday more important than our jobs, our families, our pleasure? If it is, then we will never neglect the means of grace. We will never be found doing business or pleasure on the Sabbath. What about catechism? Do we give our children license to miss catechism so that they can do something for their own pleasure? If we are going to claim that catechism is the means of grace (And yes it is!), then we must accord to it the meaning that it deserves. What about devotions? Do we allow them to be missed or interrupted for any reason? Sometimes we need to be afflicted to learn the truth that God's Word is more precious than any earthly pleasure. Do we get the message? Sing Psalter 329:4.

January 25 Read Psalm 119:73-80

Psalm 119:73-74 Do we confess that God has made us? Now this confession must be more than God is responsible for our bodies and minds. We must confess that He ordained us from eternity in His counsel and has brought us to pass. Then we may pray the prayer that God gave to us the understanding necessary to learn His commandments. But this part of verse 73 has more meaning than it first appears as well. Learning those commandments is more than just being able to recite the Ten Commandments from memory. Someone without understanding can do that. We need to understand those commandments *and* live those commandments. It must be evident from those around us that God has fashioned us and has given to us hearts that love Him. If others cannot see our faith something is wrong. All must know that we hope in the promises of God's Word. This is not the hope of the world, but rather the hope which depends on the faith of Hebrews 11. Sing Psalter 330:1.

January 26 Read II Corinthians 12:1-10

Psalm 119:75-76 The apostle Paul had some grievous affliction laid upon him by God. There are many theories about what this affliction might be. Scripture never tells us what it is, and therefore we must be content with that. But Scripture does tell us that God gave His grace to Paul to help him bear that affliction. God tells him that His grace was sufficient for him. This is the message that the Psalmist has for us in today's verses. We will be comforted by God's merciful kindness. What else do we need in times of affliction. Let us search the Word daily and find the comfort that God has for us in any affliction. His loving kindnesses are good. Let us be comforted in the fact that God is a loving God and doeth all things well for His people. Sing Psalter 330:2.

January 27 Read Ezra 7:1-10

Psalm 119:77-78 People of God, is the law your delight? Are we like Ezra who pondered the Word of God even in a foreign land. Are we like Ezra who loved that Word so well that he saw that the message for him was to return and help to build Jerusalem. Do we make time each day to delve into the Bible and read, "Thus saith the Lord?" This must not be the quick-a-minute devotions that pretend to do lip service to God. This must be time spent in the serious search of the Scriptures. This must be done throughout the day. We must both begin and end the day using God's Word. By doing this and having delight in that Word, we will be able to hear Him speak and to say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Let us make this our resolve day by day. Let us delight in God's law and find rest for our souls. Sing Psalter 330:3.

January 28 Read Psalm 119:73-80

Psalm 119:79-80 Yesterday we spoke of searching the Scriptures to see what God has to say to us in them. In verse 89 the psalmist speaks of soundness in our searching. We must not read into the Scriptures what we would like them to say. We must not let some ungodly doctrine dictate how we search the Scriptures. Many do that, you know. They want God to love all men, and so they make Scripture say that God loves all men even when that is the farthest thing from the truth. By being sound in our study of God's Word, we will truly find the comfort that they afford unto us. We will find comfort from our afflictions. Studying God's Word in any other way will not be pleasing unto Him. Sing Psalter 330:4.

January 29 Read Psalm 119:81-88

Psalm 119:81-82 These two verses seem like the cry of one of two kinds of people. It seems to be either the cry of someone who has been held captive either by an enemy or by an affliction. Or it seems to be of an elderly person waiting for deliverance to his heavenly home. It really does not matter what the situation is because the feeling is the same. Each of us should have this feeling as we wait for God to deliver us from this earth and its sins. We wait to see the salvation of God. In our own strength we faint, but God's Word gives to us hope that is not ashamed. We read God's Word so long that our eyes become tired, and we cry out for comfort. Let us search God's Word daily seeking the comfort that it truly affords, and let us pray daily to the God of our salvation. Sing Psalter 331:1.

