

Beacon Lights

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*"The ear that heareth the reproof
of life abideth among the wise."
Proverbs 15:31*

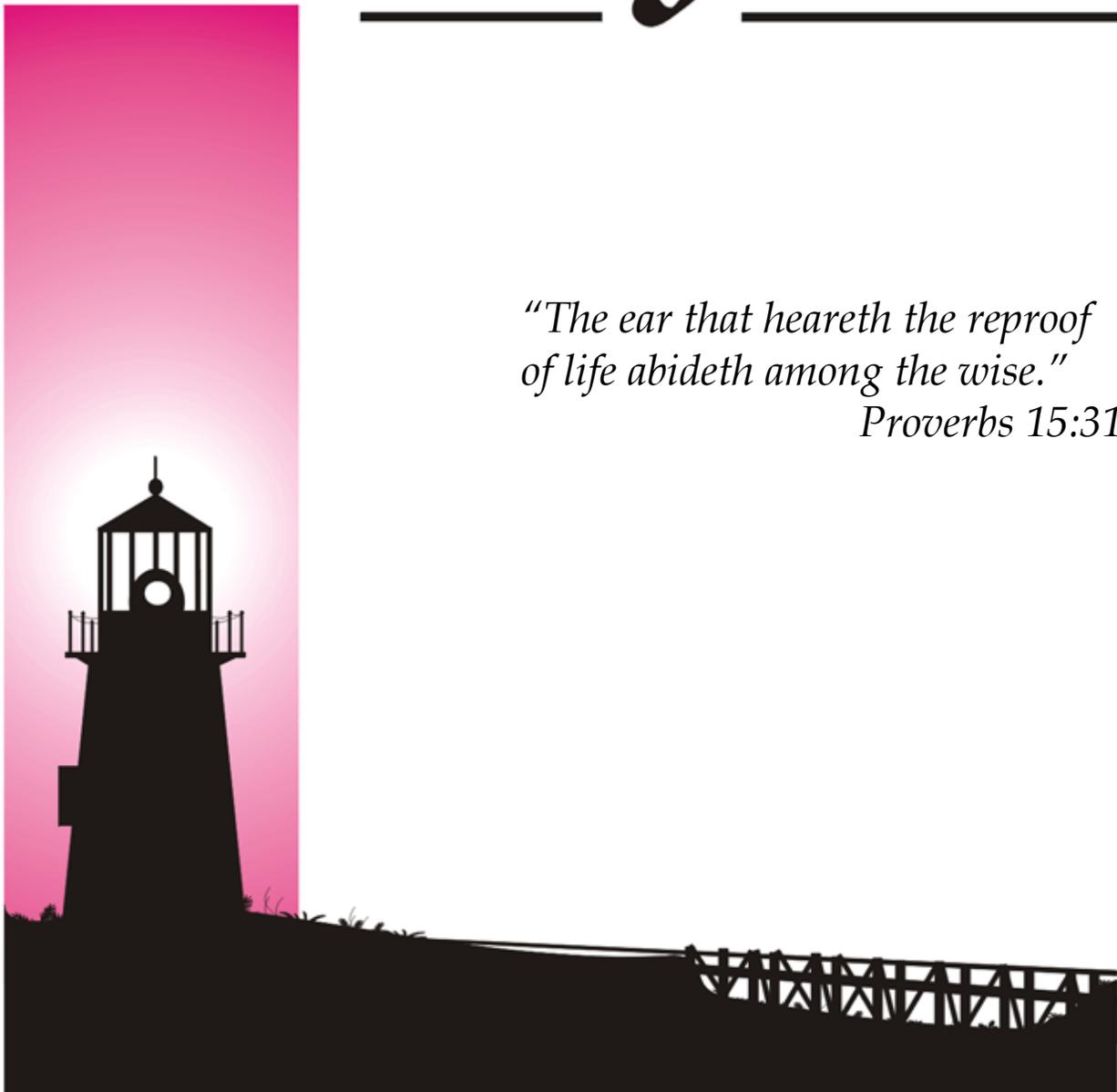


Table of Contents

	EDITORIAL
3	Why Study the History of the Church?
	STORY TIME
5	The Terror of Mohammedanism
	OUR YOUNG PEOPLE'S FEDERATION
6	Friends
	CHURCH FAMILY
8	Needed: Teachers
	DEVOTIONAL
9	Watching Daily At My Gates— March 19 – April 14
	CHURCH HISTORY
13	I Remember Herman Hoeksema: Personal Remembrances of a Great Man (6)
	GEM OF THE MONTH
15	History
	CREATION THROUGH THE SPECTACLES OF SCRIPTURE
16	Questions for Theistic Evolutionists
	CURRENT EVENTS
16	Does the Bible Teach a Blessed Future for Israel?
18	CHURCH NEWS
	LITTLE LIGHTS
19	500 Years Ago... "Let Us Find the Truth!" (1)

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Why Study the History of the Church?

by Agatha Lubbers



Christian instruction has a distinct and most unique contribution to make. It is intended to be one of the means whereby the people of God can instruct the seed of the covenant. In order to accomplish the task of covenant education, the seed of the church must be thoroughly instructed in the history of the church and must know the background and origin of the doctrines which the faithful church of the twentieth century loves and cherishes. The heritage of the church is precious and must never be spurned by those who have been sealed with the sign of the covenant in their foreheads.

