

Beacon

Lights

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*“And the eyes of them both were opened,
and they knew that they were naked.”*

Genesis 3:7a

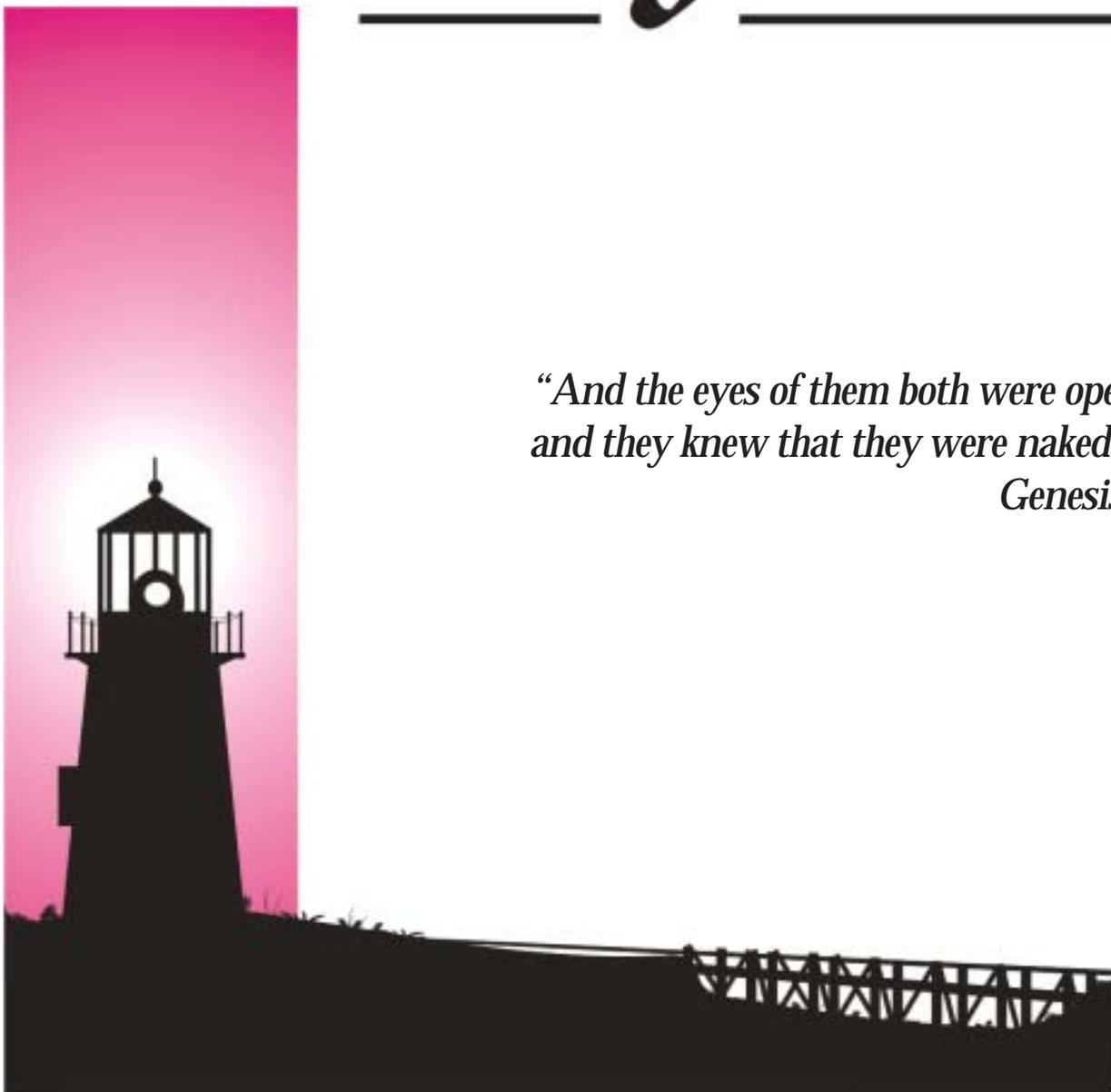


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BEACON LIGHTS

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Enlightenment

by John Huizenga

“And the eyes of them both were opened...”

The term “Enlightenment” was used by many of the ‘thinkers’ and writers from the beginning of the 18th century up to the French Revolution in 1789 to describe what they considered to be a time of truth emerging from hundreds of years of darkness and mass ignorance. For example, the Roman Catholic Church had been insisting that the sun, planets, and stars orbited around the earth, but when Copernicus challenged this idea with a telescope and sound reason, it was as though a light turned on in a dark cave for the first time. The idea was really quite simple. It was irrefutable, and the church was thrown for a loop. It did not take long for others to experiment with this power of the human mind. Why, if the church is keeping us in the dark about the solar system, what else are we ignorant about?

Rene Descartes tried to get to the truth about the world by clearing his mind of every old idea he had, and doubting everything. The only thing he found that he could not doubt was the fact that he was thinking. And because he was thinking, he could know that he existed; hence his famous conclusion: “*cogito, ergo sum,*” that is, “I think, therefore I am.” Having enthroned his brain as the autonomous “I Am,” he proceeded to use the logic of this great brain to bring into existence the rest of the world, including a god that made the world. This universe created by the mind of Descartes was, he felt, free from the mists of darkness that had somehow enveloped the world and corrupted prior ideas about the world.

Others explored the powers of their mind to formulate new ideas about the nature of man and the best type of government for a good society. Thomas Hobbes believed that “the condition of man... is a condition of war of everyone against everyone.” And because human nature is in such a condition, a strong governing authority is necessary to prevent total chaos. John Locke believed that man is born with a pure and good human nature, like a blank slate (*tabula rasa*). If children have a good environment and a good education, they will form a good civilization and society. He argued that there was no such thing as a divine right of kings to rule, and that government only has authority when those who are governed give it to them.

These ideas were being formulated at the time when the United States Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution were written; and had some impact on these documents. However, I believe that the impact of Enlightenment ideas have been, and are being felt even more heavily in educational philosophy and society. The enthronement of the human mind has opened the doors wide to evolutionary theory, euthanasia, abortion, disregard for authority, etc.

“...and they knew that they were naked” (Genesis 3:7).

The problem with many thinkers of the Enlightenment was that they did not know they were naked. By God’s grace, Adam and Eve knew, on the basis of His Word, that they stood guilty before God when they sought freedom in pursuing disobedience. Having rubbed the smoke and fog from the windows of the Roman Church, most enlightenment thinkers did not then take up the Word of God which so long had been hidden, and walk in its light. Rather, they swelled in pride at the “wisdom” they had to rub the smoke from the windows, and pursued the thoughts of their minds. These have led the masses to the society we find now in Europe and the Americas today.

There were some men of the Enlightenment who did turn to God's word, knew they were naked, and sewed "fig leaves" together. Godly scientists made great discoveries that were foundational to a correct understanding of much of God's creation. Theologians mined the depths of God's word and developed many great doctrines of salvation.

Really, history is full of enlightenments. Perhaps the Enlightenment of the 18th century had such a great impact because the Roman Church had acted like a great dam that finally burst and unleashed the flood of new ideas. You have experienced many enlightenments in the course of your growth and development. A big one usually occurs about the time you are teenagers and break through what you consider to be the outdated ideas of your parents. Perhaps you meet friends with ideas and activities that are new and exciting. You meet bold challenges to your prior ways of thinking in the Internet chat rooms, and your eyes are opened. Perhaps you listen to a popular college professor rip with pleasure into the foundations of your soul and lay out a new way of life. What do you do with this new "light?"