January 30 Read Job 30:24-31

Psalm 119:83-84 We find more about the psalmist's plight in these two verses. He is oppressed by someone that is persecuting him. This persecution seems to be on account of his faith. Is this our experience, people of God? Have we suffered persecution, real persecution, because of our faith? Have we been battered so much that we, like Job, felt we had no where to turn and all around us were miserable comforters? In such afflictions have we been faithful to God? Can we truly say that we have not forgotten His law? Or have we put that Word away because it convicted us in our sins? We can only pray the prayer of verse 84 when we have been living a life that expects a positive answer from God. God does not reward us because of right living; He rewards us in the way of right living. Sing Psalter 332:2.

January 31 Read Acts 23:1-11

Psalm 119:85-86 The psalmist continues in his cries for help in his afflictions. For today's reading we turned to some of the afflictions of the apostle Paul. Paul was afflicted often. Sometimes it was afflictions by the heathen. Sometimes it was afflictions of life, such as shipwreck. And sometimes, and this was probably the worst of all, he was afflicted by those who called themselves the church. Sometimes the people of God feel this affliction by those who choose to change Scripture's message. They look at us in righteous indignation when we say that God has elected some and damned others. They scorn us for such thoughts even though those thoughts have plenty of basis in the Bible. We must bow in prayer to God asking Him to sustain us even as we hold to His truths. Parents, help your young people in these things. They need to know the truth and they need to know how to defend that truth. You must provide for them examples and guidance. Sing Psalter 332:3.

Psalter 229—Days in the Sanctuary

by Beth DeVries

Oh, how I long to dwell in the Lord's house! This is the theme of David in this Psalter versification of Psalm 84. We are reminded of how glorious it is to dwell with God. God cares for His own and protects them. We also reflect on the great joy and blessings that are found when relying on God.

David begins by speaking of the tabernacles and courts of God. We know in the Old Testament that was where God dwelt with His people. David appears at this time in his life to be unable to visit the tabernacle of God. David longs, even faints to see the courts of God. Do we ever long to attend Church? We have been blessed with the ability to worship God unhindered and I fear that we take this for granted. We have a great privilege to hear God's word preached to us.

David emphasizes the idea of the preciousness of being in the house of God again in stanza five. Here David expresses that a day in God's courts is better than a thousand in the tents of

wickedness. That makes us think about how much we often enjoy our sins and dwelling in the tents of wickedness. Many times we feel it is a chore to attend church or Bible study. Here David reminds us of how important the time in God's house is to our spiritual life. We remember that it is our spiritual life that really matters and not our earthly life. David speaks of this in a time of absence from the house of God. May we not require an absence from God to appreciate what He has given to us.

The Lord takes care of the birds, how much more will He take care of us. The sparrow is mentioned as finding a place of rest as well as the swallow a place to build a nest. God cares for all the creatures of His creation. We learn of this care of God for His people in other passages of Scripture such as Matthew 6:28-30 "And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not,

229 Days in the Sanctuary
 PSALM 84 L. M. HILLIARDSON Joseph Barnby

1. How love-ly, Lord of Hosts, to me The tab-er-
 2. The spar-row has her place of rest; The swal-low,
 3. Hest they who in Thy house a-bide, They still re-
 4. Ad-van-cing still from strength to strength, They on-ward
 5. Up-on an un-look'd O God, our shield, The face of
 6. Je-ho-vah, God our Shield and Son, Will grace and

na-dies of Thy grace; O how I long, yea, faint to see
 thro' Thy kind-ly care, Has found where she may build her nest
 These shall ren-der praise; Bless them who in Thy strength con-fide,
 go where saints have trod, Till ev'-ry one ap-pears at length
 Thy a-maz-ing deed; A thousand oth-er days can yield
 glo-ry sars-ly give; No good will He with-hold from one

Thy hal-low'd courts, Thy dwell-ing-place; For Thee my
 And brood her young in safe-ty there; Thy al-tars
 And in whose hearth are Zi-on's ways; Thy pass-ing
 In Zi-on's courts be-fore his God; Je-ho-vah,
 No glad-ness like one day with Thee; That on-ly
 Who in His sight shall right-ly live; O Lord of

heart and spir-it sigh, For Thee, O liv-ing God, I cry,
 as my rest I sing, O Lord of Hosts, my God, my King,
 thro' the vale of tears, Like springs of joy Thy grace ap-ports,
 God of Hosts, give ear, Our la-tent' God, in mer-cy hear,
 at Thy door I wait, No torts of sin give joy so great,
 Hosts, most best in be Who puts his stead-fast trust in Thee.