At this point, the child of God, by the power of God's grace, sees a fork in the road. Down one he sees the mind of man revealed and exalted, and the Bible on a reference shelf as an out dated record of the previous thoughts of man. It is a way of dazzling light that excites him with new feelings of freedom. He hears the praise and call of "friends" willing to show him more. Down the other way he sees the same things, but with one important difference. He sees the Bible open. He sees God's mind revealed and exalted in His Word, and the mind of man and his works as servants. "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9). By the light of this Word, he sees himself as a servant of God, using his gifts for the glory of God.

As you go through life, and your eyes are opened, you are faced with a choice. The ungodly do not have this choice. Apart from the grace of God, they have no interest whatsoever in the light revealed by God. "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." John 1:5 He thinks that what his own mind has just discovered is the only light. He even calls it "enlightenment," and like a moth, circles into the fire of eternal death. I pray, young people, that God works by the power of His grace in your hearts. Do you see the two options you face when you are "enlightened" by the words of man? If, as a child of God, you choose to turn away from the light of God's word, you can be assured that the cheap thrill of worldly "enlightenment" will come with a steep price. The way back will be one filled with heartache, regret, guilt, misery, and endless troubles.

When we do succumb to the flatteries of man's wisdom, let not a day close without prayer and repentance. Be diligent in your daily devotions and meditations upon God's word. Bask in the glorious shining of God's word that we enjoy every week in the house of God. Diligently seek the rest of the Lord's Day. The more you do these things, the more you will enjoy even in this life the treasures of eternal life. ❖

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When I In Awesome Wonder...

Michigan's Golden Coast

Hummingbird

by Deanne Wassink

From the inside of the building I could see him lying still as death next to the glass door he had flown into. I picked him up gently. Holding him in the palm of my hand I could hardly feel the weight of this incredibly delicate male ruby-throated hummingbird. He glowed an iridescent green. I was so excited that I actually interrupted one of the classes at the seminary I was attending to show him off. I knew the Prof. would appreciate this rare opportunity. I was not so sure my fellow students would appreciate this adult show and tell. Though he looked dead, (the bird, that is, not the Prof.) I was concerned that the little fella might only be stunned. So, after about fifteen minutes of admiring him I set him on a tissue outside the glass door where I found him and watched. Suddenly, he stood up, shook himself and flew away, albeit a little unsteadily. From that day, I have continued to have a special interest in this unique bird.

So many things about the hummingbird are special that it is really in a class by itself compared to other birds. In a special way they show the wonder of a creator who does whatever he pleases for his glory—even if it seems impossible.

There are about 330 species of hummingbird. All of them live in the western hemisphere. Only the ruby-throated lives in western Michigan. He is about three inches long and weighs two to three grams—one fifth the weight of a chickadee. He builds his nest out of plant material glued together with spider silk. He decorates it with bits of lichen. His mate, having subdued colors, is very hard to spot when she sits on two white eggs.

Captured hummingbirds have lived for seventeen years which is an amazing thing considering they have an incredibly fast metabolism. Each day they must eat at least one and one-half times their own weight in nectar,

which they find in flowers. In fact, they prefer large red tubular flowers like those on the trumpet vine. It is for this reason that the hummingbird feeders that birders place in their yards are typically made to look like the bird's favorite flowers. If they are not eating the sugar water we give them they must visit over 1,000 flowers.

In case you think you have a fast heart rate, consider the fact that the hummingbird's heart beats at 1,260 times per minute when it is agitated! That is 21 times a second! It breathes at the rate of 250 times per minute! It has a heart that weighs 20 percent of its total weight—more than any other animal.

The flight of the hummingbird is equally amazing. It is the only bird that can fly backwards. When it is hovering over a flower its wings beat 80 times a second! I can hardly imagine that. No wonder they appear as a blur to our eyes. Their wing muscles are the most powerful for their size of any animal.

The feathers of the hummingbird are covered with air filled platelets that capture the light and split it like a prism reflecting only certain colors. That is why they sparkle in the sun with such an amazing iridescence. They are truly the jewels of the bird world.

In case you think this mini-bird is a wimp, you had better look again. Every year he migrates back and forth across the Gulf of Mexico between Central America and the Eastern United States flying thousands of miles. That's right. The little guy I found stunned on a spring morning had just come in from wintering near the equator. He also is the most aggressive bird around. He will take on other birds and animals many times larger.

This past summer we visited friends at their summer home near the beautiful coastal city of Ludington. We watched the hummingbirds fight over a feeder. Their movements were so quick as they buzzed each other that

we could only see them clearly when they hovered. They put on an amazing display.

I am convinced that the Lord created the tiny hummingbird to show us that His creative power has no limits. About the time we think that He has given every possible variation of color, size and ability in the bird world, He shows us this sparkling jewel in the crown of His creativity. So tiny, so quick, so maneuverable, so colorful that human words fall short of the reality. Human engineers and scientists are studying him in an attempt to understand and emulate his abilities.

If our heavenly Father can create and care for this little flying wonder, how much more will He nurture the physical bodies and care for the physical and spiritual needs of His loving children. He has loved them so much that He sent His Son to die for their sins, breathes new life into them, and prepares them for their place in heaven.

Glory to His name!

“Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?” (Matthew 6: 25, 26).

The Warrior

*Flashing in the sun,
Like he's number one,
The closer he flew,
The bigger he grew.*

*'Twas himself he saw.
He gave it his all.
Attacked with his might,
Worked up for a fight.*

*'Twas himself he hit.
His head he did split.
Dropped like a stone,
Out cold he lay prone.*

*Revealing God grand,
He lay in my hand.
With feathers that shown,
Out classing my own.*

*With a shake he flew,
His bump he did rue.
He beat his rival.
And made us marvel. ❖*

Deane is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan.

Church History

A Lonely Church

by J. P. deKlerk

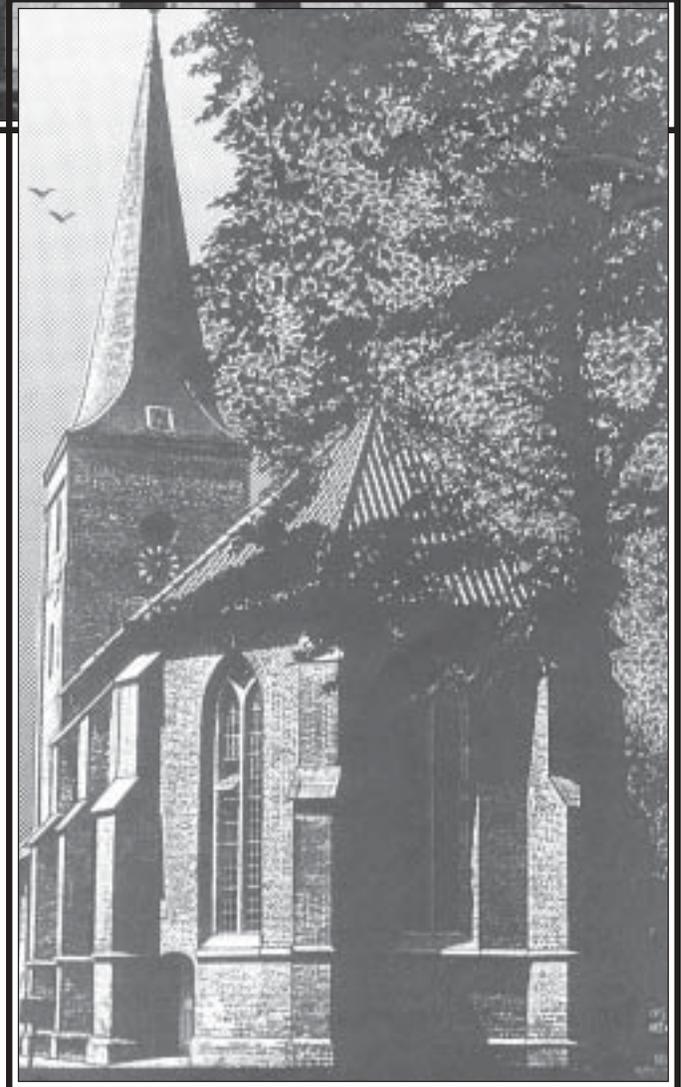
You see here a church in the Dutch hamlet Houtigehage, which is part of the village Luchtenveld, in the frontier-area of the provinces Friesland and Groningen, well-known by tourists because of the moors there. During the summer months, flowering tracts of heath all around are a beautiful sight. But on Sundays more and more curious people come to this small church (150 seats). The church and the manse