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neither do they spin; And yet I say unto you, That Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" We can live in the confidence that God will provide all that we need, not all that we want.

In the third stanza, we see David returning to the idea of abiding in the house of God. God blesses those who abide in His house and trust in Him. David speaks of giving praise to God, which we know to be one of the ways to abide in God's house. We attend church as a part of our thankfulness to God and to praise His name.

God's people have His ways in their hearts and trust in Him. God provides the grace that is necessary for all of our difficulties and struggles. This becomes the strength of God's people. We know that this grace upholds us and keeps us in His care. Grace, worked in us

by the Spirit of God, gives us strength to continue onward in our journey. We know that many in the history of the church have fought battles and suffered tribulations through which God has sustained them. He will also sustain us. This stanza continues on to speak of the gathering of the elect in Zion's gates. What a glorious day that shall be!

This Psalter versification closes by reminding us that God will be our shield. That God will give His grace and glory to His people. We are also reminded to live a Godly life as an act of thanksgiving to God for His gift of grace. "O Lord of Hosts, most blest is he who puts his steadfast trust in Thee." ❖

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

Where We Stand

How Did the Fall Affect Creation?

by Rev. Ron Hanko

Reprinted from the CPRCNI newsletter.

Our question for this issue takes us back to the beginning: "In what way did the fall of the human race affect the animal kingdom and the plant kingdom?"

This question is important because it gets at one of the problems with evolutionary theory. Evolutionism has no explanation of the fact that there is death, decay, thorns, weeds, suffering, and waste in the creation, except to say that they were always there.

That these things are still around is a problem first for secular evolutionists. It contradicts the idea that there is gradual, positive development in the creation.

Indeed, in spite of men's bright hopes of conquering death and disease, the situation grows worse. They

find a cure for one disease only to have many other new diseases develop (AIDS, C.J.D., etc.). They eradicate one, smallpox (the only disease they can claim to have eradicated) only to be faced with a host of others. Not only that, but their cures often prove worse than the diseases, and new forms of the diseases develop that are resistant to their cures. So they get farther and farther behind in the battle.

But what poses a problem for secular evolutionists is a far greater problem for so-called theistic evolutionists - those who try to find a compromise between Scripture and evolution. These teach that God created the world, but many millions of years ago, and that the creation, including people, animals and plants, have evolved since then.

These people (God judges their hearts), are also teaching, whether they like it or no, that disease, death, waste and weeds have always been part of the creation. They cannot avoid that conclusion. Yet, that is to say that God did not create all things very good.

So too, their inability to explain the presence of these ills is part of their denial of the fall and the coming of sin. Evolutionism has NO explanation of sin, and consequently no need of Christ and His atoning work.

Believing what the Bible teaches, that God created the world in six days about six thousand years ago, we believe that all these things are the result of the fall. The creation as God made it was perfect (Gen. 1:31). Sickness, pain, death, killing, weeds, thorns, waste, came into the animal and plant kingdoms as well as into the life of man.

As difficult as it might be for us to imagine a creation where there were no “thorns and thistles” (Gen. 3:18), no sickness, death, decay, or waste, it is nevertheless the clear teaching of Scripture that it was so before the fall. All these came in with the fall.

Paul teaches this in Romans 8:19-22. Here the creation is pictured as a living thing and groaning. It groans

because it is subject to vanity and corruption, but it is subject to these things “not willingly,” that is, not by its own willful disobedience. Rather, as we learn from Genesis 3:17-19, this is all the result of man’s sin and God’s curse.

It was so, because man was the king of creation under God (Gen. 1:27, 28). Because he held dominion over the whole earthly creation, his fall affected the creation as well as himself. He dragged it down with himself.

Certainly we may learn from this the exceeding sinfulness of sin. So great is our sin in Adam that it has affected not only ourselves but the rest of creation as well! How then shall we be saved except through the mercy of God?

It also reminds of the glory of the new creation, for “the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom. 8:21). How great, then, will be that glory! ❖

Rev. Hanko is the missionary/pastor of Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland.

Church History

Early Church History— The Apologists (3)

by Rev. John A. Heys

JUSTIN MARTYR — One of the first of the Apologists worth considering was Justin Martyr. It would be more proper to call him, “Justin, The Martyr.” His last name was not Martyr. The word “martyr” was added to his name because he died as a martyr.

Justin was born between the years 114 and 165 A.D. Some historians give the former date while others favor the latter. He was born in Schechem, a city in Samaria

and called himself a Samaritan. Here too, historians cannot agree, and some claim that both his father and grandfather were either Roman or Greek.

He was born in heathendom and brought up in all the heathen customs of that day. As a young man he became interested in philosophy and studied it diligently. However the heathen philosophies of that day did not satisfy him, as is plain from the fact that he accepted successively Stoicism, Aristotelianism, Pythagoreanism

and Platonism. His rejection of the one and seeking of the other was due to the fact that they did not satisfy him. They did not answer all the questions that rose in his mind. Not until he was converted and embraced the Christian faith did he find the truth, and then he devoted his life to teaching what he called, "The True Philosophy," namely, the Christian faith. Of it he states that the Hebrew prophets were "men more ancient than all those who are esteemed philosophers. They glorified the Creator, the God and Father of all things, and proclaimed His Son the Christ." He also stated of the Christian faith, "I found this philosophy alone to be safe and profitable." Even after his conversion, he still considered himself to be a philosopher.

Whether God used him as a believer or as an unbeliever, it is plain that he did make a notable defense of the Christian faith in the midst of a world of opposition and persecution.

There are those who maintain that Justin was not really converted and that he simply had a historical and not a saving faith. It is claimed that he remained a heathen philosopher whose philosophy was influenced by the Christian faith. There are indeed many things about him which would cause one to question his conversion and faith. It is not an easy thing to determine whether he should be considered to be a Christian convert or not. Consider only the fact that he rarely spoke of the forgiveness of sins, and when he does, he gives it a very subordinate place. On the other hand he places much emphasis upon the fact that Christianity was the oldest, truest and most divine of all philosophies. He did not condemn all the heathen philosophies as godless and anti-Christian. He simply raised the Christian faith above them all as the safest and most profitable.

From his writings it is plain that he never let go entirely of his philosophical ideas. He surely did not accept or understand all the truth of Scripture as they were known in his day. Yet at the same time it cannot be denied that his teachings show a development of doctrine.

From him we learn one of the clearest conceptions of the doctrine of the Trinity that was taught up till that time. He maintained the generation of the Son by the Father and that the Father and Son were two distinct persons though they dwelt in one divine essence. He likewise taught that Father, Son and Spirit must be the object of our worship.

Justin also believed in the incarnation, that is, the coming of the Son of God into our flesh. He proved from the Old Testament Scriptures that Christ is the Son of God. In defense of Christianity that it is the "True Philosophy," he maintained that the philosopher Plato learned many things from Moses. However, in this connection, it may also be stated that he considered Plato and all the heathen philosophers to be Christians in as far as they obeyed Christ's teachings. What he meant by obeying Christ's teachings was, of course, not the spirit of the law but the letter and simply that their teachings in some ways resembled those of Christ.

Whether we must consider him to be a true Christian convert or not, he certainly can be classed as an apologist. Whether God used him as a believer or as an unbeliever, it is plain that he did make a notable defense of the Christian faith in the midst of a world of opposition and persecution.

In his "Apology" he strove to prove to the Emperor that the terrible persecution being inflicted upon the Christians was an injustice. They, he claimed in this "Apology," were the representatives of the "true philosophy" and were the true worshippers of God.