on the right and the sexton's house on the left were built by Jan Overdijk in 1928. He died in 1974. His son, with the same name, continued his work till he died in 2000. Now Rev. Gerard van Loon is there, sent out as a missionary by the Evangelicals of Ekklesia in the South African province of Transvaal.

The Overdijks were independent and self-supporting, writing and printing many booklets about the Scrip-

tures. Above the entrance of the church it says “Jezus leeft” (Jesus lives). Jan Overdijk rang the clock three times a day; it was a tradition he had started. He also founded a center for the help of the poor. He also preached in a chapel in Noord-Jeruel. He received financial support from family members in Leeuwarden; his grandparents had a furniture business there. In 1932 a fire destroyed the organ of the church in Houtigehage (only the front is left as decoration), but the extensive library is still available for study of the Scriptures.

Though the Overdijks were never members of a church or denomination, according to those who heard their preaching, they could have been of the “Free Evangelical Brethren.” Rev. van Loon seems to be more of a traditional Baptist. But like the Overdijks he only wishes to spread the Word of God without any alteration and as its only basis. ❖



The State Reformed Church of Zuidlaren

by J. P. deKlerk

In the northern part of the Dutch province of Drenthe, you can still find this well-preserved State Reformed Church of the city of Zuidlaren. An outspoken farmers’ congregation, “Suudloaders” as they call themselves in the local dialect, are reliable, independent, and always at work.

This church was built in 1300. Over the years there were some small alterations, including a new roof on the tower, a new chancel (in 1500) and an improved shape of the nave. To get an idea of the great height of this building, look to the left of the entrance door.

The area surrounding the church attracts many tourists because of its beautiful lake forests and tracts of heath. another attraction is its famous annual house fair.

Because of numerous conflicts with wild gangs from other parts of Europe, it wasn't until 1813 that Drenthe became a province. It was very difficult to get some form of unity, respect for law and order, having only the authority of six judges (courts) spread over the area (usually in the open air, under an old oak, surrounded by soldiers).



J. P. de Klerk was a writer and journalist in Ashhurst, New Zealand.

My Bible

*O*h how precious is my Bible
It inspires day by day
It's my lamp in earthly darkness
Shining all along my way.

*B*y its precepts I am guided
In the way that I should go
Strength it gives my weary footsteps
When my gait is languished, slow.

*D*rooping hearts can smile more sweetly
In the sunshine of God's Word
From the soul who lives his Bible
Only words of joy are heard.

*I*n this vale of grief and trials
When the eye is dammed with tears,
There is no book like the Bible
To dispel all rising fears.

*W*hen we pass through death's grim valley,
Troubles more than we can bear,
We can find hope, peace and comfort
In those lonely pages there.

*T*hrough these nights of life so tedious
My Bible will light my way.
Till I find the brighter beam
Of the great eternal day.

— J. Hulbert Robins
Reprinted by request from December 1951
Beacon Lights.

Watching Daily At My Gates

The Song of Zion

“A Psalter–Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God”

by John Huizenga (Reprinted from May 1998)

May 15 Read I Samuel 21:10-15; Psalm 56:1, 2

The heading of this Psalm directs our attention to the time when David fled from his enemy Saul to Gath. In Gath he quickly realized that they were dangerous enemies of his as well. All David can see is his enemies. It would appear to him as though they surrounded him with gaping mouths ready to swallow him up. They are ever present. Their hate is constant. They watch from morning to night. Do you see the enemy standing around you every day from morn to night? Do you know your sinful human nature? Do you recognize the devil with his innumerable devices for tempting you and leading you away from the way of life? Do you see all these things along with wicked men waiting with gaping mouths? We need not fear. We should fear if all looks well to us. May we like David call upon God to be merciful, look down upon us and deliver us from certain death. Sing Psalter 151:1; 153:1.

May 16 Read Luke 12:1-7; Psalm 56:3, 4

The world likes to boast about having no fear. We see the words “No Fear” on T-shirts and bumper stickers. But fearlessness is nothing to brag about, especially for those who trust in themselves. Often the T-shirt reveals one who is blind to the reality of eternal punishment in hell. If you are spiritually alive, you will see many spiritual enemies all around and you will be afraid. Often we are even afraid of those men, diseases, or accidents that could kill the body. When you are afraid, what do you do? Do you increase your insurance coverage? Do you save up more money? David says, “I will put my trust in God.” Our Lord also reveals to us that we are children of God and always under his watchful eye. May we put our trust in him Who has redeemed us. What a comfort this is in times of fear. Let us sing his praises. Sing Psalter 151:2; 152:1; 153:2.

May 17 Read Luke 11:45-54; Psalm 56:5-7

They meet, they lurk, they watch. This has been the activity of Satan and his hosts since the fall of Adam. The wicked devote their whole life to the overthrow of God and his people. David experienced this oppression very intensely day after day. Christ reveals the activity as it has continued since the days of Adam and Eve and then felt as never before the intense pressure of Satan through the scribes and Pharisees as they spent their energy trying to trap Jesus. As with many of the saints before, the enemies of the church resorted to twisting Jesus’ words in order to condemn and find fault with him. This pressure has only increased since then and will continue to increase.

Today false shepherds take the word of God and twist it in order to lead many astray. They meet and lurk to destroy the church. Do not be afraid to call the judgment of God upon those who seek to destroy the church. Let us sing these words from the heart. Sing Psalter 151:3.

May 18 Read Hebrews 11:32-12:3; Psalm 56:8, 9

Life may appear to us altogether as aimless wandering. Just when things begin to go smoothly and the future looks bright, God sends us off in another uncertain direction. When we consider all the sorrows and trials of the people of God today and throughout the history of the world, we can’t begin to comprehend the overall plan of God for the salvation of his church. But God does have a plan. He reveals to us in the book of Hebrews that all these were led down the one path of the promised Messiah. They walked by faith. They are to us a cloud of witnesses. God watched over them each step of the way, and he watches over us. Every tear is important and God, as it were, keeps them in a bottle. “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.” Sing Psalter 151:4.

May 19 Read Hebrews 6:11-20; Psalm 56:10, 11

The words of men are full of lies, but God cannot lie. his word is sure. David was inspired to praise the very word of his covenant God Jehovah. What is the word of God? It is the promise of deliverance and salvation from sin. The more we see the bondage of our sin and feel our alienation from God, the more precious the word of God becomes. The word of God is our strong consolation. We flee to the word to lay hold of the hope which is an anchor for our soul. We cannot have the blessed hope in God’s word if we do not diligently read his word and listen to it carefully each Lord’s Day. What a blessing it is to hear the true word of God. May we never despise the preaching. May we praise the word of grace. Sing Psalter 151:5.