How right he was on this score! The Greek world was steeped in immorality, in fact immorality was taught to be virtue. In contrast to this immorality among those who were not Christians, the Christians were a different people, the immoral go free and are allowed to persecute a people with such a perfect set of morals and moral principles. In this way he strove to prove his point that Christianity is the true philosophy and has an equal right to exist with the inferior philosophies that are permitted and encouraged. ❖

The late Rev. Heys was a minister in the Protestant Reformed Churches from 1941 to 1980.

The St. Wilfrid's Chapel

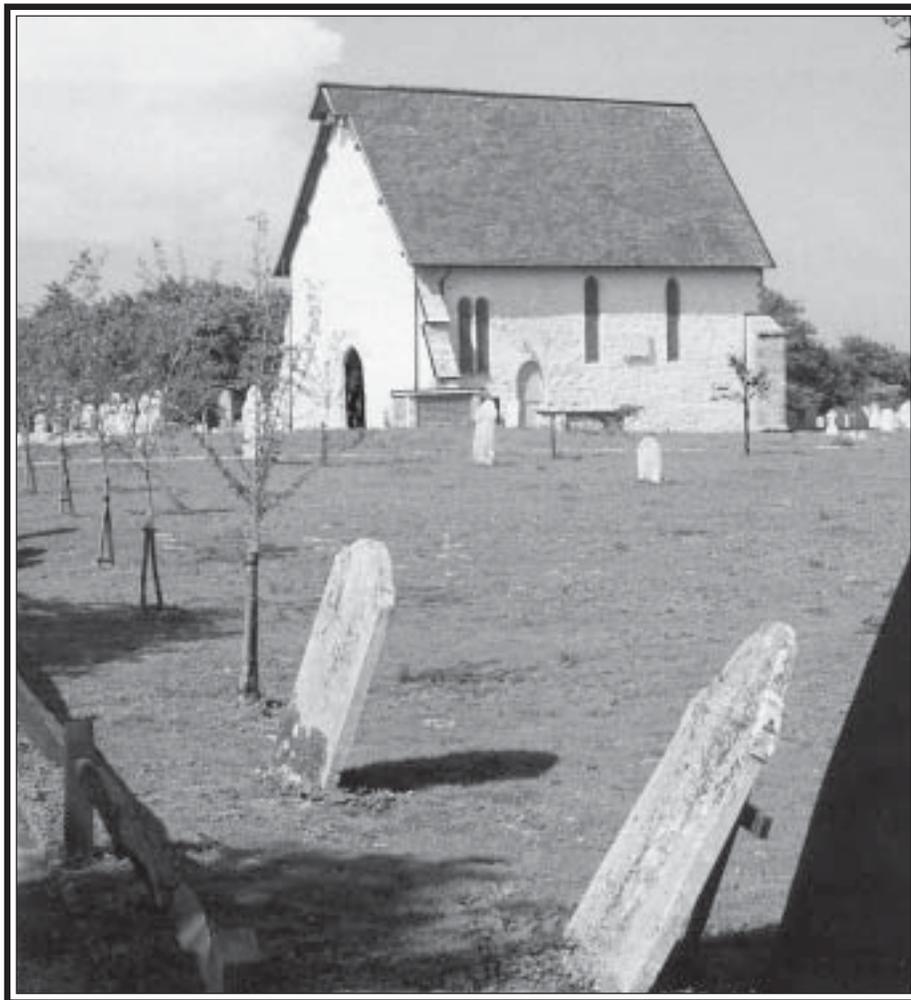
by J.P. deKlerk

A part of the British Isles, called England, was in fact founded by the Roman Julius Caesar in 55 BC. But in 43 AC emperor Claudius came with a big army and took possession of the land. The Romans remained there till the year 400. The first Christians entered England probably in 177.

The missionary Wilfrid (634-709) later became famous. This chapel is named after him. Because of a con-

flict this chapel is only half of the original building. In 1864 part of the congregation dismantled the chancel stone by stone and rebuilt it two miles further on. The chapel was restored in 1917. ❖

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



The St. Wilfrid's Chapel in Selsey, South England.