May 20 Read 1 Samuel 1; Psalm 56:12, 13

The vow of a wise believer is a beautiful confession. The vow often arises from the heart which sees the greatness of the debt owed to God. Hannah knew only God could give her a child, and she expressed her profound knowledge of the covenant promises in a vow to give her child for service to God. Sometimes foolish vows are made or sinful pride creeps in to make one regret a vow. God tells us it is better not to make a vow at all than to make one and break it. The sinner who comes

to a realization of his sin and the greatness of his salvation is filled with a desire to walk in a life of thankful obedience. He wants to confess before God and the church this desire that has been worked by God's grace and promise to walk in a life of obedience in Christ. This is not a foolish vow if we truly know that it is only by God's grace that we can keep it. May the youth of our churches come to a certain knowledge of their salvation and cheerfully make confession of their faith. Sing Psalter 151:6; 152:5; 153:3, 4.

May 21 Read Ruth 2; Psalm 57:1

The heading of this Psalm instructs us that David was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write these words when he fled from Saul to the cave. He was being hunted down and pictured the life of every child of God as we are stalked day and night by Satan. As with the previous Psalm, David pleads to God for his mercy. David acknowledges that he is helpless and in need of the sovereign Ruler over all. He compares himself to a helpless, naked, baby bird that will quickly die unless it is sheltered under the wings of its mother. This beautiful picture is also used to describe the situation of Ruth the Moabitess. By the grace of God she left her life of sin and was welcomed into the nest of Israel. May we also humbly seek Jehovah God and welcome those who are led to our churches. Sing Psalter 154:1.

May 22 Read Hebrews 13:15-21; Psalm 57:2

As David cries out to God for deliverance, he brings to mind the various names of God and his works. In verse 2 he calls upon "God that performeth all things for me." In the reading from Hebrews we have one of the many teachings of God concerning the work of salvation within his people. No matter where in Scripture you find instruction concerning our salvation, we learn that it is by sovereign grace alone. This does not make us passive robots as some who know not the Scriptures would have us believe. The God that saves by sovereign grace also makes his people free and willing servants whose will is knit with the will of God. The relationship surpasses our comprehension, but we begin to enjoy it now in this life. Sing Psalter 154:2.

May 23 Read Matthew 28:1-15; Psalm 57:3, 4

David describes the enemy that surrounds him in most graphic and terrible pictures. He is on the verge of being destroyed. If we bring before our mind the scene at the tomb of Jesus on Friday night and Saturday, we see the dead body of Jesus surrounded by wicked scornful soldiers commissioned by wicked rulers. It would appear as though after years of trying to kill the servants of Jehovah, they finally killed the Lord's Anointed. But then and once and for all God sent from heaven his mercy and truth. Jesus arose from the grave and conquered death to give salvation to all his people. The enemies trembled with fear and the work of Christ on earth was finished. We still face the enemy, but we have hope in the reality that death has in principle been destroyed. The enemy is yet very real. The Psalms are often very vivid in describing the wicked. I fear that Satan and his hosts are working hard to disguise their true nature today. Too often things do not seem so bad. It is so

important for us to read the Psalms that we might gain a true picture of reality and pray for deliverance. Sing Psalter 154:3.

May 24 Read Isaiah 2:1-17; Psalm 57:5

In everything, even in our sufferings of persecution and the haughty boastings of the wicked, God is glorified. The glory of God is the end and purpose of all things. He is the creator of all. He has fashioned each one of us for his own glory. We are foolish to think that we deserve some glory. The glory of God is the purpose of our entire life. When our pride seeps into our thinking, it is impossible to give God glory. We become jealous and feel that we are worthy of something better than to exalt another. When we are humbled and see how great our sins are, how unworthy we are in ourselves, how dependent we are upon God, then we begin to glorify God. David gives God glory in this section of the Psalm which reveals his great danger and the rescue of God. David again sings praise to God at the end of Psalter 155. Sing Psalter 154:4 and may the words resound in your heart today.

May 25 Read 1 Samuel 23:14-29; Psalm 57:6

David had fled from place to place while Saul sought to kill him. Now he was under the cover of the forest in the wilderness and mountains of Ziph. Even here, the inhabitants of the land offered their assistance to Saul by spying on David so they would be able to set up a trap; and David is grieved. During this time God sent Jonathan to encourage and strengthen David, and David was able by faith to write in the same verse that his enemies would surely fall into their traps. David was unable to gather with the congregation in worship at this time. Sometimes in our afflictions we also are unable to gather for worship. Let us give thanks for the friends and family which God gives to us as means to strengthen our faith in times of need. Sing Psalter 155:1.

May 26 Read Romans 5:1-8; Psalm 57:7

What a comfort and joy it is to see the evidence of God's grace working in the saint who suffers tribulation and is able to glory in tribulation. God revealed to Paul that tribulation worketh patience, and David experienced this patience in a steadfast heart. Though his life was in turmoil his heart was fixed. He had hope in God and the hope made him unashamed to sing praise to God. A song in the midst of tribulation is a work of God's grace. Paul and Silas sang in prison. The elderly saint who lies on the bed of affliction and barely responds to any stimulation can burst into clear and joyful songs of praise to God. Apart from God, man responds to tribulation with bitterness. "It's not fair," they cry. But in Christ we have a hope that wells up in song, and God gives us songs to sing in these times of tribulation. Sing Psalter 155:2.

May 27 Read Acts 2:22-36; Psalm 57:8-10

Why does the child of God sing in times of distress? Why does David glory in tribulation? David confesses that the song is because the mercies of God and his truth is exalted even to the clouds. We learn from the light of the New Testament that the mercy and truth which David saw was salvation in Christ. In Christ is fulfilled the hope of every child of God from Adam

to the end of the world. In Christ we see that tribulation is the means whereby we are drawn into fellowship with God. Knowing our sins and the misery which results from sin, we sing in thankfulness to God for deliverance. Let us pray for a right understanding of trials and tribulation that we might sing praise unto God, and even rise early with the Psalms in our heart. Sing Psalter 155:3.

May 28 Read Matthew 6:9-13; Psalm 57:11

Again as in verse 5 David gives glory to God. We can sing the same Psalm at the end of Psalter 154 and 155. Giving such praise to God is the purpose for which we were created. God so directs every detail of our lives that we are led to sing forth these words of David. Our Lord also instructed us to give glory to God in prayer. In the beginning of the Lord's prayer we acknowledge the holiness of God's name and we pray that the will of God be accomplished in his kingdom. Then we make our petitions, not because we want to be satisfied in ourselves, but because we desire to be fit for God's praise. The prayer ends "for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever." In all the details of our life and the petitions for earthly needs, we must always have in mind the reason why we ask these things: that we might glorify God. Sing Psalter 154 & 155:4.

May 29 Read John 11:47-53; Psalm 58:1-5

God directs our attention in this Psalm to the wicked and his judgment upon them. They appear to seek justice and truth, but their hearts are set upon their own agendas and sinful pride. They are compared to a poisonous snake that bites and will not be charmed. Unlike the thinking of the world which says that wickedness is learned in bad environments, the inspired Psalmist reveals that they are born wicked. We are all conceived and born in sin. There is no such thing as an innocent baby. The corrupt natures we have at birth would develop until we were like the wicked hypocrites that condemned Jesus

were it not for the power of God's grace alone. We have nothing to boast about in ourselves. We are saved by the blood of Christ alone. Sing Psalter 156:1, 2.

May 30 Read Luke 9:54-56; I John 3:1-9; Psalm 58:6-9

David cried out to God that he would destroy his enemies. He called upon God to break their teeth, make them melt away, cut them to pieces with arrows, and whisk them away in the whirlwind of his wrath. But when the disciples of Jesus wanted to call fire down from heaven to destroy those who would not receive them into their village, Jesus rebuked them. Has God changed from being a God of wrath to a God of love? No, God has not changed. God will certainly come to destroy the wicked, and were it not for salvation in Christ, everyone in the world would be destroyed in God's wrath. God has been pleased in his eternal council to reveal the full spectrum of his attributes from wrath to love in the way of saving those whom he has chosen from among those whom he will destroy. Let us pray that God's will be done and sing praises to him who does all things righteously. Sing Psalter 156:3.

May 31 Read Revelation 11:1-18; Psalm 58:10-11

David is inspired during this time of persecution to write concerning the victory of Christ over the seed of the serpent. When Christ returns to gather his elect into heaven and cast the wicked into hell, all will confess that God is just and righteous in all that he does. Then we will see as never before that all the schemes and grand empires of the wicked were in the hands of God to serve his people. We will not rejoice because the injustice done to us has been punished, but because all those who were filled with hatred against God and blasphemed his name will have been justly condemned. Our songs of praise will be directed to God because he is God and accomplishes all his good pleasure. Sing Psalter 156:4.

Watching Daily At My Gates

The Song of Zion

"A Psalter-Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God"
(Reprinted from June 1998)

June 1-9 Devotionals from Psalter #157

"A Cry for Help"

June 1 Read Psalm 59, noting verses 1 and 2; Read and sing Psalter 157:1

This psalm and song versify David's thoughts when Saul sent men to watch his house to kill him. Notice that his first thought in response to his fear is to call on God. As we walk close to God that is our immediate reaction also to fear and turmoil in our lives. In this safe country we rarely face life-threatening

danger and we become self-satisfied and confident. *He* is our only security and provider, but sinfully we always look to our own strength and the power of money or prestige to take care of us. If praying is our last solution when other hopes have failed, we aren't walking with God as we should. Today focus on thinking of God as your only answer to every trouble. Pray to keep him first in your thoughts! By looking to him first your human efforts will be directed rightly.

June 2 Read Ephesians 6 especially verses 10-12, Psalm 59:3, 4, and Psalter 157:2

In the second verse of this song, the enemy is surrounding David to capture him. We have outwardly peaceful lives, but when we as individuals and as a church stand up for the truth and reject sin we feel the pressure of hatred building against us too. We may someday experience being surrounded by those who are against us because we won't accept their lies. We need to be willing to be embarrassed and uncomfortable today when it would be easy to compromise our beliefs just a little to keep "peace" and not draw attention to ourselves. But doing that makes us guilty of lying. Also don't neglect constructive criticism of your friends in the church. Pray for courage!

June 3 Read Romans 12:14-21, Psalm 59:5 and Psalter 157:3

David is justly angry against his false accusers, and he calls on God to take vengeance. We shouldn't sympathize with those living unrepentantly in sin. We must condemn their actions, and pray that wickedness will be punished. But God is the judge and he alone punishes sin (except as he gives us authority.) Our calling is to continue to act in love even to our enemies, not to bring justice by making others suffer. When we "get back" in our petty little ways to those who don't quite please us, we are defending our own pride, not God's glory. Trust God to deal with the faults of others. Often forgiving your own family is the hardest of all! Pray for grace to work for the good of the neighbor even when you feel attacked.

June 4 Read Psalm 2:1-6, Psalm 59:6-8 and Psalter 157:4

David's enemies continue their attack. He is steadily hopeful in God and doesn't lose faith when they seem to be succeeding. The wicked are openly violent, ridiculing the good and trying to drag it down. Today we see our nation has turned aside from the true God and imagine they are powerful and self-sufficient. God scorns their feeble insults. They think God won't see their evil, but they will someday stand in judgment. In your life do you preserve God's holiness with your words? Speak respectfully—God hears you!

June 5 Read Psalm 37, especially verses 7-9, Psalm 59:9, 10, and Psalter 157:5

David is confident, knowing God is his defense. He has no hope in man's power, only in God's mercy. Much in this Psalm makes us look ahead to the persecution we may experience in the end times. We, like David, need to be firmly grounded in God and his promises so we can withstand those trials. And of

course we need to live today, as every day, in strong faith. Is God your refuge and renewal? Or do you flee to the TV to unwind each day, or escape in other recreation? Like David, look to him as your source of strength. He won't let you down. When we acknowledge him first and center our thoughts on spiritual things we are set high above our spiritual enemies of doubt and temptation.

June 6 Read Psalm 93, Psalm 59:11-13 and Psalter 157:6

David calls on God to bring down his enemies for their lies, knowing that in the end all will recognize God's rule and will worship. We can cling also to that certain knowledge that God will have the final victory. In this age of tolerance even the worst crimes are hardly punished so wickedness grows. But God has the proud wicked in derision, and those who live in sin will reap the rewards. They will be trapped in their own pride, because when God is denied all meaning is lost! God reigns—praise him!

June 7 Read Psalm 2:7-12, Psalm 59:13-16, and Psalter 157:7

Those who hate God will be consumed in his anger. They will suffer for their sin and will acknowledge that he rules. By trusting God and continuing to speak the truth, we render the attacks of the wicked useless. Their ultimate goal is to "get us off our pedestal" and join them in sin. We are strong because God is our strength. Notice this is also a picture of our constant spiritual fight against our own sinful nature. As soon as we try to save ourselves we fall, but keeping our eyes on him we can't waver!

June 8 Read Psalm 3, Psalm 59:13-16, and Psalter 157:8

David looks beyond the turmoil before his eyes and is confident that a new day will dawn. This is a small picture of heaven where we will rest and praise God after the darkness of this world. In this life we fail continually, and often as we see sin grow and flourish in us and around us we can lose faith and be discouraged. Take his attitude of hope and look past your frustrations of work today! Never doubt God's sovereignty! When doubts take hold in your mind look to the Scriptures and Psalms like this one to remind you of his eternal care.

June 9 Read Psalm 100, Psalm 59:16, 17, and Psalter 157:9

The last verse is David's response of thanks and praise to God. Many psalms end with this theme, and the Heidelberg catechism also sets the pattern of thankfulness as the final step in the lifelong process of realizing our salvation. This is also our natural response to all the little victories we experience when we don't give in to temptation and uphold the truth. Most of all it is our constant expression in every action of life. We have true joy in our salvation, God's victory in our heart. We can always trust God's steadfast love. A chief means of praise is songs such as this Psalm. Pray to realize this joy and respond with praise.

Devotionals by Beth De Vries June 10-17

June 10 Read Psalm 60

We often feel that God has turned his back on us and is not attentive to our requests. It seems that we think that we deserve some attention from God. In reality all that we receive is a free and gracious gift. We turn our backs to God and his appointed way and then wonder why he seems so far from us. God may become displeased with us and angry when we disobey him continually as he did with the people in the Old Testament. We find an example of this in Numbers 11 when Israel murmured about the manna. Yet, God truly loves his people and will restore them to his favor again, not by any merit of theirs, but by his working of grace in our hearts. Sing Psalter 158:1.