The Philippines: A Layman's Perspective (1)

by Nicholas Kleyn

Introduction:

The Foreign Mission committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches sent a delegation of Rev. Rodney Miersma and Rev. Daniel Kleyn to the Philippines for two weeks in October 1999. I had the privilege of “tagging” along for one week of this trip to see the land and the people that the PRC has contact with in Daet and Manila. It was a culture shock for me to go to a foreign country like this and gave me the opportunity to meet people from a foreign county who have the same beliefs as we do.

Tuesday October 5 – Wednesday October 6

I left Grand Rapids Tuesday morning and met Rev. Kleyn and Rev. Miersma in Minneapolis. We then flew to Japan (12 hours) and then flew down to Manila (4 hours) and lost a day crossing the International Date Line. We arrived in Manila Wednesday night at 10:30 PM. Went through customs, which went well, except right away you knew you were in a different country when you see a sign, “Drug traffickers will be subject to the death penalty.” We caught a taxi and went to the Shalom Center (hotel) and slept.

Thursday October 7

We awoke and had a rice breakfast and other interesting food at the hotel. We soon found out that Filipinos have rice with breakfast, lunch and supper. We did not have anyone to meet till late afternoon so we ventured out into the streets of Manila. We saw sites and smells that were very interesting and make me thankful for the things we have in America that we take for granted. We saw the make-shift huts and shelters that people live in. Everywhere we went there was dirt and trash. Streets were not well kept, and had lots of potholes and traffic lights that did not work. We walked down to the ocean and saw how it was full of trash

washed up onto the shore. People were living on top of this trash in their boats. There were people who were sleeping on the sides of the footpaths.

We exchanged some money as well. For \$100 US you get 4,000 Peso. The minimum wage per day is 200 Peso or \$5 US. But we could buy a pretty good meal for around 40 Peso or \$1 US.



Selling fresh fish in the streets.

We then visited a mall. It was pretty nice to get out of the hot, humid, tropical weather. We never did know what the temperature was except that it was hot. The mall was a lot like our malls and here we could see there is a rich element in the Filipino society.

We then went back to hotel and rested. Jet lag was catching up with all of us.

The Filipinos can all speak English. The American military had a presence there till the early 1990's, thus everything is written in English and nearly everyone we

met could speak good English. The hardest part was that their accent was pretty heavy at times, which made it difficult to understand them.

At 4:30 PM we met Rodolfo Sy. We were meant to go with him to a Bible study, to a Berean Group as they call themselves. This did not work out for the group, so instead we met with Rodolfo in our hotel room for three hours. He was a very Reformed man and had an excellent grasp of the truths of the Reformed faith. The ministers discussed many different things with Rodolfo and were impressed with the knowledge that he had. It was encouraging to hear a man from his background have such a knowledge of the truths of Scripture.

Friday October 8

We got up at 4:30 AM and were off to the airport to fly to a city call Naga. The ride in the taxi to the airport took 20 minutes, but during rush hour it could take 3 hours. We flew out of their new Philippine Airlines terminal that had just opened and was quite impressive compared to all the other buildings we had seen so far. We flew to Naga and were met at the airport by Pastor Nelson Carvillo and Pastor Modesto Tanierla. Six of us squeezed into a taxi built for small people and went to a bus terminal. We then caught a bus to Daet. What a ride that was! The driver was unreal: cutting blind corners, passing cars and just pulling over to miss oncoming traffic etc. We stepped out of the bus in Daet (with much relief) and right into a restaurant for lunch. After lunch of sweet and sour pork and rice we squeezed our big bodies into a tricycle, (a small 250cc motor bike with a sidecar on it) and went to a hotel to check in and rest for a few minutes.

At 1:00 PM, Modesto came and took us to his church called Sovereign Grace Baptist. This was quite a unique building with no glass in the windows, pews were small and hard, the lighting was very dim, and everything very plain and simple. It struck me how content they are with simple things and nothing has to be fancy or extravagant. Pastor M. Tanierla (71) lived behind the church

nothing has to be fancy or
extravagant.

with his wife and mother. I think there were also two other families that lived in little huts in front and behind

the church. These huts were very simple and plain compared to what we have in the USA, but they were quite adequate.