June 11 Read Job 38:1-15

God has created the heavens and earth in all its glory. He controls them for at his command the mountains shake and the earth is moved. In Job 38, Job is challenged by God for his doubt of God's faithfulness. God reminds Job that the triune God alone was present at the beginning and he alone rules the world and all therein. In the second stanza of Psalter 158 we read of God bringing his judgments upon the earth and we find the psalmist begging for God to renew the strength of the land that she not become destroyed by man's own wickedness. Sing Psalm 158:2.

June 12 Read Proverbs 3:1-12

We find ourselves in trials and difficult situations frequently in this life. Maybe today you have already faced a difficult situation or are afflicted by some ailment. Many times God gives us these trials to strengthen our faith and to lead us closer to him. Our lives seem to be filled with despair and disappointment especially when we focus on our earthly life. The third stanza of Psalter 158 reminds us that God has led his people into these difficult and bitter times. Proverbs 3:11-12 also teaches us that God uses chastisement and trials to correct and build up those whom he loves. May we find comfort in this and not become discouraged as we sing stanza 3 of Psalter 158.

June 13 Read Psalm 107:1-8

"O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever." This is the truth that Psalm 107 calls us to proclaim to all the world. We have been given grace and a great inner happiness. May this spirit flow freely from us. God commands us to show his truth to all those that we meet and have contact. God's gracious love for us should cause us to proclaim our blessing to everyone. We know that God has his elect people but we know not who they are; therefore, we must proclaim the banner of his truth to the world. They should be able to see not only by our words but also by our actions that we are filled with the love of God in our hearts. May we be known as a people who display this banner. Make a special effort today to show to a neighbor or stranger the love God has given us. Sing Psalter 158:4.

June 14 Read Deut. 7:6-11

The truth of God's eternal election is brought to light again in stanza 5 as well as the passage which we read in Deuteronomy. This passage shows us that God has not chosen us by our own merits or because we are such great people. Rather we have been chosen and preserved by him because he set his love upon us and has promised to care for us. We are called to keep God's commandments in thankfulness for what he has done for us. The theme is the same in the fifth stanza of Psalter 158 where the psalmist speaks of God saving his beloved from their foes. Our help comes from the Lord's almighty hand especially when we ask this of him. May we bring our needs and troubles to the Lord that he may defeat our enemies and make us strong. Sing Psalter 158:5.

June 15 Read Psalm 60:6-8, Psalm 2

The rulers of this world think themselves to be great and plot against the people of God to harm Christ. They foolishly think that they can break the bands of God's anointed. God triumphs over the wicked with ease, and puts them in derision. He even goes so far as to laugh at the wicked. He shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. God shall have the wicked bow to him in the judgment day and acknowledge that he is God alone. God accomplishes this defeat of the wicked by the death, resurrection, ascension and second coming of his only begotten Son, as is seen in Psalm 2:5-7. Sing Psalter 158:6.

June 16 Read Romans 7:12-25

We are often overcome with our sins in this world. The old man of sin wars in our flesh with our new man of righteousness. It seems at times as though the old man is winning the battle and we will soon be completely wicked. The good that we seek to do we appear to be unable to do, and the evil, we are too willing to do. This passage in Romans reminds us of how difficult the battle is even for those who seem strong in their faith as Paul was. Psalter 158:7 refers to the strongholds of sin when we are about overcome in the battle. Who will guide us in these sinful times? God will be our guide and lead us from our tents of sin. He will cast off the devil and our enemies and give us the victory that his name may be praised. Sing Psalter 158:7.

June 17 Read Isaiah 12

As was discussed yesterday God is our sure help against the foe in time of trouble. It is God that will comfort us and lead us in the right way. This has been the theme throughout this Psalter and Psalm and it is ever so important for us to remember. We must always put our trust in God and not rely on our own strength or that of man. When we learn obedience to God's will for our lives, we also find patience and contentment. Isaiah 12:5 is good for us to remember as we study the Psalms "Sing unto the Lord; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth." Sing Psalter 158:8.

Rev. C. Hanko

Chapter 23

The Split of 1953

edited by Karen Van Baren

Editor's Notes—The year 1953 was a trying one for the PRC and its members. The cost of schism is high. Rev. Hanko paid with his own health. The stress of dealing with a divided consistory and congregation took its toll. His son remembers that after consistory meetings, his father sat up late at night, munching on soda crackers to calm his churning stomach. Was the cost too high? Rev. Hanko answers that question with a resounding "NO." After the split, the churches could confess with Job, "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

During these years, there was plenty of unrest within our churches. Rev. Petter began writing about "conditions" in the church papers. On Tuesday afternoons, De Wolf and I would take a walk after catechism to discuss the affairs of the week. I mentioned Petter's articles, to which De Wolf responded, "I can agree with him as long as he does not make faith a condition." Soon, an article did appear with the heading: "Faith a Condition."

One Tuesday morning, our missionary called me to assure me that he was so happy, especially after working with the Liberated in Canada, that he was PR. I told him that I was glad to hear that, and that he should inform our people of that. He was under a cloud of suspicion for his lack of distinctiveness.

Evidently what he was looking for was an opportunity to preach on our pulpit. I was aware of that, so on Thursday morning I offered him the Sunday morning pulpit, with the understanding that he preach a strong PR sermon, assuring the people of his faithfulness to our churches. Instead of that, he preached a wishy-washy sermon that might be preached from almost any pulpit. He made no statement that could be branded as hereti-

cal, but the whole sermon was so completely man-centered that it could hardly be considered a defense of the Reformed truth as taught in the Scriptures.

I was upset, but no more so than the consistory. The next evening, at the consistory meeting, there were numerous complaints about that type of sermon being preached by our missionary. It was decided to make copies from the tape, to study the sermon, and to bring up the matter again at the next meeting. Thereupon, we decided to call him in and admonish him in regard to that type of preaching, which certainly did not represent us on the mission field. He came to the meeting. At first he revealed a bit of bluster, but finally listened to what we had to say without comment. Evidently he was glad that we were not making a greater issue of his sermon.

About this time the Adams school opened, even in spite of the fact that DeWolf and his friends openly opposed it. Reluctantly he encouraged all to support the school, since it was there anyway.

Somewhere around January of 1953, one of our ministers called and wanted to visit me. Soon we were in a heated argument, since he was flinging charges at our churches. We had changed, not he. Finally I suggested to him, "Why don't you leave? Get out, and leave us with peace." He got up, took the doorknob in his hand, and said: "We'll split first!" With that he stormed out. But he revealed that destroying our churches was foremost in their minds. He had gone through our churches, and we were paying him for it, spreading all sorts of propaganda against our doctrine, our people, and our ministers, especially the Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff.

De Wolf came to me one Thursday morning and said, "Do you suppose I could say something like this off our pulpit?" The statement he mentioned reeked of conditional theology. I told him that that statement was not

Reformed. He claimed he could say it and remain Reformed. This shows that his statements were deliberately planned.

On April 15, 1951 Rev. Hubert De Wolf preached a sermon on the text in Luke 16:29, "Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." In the course of the sermon, he accused some of the members of the congregation of being proud of being Protestant Reformed. He said that wearing Protestant Reformed on their coat lapel would not bring them to heaven. It was in that connection that he added, "But I assure you, that God promises every one of you that if you believe, you will be saved." This statement bore all the semblance of a general, well-meant promise to all who hear the gospel. Besides, it spoke of faith as a condition to salvation.

After his infamous sermon, Rev. De Wolf reportedly said to one man, "Well, I said it." "Yes," said the man, "but it took you long enough."