A meeting with ministers and elders from about six or seven congregations in the area had been organized by Pastor Percival Tanierla for the afternoon at this church. Pastor P. Tanierla has been instrumental in teaching the men with whom we met the Reformed truths. The idea of the discussion was to talk about different doctrines that they struggled with, about their churches and how they were affiliated with each other, and about the PRC and our beliefs and purposes in visiting these



Singing was accompanied by guitar.

churches. The men started arriving around 1:30 PM. We met these men as they arrived and were able to talk to them and get to know them a little. We were then introduced to the group of men that had gathered, around 12-15 men. The session was opened in prayer and we sang a few hymns with a guitar as accompaniment. A circle was formed and discussion started and lasted for around five hours. It was a very lively discussion. Some of the questions were as follows: What does the PRC want to do in the Philippines? When are we coming? What type of gospel are you going to preach when you come? They got into discussions on dispensationalism, covenant, doctrines of sovereign grace etc., and Rev. Miersma and Rev. Kleyn were in the hot seat. One question after another, and well-thought-out questions with Scripture to support their questions, were asked. They both did an excellent job of answering the questions. It was interesting to see these Filipino ministers asking questions and discussing things. They get really excited when they are making a point and it is interesting how they express themselves. Rev. Kleyn said that he felt

like he was in front of synod again for his examination into the ministry. These men were very receptive to the answers given by the two ministers and were very open to learn more truths of the Reformed faith. It sure was a blessing to see these Filipino men get excited about new biblical truths they were learning.

It sure was a blessing to see these Filipino men get excited about new biblical truths they were learning.

After the discussion ended, Rev. Miersma and Rev. Kleyn went back to the hotel to prepare for Saturday's lectures, and I think as well to recover and relax after a very busy day. I had the opportunity to go with three men to visit in their homes. Dante Almoguera, Elmer Barrameda and Pastor Danny Tejares. These men are the leaders in a church called Reformed in Christ Fellowship which is located in Daet and about three miles from the church we had been meeting in during the day. We first went to Pastor D. Tejares' house. He has five children and lives with his parents. He also is the Pastor of this church and they hold the church services in his house. A rather sad story too. He and his wife were on a bus to Manila in June and had an accident with a truck. His wife was killed instantly and he was severely injured. He had just gotten out of the hospital a week before we came and his leg was still in plaster because of seven fractures he had in it. He has five young children. But you could see how the church and his family had pulled together during this tough time and he talked of God's will and sovereignty in the things that had happened to him. It was a blessing to see how sincere and accepting he was of God's will for him.

I then went with Dante to his house just around the corner. He is 32 years old and is married with two children. He lives with his parents in law in the same house. These houses are very different than we have in the States. Nothing is fancy and the people are content to have homes that are simple and plain as that is usually all they can afford. It is also very common in the Philippines that families all live together either in the same house or in little huts on the same complex. The family

unit is still rather strong compared to how it has fallen apart here in the States.

Elmer was a young man from a church in the hills about three hours from Daet. He had been staying with Pastor D. Tejares the last few weeks to help him because of his accident. He met Pastor D. Tejares at school and has been taught the truths of the Reformed faith by him.

I then visited for a few hours with these men back at Pastor D. Tejares' house. We spoke about their thoughts on the day's discussion and they were very receptive to the teachings of Rev. Miersma and Rev. Kleyn and said they now would go and study the Word of God more in light of the day's discussion. We also talked about life in general, how they all struggle to find work, about the



Our welcome at Reformed in Christ Fellowship on Sunday morning, meeting in Pastor D. Tejares' house in Daet.

economy, the political situation, schooling and family life. It was interesting that in the Philippines divorce and abortion are outlawed by the government and is very low. They said it was changing. Slowly these things were getting accepted more and more and the government was changing the laws.