I must admit that I was deeply grieved by that sermon. When I came home I said to a group of young men gathered with our boys in the living room, "It seems to me that Rev. De Wolf is going to leave us." No more was said, but the next day Rev. Hoeksema, who was not at that service, called me and asked about the sermon. I told him as reservedly as possible what I thought of it. On Tuesday Rev. De Wolf called me and asked, "What makes you think that I intend to leave?" I answered, "After the sermon of Sunday evening I cannot imagine that you want to stay." To which he replied: "Well, I have no intention of leaving."

At the next consistory meeting, there were at least two protests against this sermon. Rev. Hoeksema appointed a committee to study these protests and to supply the consistory with an answer, but added that the committee should not be too ready to condemn Rev. De Wolf, because the matter might not be as serious as it appeared to be. Obviously, he wanted to protect his colleague as much as possible.

Since there was a division in the consistory in regard to this statement, the case dragged on for some time. The elders were plainly taking sides for or against this pastor. Finally, when those in favor of Rev. De Wolf were in the majority, they decided to drop the entire matter.

Although this was improper, since the case should have been settled one way or another, there was a sense of relief that maybe peace had been restored. The last Sunday in August Rev. De Wolf preached a sermon that was thoroughly Reformed. Rev. Hoeksema was so

pleased that he made a point of commending the Reverend on it, and added, "Keep it up, Hubie."

Two weeks later, on September 14, Rev. De Wolf made his second statement that created offense in the congregation. He spoke on Matthew 18:3, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." In the course of the sermon, he stated that conversion is a prerequisite for entering into the kingdom.

By that statement he again introduced the idea of conditions that man must fulfill, making conversion a requisite to enter the kingdom. Scripture plainly teaches that it is God who converts the wayward sinner. God certainly does not place himself before prerequisites. This could only mean that it is necessary for us to convert ourselves.

Someone may ask, but does not God call to repentance? Did Paul not say to the Philippian jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house?" True. But when God calls to repentance and faith he is actually arousing in our consciousness his own work of grace (Eph. 2:8, 9). We read that Jesus said to the father of the demoniac son, "If thou canst believe..." (Mark 9:23, 24). To which the man replies evidently in amazement, "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief."

I may well insert here that on that same Sunday evening another minister told his congregation in Holland: "This is my stand on the issue of conditions: When God speaks *about* his people he speaks unconditionally, when he speaks *to* his people he always speaks conditionally." During the week, I offered to show him passages of Scripture that showed that God spoke *to* his people unconditionally, but he refused to discuss it with me.

Now Rev. Hoeksema and the consistory had had their fill. They realized how deceptively Rev. De Wolf was working to win over as many as possible in the congregation. New charges were made, and the entire case was once more opened. Not a Sunday went by that De Wolf did not try to create sympathy by choosing Psalter numbers that stressed how much he had to suffer as a martyr for the cause.

This controversy in First Church came to a head in the Spring of 1953 at Classis East, where a minority report was adopted, composed by two elders, in which recommendation was made that Rev. De Wolf should publicly retract those two statements as heretical, regardless of what interpretation might be given to them.

The matter was clarified when Rev. Rich Veldman tried to defend him on the floor of Classis East by showing how his statements could be interpreted in a Reformed manner. I was ready to jump up and say, "But De Wolf doesn't mean that." But De Wolf himself stood up and said, "Rev. Veldman knows very well that's not what I mean."

Rev. De Wolf delayed as long as possible with making his apology. When it finally came to the last part of June 1953, he made an apology that actually laid the blame on those who regarded the statements as heretical. They should have known better.

With a close vote, and with the reluctant agreement of Southeast consistory, Rev. De Wolf was suspended from office and those of the consistory who agreed with him were deposed. Although De Wolf was suspended, not everybody agreed that he should be deposed. Yet his censure was important for our existence as churches. While we may have remained a PR denomination, we would have lost all we gained in 1924.

The rest of the facts concerning the appeal to classis east and its decision, the deposition of De Wolf and those of the consistory who supported him are likely well known to all of you and need not be repeated.

You may wonder why, after the deposition, we left the church building to meet in the Grand Rapids Christian High School on the corner of Franklin and Madison. The De Wolf faction notified the consistory that they intended to hold services in our church auditorium on the coming Sunday. The consistory discussed whether to insist on our right to meet there, but decided against it. This would only stir up more trouble. Besides, we were confident that all those who loved and had so consistently fought for the truth in the past would be willing to meet elsewhere until the matter of the church property was settled.

An announcement was made in the *Grand Rapids Press* that the First Protestant Reformed Church would hold its services at the regular time in the Christian High School auditorium on the corner of Franklin and Madison.

Everyone wondered how many would be at Christian High that Sunday. One man warned his children that they must not be disappointed if there were but a few. To his surprise, as he approached the school, he saw numerous cars parked in the area and told his children, "Hurry, or we won't get a seat."

There were many present. The auditorium was filled. True, to our sorrow many familiar faces of those whom

we would have liked to see there were missing, but everyone felt a sense of relief that once more the struggle was over and peace restored.

Again, as in 1924, Rev. Hoeksema chose for his text that morning John 6:67: "Then Jesus said unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?" Once again we were reminded that we should continue to stand for the truth, for God's blessing rests only upon those who are faithful even unto death.

This temporary loss of property had one big advantage. There were many in the large congregation of First Church, who were mere hangers-on, driftwood, as it were. These would remain with the church edifice, no matter who took over. We were delivered from them, for it took determination to break away and meet in another place.

We wrote the De Wolf faction and asked them if we could come to some amicable settlement. To that they responded that they would receive no correspondence from us unless we addressed them as the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. That was more than we could grant. Our name meant more to us than all the property. That name not only designated us as the defenders of the truth for which the property was dedicated, but it also involved all the other churches who remained faithful with us. For our own sake, but also for the sake of the other churches, we had to defend our name as First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. This is also in harmony with Article 28 of the Church Order.

When the matter of the property went to court, it was immediately evident to the judge which side was in the right, as he said to us in private, "This young whippersnapper wants to take the church away from you." He maintained, as did later the Supreme Court of Michigan, that the property had been dedicated to the PR truth.

Classis East met in September with two sets of delegates from First Church. The classis stood before the question as to which delegates would be recognized, those of the faction that De Wolf and his elder, or those represented by Rev. C. Hanko and his elder. Without much hesitation the latter were recognized as the proper delegates. De Wolf and his elder left the meeting and those who sided with him also left.

Classis West met and, with the exception of Rev. Homer Hoeksema and his elder, decided to refuse to recognize the deposition of De Wolf and his supporters.

True, our churches were sorely decimated. Some congregations, namely, Bellflower, Manhattan, Orange

City, Oskaloosa, Rock Valley and Sioux Center faded out completely. Others lost many of their members and had quite a struggle to survive. We also lost seventeen ministers. It is well known what repercussions this had throughout the denomination. First Church was reduced to about 40 percent of its former membership.

The question may arise, was this controversy necessary? To that there is but one answer. The very fact that so many left us shows that they did not love the truth of God's sovereign grace sufficiently to fight or even to die for it. I grant you that a number of our members were misled, even deceived into leaving, as is evident from the fact that some of them returned. But those who were well aware of the issues involved are responsible for forsaking the truth of God's sovereign grace, whatever their motive may have been.

One might ask, might it have been avoided? To that there is again but one answer, no. Even though many may have had personal grudges or left us for other personal reasons, they were obviously not content among us. Defending the truth always demands sacrifice. He who will be Jesus' disciple must take up his cross and follow him. He who loves father or mother, sister or brother more than him is not worthy of him.

Did they leave because they agreed with the covenant view of the Liberated rather than with our view? Obviously that was not always the case. Almost immediately, most of them turned their backs to Prof. Schilder and joined the Christian Reformed Church. De Wolf and his followers for a short time continued under the name of Orthodox Protestant Reformed, but before long, they too joined to the CRC.

The Lord had spared and restored Rev. Hoeksema sufficiently to face this last struggle for the truth. One is reminded of the words of the patriarch Jacob concerning his son Joseph (Gen. 49:23, 24): "The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob."

Have we profited from it? We certainly have, especially from the aspect that the truth of God's sovereign grace has been preserved among us. You can be sure that if we had continued without the purifying fires of 1953, today we either would no longer exist or we would have no right of existence, because for the sake of peace we would have sacrificed the heritage God has entrusted to us.

There was also progress. This is particularly true in regard to the beautiful truth of God's covenant as we may confess it, the relationship between God and his people as a fellowship of friendship in which he is our sovereign friend and we are his peculiar possession and friend-servants.

We see, possibly more clearly than ever, that there are no conditions in God's covenant, no, not in the old dispensation and not in the new. God had privileged the church of the old dispensation to know him and to address him as Jehovah, the sovereign, eternally unchangeable, covenant God. That name strongly emphasized the sovereign friend-friend servant relationship between God and Israel. God gave Israel his name Jehovah even while Israel was still under the bondage of the law. When Jesus came, he taught his disciples, among many other things: "When ye pray, say: Our Father who art in heaven." Imagine the surprise of these men who had been taught from infancy to address God as Jehovah. It must have taken some time before they could fathom this new address in their prayers. In fact, it took until Pentecost when the Spirit of the glorified Christ was poured out in the church. This is the Spirit of adoption, who cries within the heart of the elect Jew, "Abba," and in the heart of the chosen Gentile, "Father." Together they could address God in unison as, "Abba Father." Since we are adopted as sons and daughters in God's house and are heirs of everlasting salvation, God testifies by his Spirit in our hearts, that we have the right to know him and call him our Father in Christ Jesus, our Savior and Lord.

That precious truth seals to our hearts the one and only comfort for body and soul, in life and in death, I am not my own. I belong, yes, I belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ as part of the family of the living, covenant God and as an heir of life eternal with him in glory. I shall see him in all the riches of his holiness in Christ Jesus, shall know him perfectly, and delight in his praises forever and ever! Completely, with my whole being, I will live solely to his glory! God is GOD! Soli Deo Gloria! ❖

Karen is a member of Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois, and a granddaughter of Rev. C. Hanko.

Church News

BAPTISMS

"For the promise is unto you and your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts 2:39

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

- Jenna Rae, daughter of Rob and Jill Koontz—Cornerstone, IN
Samantha Rhea, daughter of Mike and Tami Bultema—Cornerstone, IN
Grant Timothy, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Hop—First, MI
James Douglas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jim Schimmel—Holland, MI
Jacob Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Bartelds—Holland, MI
Nicholas Scott, son of Mr. & Mrs. Scott Oosterhouse—Hope, MI
Mona Rae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Rich DeMeester—Hope, MI
Luke Jordan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jordan Dykstra—Hudsonville, MI
Ashlyn Kate, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Bryant VanOverloop—Hudsonville, MI
Mark Robert, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mark Hoekstra—Hull, IA
Karyn Ranae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Chad Uittenbogaard—Hull, IA
Lucy Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Luke Griess—Loveland, CO
Logan Wayne, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jason Scritchfield—Loveland, CO
Adelle Janette, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Adam Bosman—Peace, IL
Nicole Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dwight Kuiper—Southeast, MI
Evan Ryan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tyler Pipe—Southeast, MI
Joanna Mae, daughter of Rev. & Mrs. Allen Brummel—South Holland, IL
Dirk Henry, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dan VanUffelen—South Holland, IL

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Proverbs 22:6

Public confession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made by:

- Jeff Tolsma—Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
James Bodbyl—Holland, MI
Michael Pols—Holland, MI
Randy Kuiper—Hope, MI
Heather Peterson—Hope, MI
Angie Engelsma—Hudsonville, MI
Alex Postma—Hudsonville, MI
Doug Schut—Hudsonville, MI
Derek VanderVeen—Hudsonville, MI
Megan Streyle—Southeast, MI
Carla Nelson—Southeast, MI

MARRIAGES

"For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." Psalm 48:14

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

- Mr. Tom Spriensma and Miss Shauna Schut—Georgetown, MI
Mr. David Rutgers and Miss Laura Pastoor—Hope, MI
Mr. Scott DenHerder and Miss Shannon Kamminga—Hudsonville, MI
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"LITTLE LIGHTS"

Martin Luther (8):

... *let it shine!*

95 Theses Nailed to the Door

by Connie Meyer

"As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs." Such had become of the sale of indulgences. It was a scandal.

Martin Luther set out to do something about them. A year ago Luther had warned the people of Wittenberg about indulgences in a sermon on the eve of All Saints Day. On All Saints Day it was believed that one could earn quite large indulgences for coming to the Castle Church in Wittenberg, contributing money, and viewing all the relics on display there—thousands of them: bones, hair, teeth, and more. The elector of Wittenberg had worked hard to acquire such a collection. Wittenberg was the Rome of Germany—Luther's own Wittenberg!

All Saints Day was soon approaching again and the situation was only getting worse. This time Luther decided to write down a set of theses, or statements, to discuss with his fellow professors about indulgences. He wrote 95 of them! Clearly Luther was upset and had much to say. He wrote them in Latin and nailed the placard onto the door of the Castle Church. It was the eve of All Saints Day, October 31, 1517. Many people would be visiting the Castle Church to see the relics there, including theologians and priests who would be able to read the Latin statements. He sent a copy of them to the archbishop of Germany, too. Luther did not intend all people coming to church that day to read his theses. And they all did not. Most people knew only German.

So why is this day so important to us almost 500 years later?

Because in a few weeks all the people *were* reading his theses. Someone translated them into German. In the providence of God, the printing press was a new invention and thousands of copies were soon printed. Now not just a few professors in Wittenberg were discussing Luther's statements, but all of Germany, and Europe!

Many people already disliked the sale of indulgences. They felt they were being robbed by them. This was not new. But what was new was understanding *why* indulgences were wrong. This is what Luther's theses began to explain. Indulgences not only robbed people of hard-



earned money and robbed deacons of alms for the poor, much worse, they robbed God's people of the comfort that comes from trusting in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. Here was the heart of the matter.

Understanding this was significant. Christ alone, Scripture alone, faith alone—with these truths the people were finally brought out of the darkness and

into the light. As the first rays of dawn are swiftly and surely followed by bright morning sun, the truth could no longer stay hid. The people began to understand. The Reformation was begun.

(This series of articles was primarily based on Here I Stand, A Life of Martin Luther by Roland Bainton)

Find the underlined words from the third verse of Martin Luther's famous hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," in the puzzle below:

And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us, we will not fear, for God has willed His truth to triumph through us. The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him; his rage we can endure, for lo! His doom is sure, one little word shall fell him.

L	T	G	R	I	M	H	T	U	R	T	P
P	O	H	G	U	O	H	T	C	A	N	W
R	N	W	S	H	O	U	L	D	S	I	O
I	E	O	U	P	D	N	E	S	L	H	R
N	T	R	E	M	B	L	E	L	L	G	L
C	A	D	I	U	L	N	E	I	E	U	D
E	E	H	M	I	K	D	T	V	F	O	R
G	R	I	F	R	C	T	F	E	A	R	N
A	H	U	A	T	L	U	N	D	O	H	O
R	T	D	S	E	N	D	U	R	E	T	T

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