After a very interesting night I caught a tricycle back to the hotel around 9:00 PM. Rev. Kleyn and I then went out to find some food to eat. I think we found some cakes at a shop that was about to close. ❖

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

Three Days in the Life of a Little Boy

Day 1

The candy dish was full. No one would notice if one little piece was missing. Besides, his sister Mary wouldn't care. She was so nice. She would share the candy with everyone as soon as she got it. No, she wouldn't mind if just one piece was gone...

Day 2

"Happy birthday to you! Happy birthday to you! Happy..." sang the chorus of friends and family as Mary blew out the candles on her cake.

Suddenly Billy felt a gentle poke in his side. "Billy," whispered Mother, "it's time to give Mary the candy dish. Will you get it, please?"

Billy ran as fast as his little legs would carry him. Yes, there it was, safe and sound in its special hiding place. He carefully brought it out and presented it to Mary.

"Oh Billy, thank you!" said Mary.

"Um, Billy," said Mother, "did you drop some candy on the way?"

Billy glanced behind himself. No, there was no candy on the floor anywhere. He looked at the candy dish again. It wasn't quite as full as he had thought. But he hadn't thought a few more pieces of candy would be missed!

Mother squarely looked at him. "Billy, do you know anything about the missing candy?"

Billy hesitated. He didn't dare look into Mother's eyes. Then a tear trickled down his cheek. "I'm sorry, Mother, really I am." He knew he had no way to repay what he had taken. He began to cry...

Day 3

Billy longingly looked at the cookie jar. Then he glanced at Mother—but Mother caught his eye.

"Billy, remember when Mary forgave you for eating her birthday candy?" asked Mother.

Billy nodded.

"God forgives us for much more than that. We sin against Him all the time!"

Billy kept nodding. He knew he sinned a lot. But he also knew he didn't want to sin.

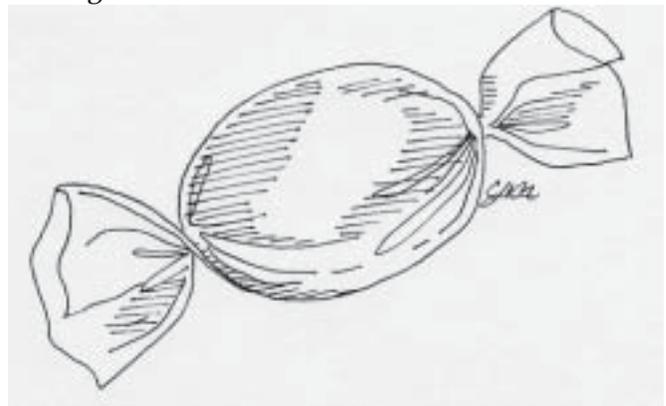
"LITTLE LIGHTS" ... *let it shine!*

by Connie Meyer

"We must think about how much God has forgiven us and delivered us from our sins. Then we will be thankful. And when we're thankful, then we will be obedient."

Billy nodded again. Yes, he was truly thankful! He thought about that as he went into the next room to find a toy. And he forgot all about the cookie jar. ❖

Connie is the mother of 5 children and a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.



Circle the parts of Lord's Day 1 that match with the story above:

Question: 1. What is thy only comfort in life and death?

Answer: That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ...

Question: 2. How many things are necessary for thee to know, that thou, enjoying this comfort, mayest live and die happily?

Answer: Three; the first, how great my sins and miseries are; the second, how I may be delivered from all my sins and miseries; the third, how I shall express my gratitude to God for such deliverance.

Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 1

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Church News

BAPTISMS

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”

Mark 16:16

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Joel Allen, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Baker—Doon, IA

Rylee Jean, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Rex Walkner—Doon,
IA

Caleb John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Moelker—
Georgetown, MI

Ryan Nicholas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Nick Westra—
Georgetown, MI

Molly Lauren, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. John Moore—
Loveland, CO

Logan John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Del Roetcisoender—
Lynden, WA

Katie Renae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. James Kooiker—
Randolph, WI

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:

Jeremy Bodbyl—Holland, MI

Katie Knott—Hope, MI

Sarah Rutgers—Hope, MI

Sarah Griess—Loveland, CO

Heidi Wiersma—Peace, IL