In this apostatizing age it becomes increasingly important for the children of God's covenant to be aware of the firm foundation upon which the church is built and also to be thoroughly apprised of the facts of the history of God's church, as God has chosen to establish and gather his church in time through the work of his eternal Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. To appreciate and love the heritage of the church, each individual member must know the sufferings and struggles which God has sovereignly sent upon his church through all the centuries of its existence in the world.

There are at least five substantial and crucial reasons for studying the history of the Christian church. Although these reasons overlap somewhat, they are nevertheless significantly unique so that they can be used as a motivation for studying church history. They are significant enough so they can be used to satisfy those who will ask the question (which ought to be asked) concerning the need for this kind of study in the life and training of the Reformed Christian.

These five reasons are the following:

1. The Reformed Christian cannot correctly understand world history unless he understands the history of the Christian church. We adopt the position that all history is fundamentally and centrally church history. The Apostle Paul says to the church at Corinth in I Corinthians 3:21ff as follows: "...let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours: And ye are Christ's and Christ is God's." And in Colossians 1:18, 19, and 20, we read as follows: "...that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."

We can say therefore that because all history is church history and because all things happen for the sake of the church, it is essential that the history of the world be understood and studied in terms of the history of the church.

2. The Reformed Christian studies church history because the history of the church aids him in understanding the Scriptures. Although the Scriptures are perspicuous, the history of the gathering of the church, as this is recorded in the Scriptures, can be more clearly and more fully understood when these Scriptures are read and studied by one who is thoroughly familiar with the subsequent history of the church. All of history is integrated. All of history is one history. All of history is for the sake of Christ and his church. The Scriptures, which record sacred or Bible history, are also part of the record of the gather-

ing of the church by the eternal Son of God, who gathers his church out of the whole human race from the beginning of the world and until the last elect saint shall be born. The Son of God, who gathers, preserves, and defends his church by his Spirit and word, does this through the Holy Gospel, which is recorded for the saints of all ages on the pages of the holy Scriptures. This gospel which is God's means to gather the church was first revealed in Paradise to Adam and Eve, later it was published by patriarchs and prophets, it was represented by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law, and was lastly fulfilled by his only begotten Son. (cf. Heidelberg Catechism, questions 19 and 54.)

We can say therefore that the Scriptures, the infallible spectacles through which we (the members of Christ's church) understand all history, can be understood more comprehensively when historical facts and events in the later ages of the history of the church are used to aid in the investigation of the prophetic word of the Scriptures.

3. Reformed Christians, who are citizens of the universal and catholic church of Jesus Christ, have an obligation to know their own history. Young people and children desire to know the history of the country in which they have their natural and earthly citizenship. This is right. Young people wish to be acquainted with their family ancestry. They never tire of hearing the tales concerning the exploits of their grandparents. Because the Reformed Christian confesses that God gathers, defends, and preserves his church out of the whole human race by means of the instituted offices and activities of the church (eg. the preaching of the gospel, the administration of the sacraments, and Christian discipline), it is the calling of all Reformed Christians to know that history. It is the history of the Christian from the time of its initial institution in Paradise to this very day that the Reformed Christian studies.

4. The Reformed Christian also knows that the history of the church cannot be separated from the history of the development of the doctrines and dogmas of the church. So that he may understand these doctrines and dogmas, which have been developed as the Truth of the Word of God, the Reformed Christian must study the history of the times in which these doctrines were developed and correctly articulated by the church. Believers and their seed must attempt to become involved in the history of the times when these doctrines were first stated in the form that we have them today in our Ecumenical Creeds and our Reformed Confessions. The heritage of the truth is important.

5. The Reformed Christian has a calling, which is distinctive and is enormously important in these last days. He has a calling, which demands certain intellectual and spiritual accouterments so that he can fulfill that calling. The man of God must be thoroughly furnished to stand forth as a courageous and informed defender of the truth of the Word of God. In these last days the enemy of the church becomes sinister and strong. The Bible declares that even the elect would be deceived were it not for the preserving power of God. Because the "present is the fruit of the past" and the "germ of the future," the Reformed Christian is called to fight the battle of faith in the defense of the truth—a truth which was once delivered to the saints. Unless the Reformed Christian knows the battles which the church has fought in the past and through God's sovereign power has won, he cannot be strong in the present struggle. The Reformed Christian may not neglect to use the divinely ordained means for fighting the battle of faith. The Reformed Christian has to fight many of the same kinds of enemies fought by the church of the past, and there is a certain fundamental truth in II Timothy 3:7, to which he must listen. The Reformed Christian is not to be one who is "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." Although every generation must fight against the same principalities and powers, the present generations must rely upon the truth developed by the fathers, and future generations will rely upon the truth elaborated and articulated by means of the battles fought by the present generations. II Timothy 3:14a exhorts as follows: "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned...."

The battle never changes fundamentally. The Church can learn from the victories and failings of the past. Good generals in the armies of the world always study the great wars and strategy of former generals and armies. The enemy is always principally the same. "There is no new thing under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9). That means there is no totally new heresy under the sun either. The name may change, and there

may be slight mutations, but the fundamental error continues to exist. The church always fights against SIN.

The church which does not learn nor love the heritage of the truth will lapse into error.

God grant that we may be faithful and that we may cling to the certain promise given by Christ. "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." ❖

Reprinted from March 1975 Beacon Lights.

Story Time

The Terror of Mohammedanism

by Rev. M. Gritters

It has been said by Christ, and afterwards by his apostles, that false prophets would arise and would deceive many, that is, that many would follow them. One of these great false prophets was Mohammed, he was indeed the great prophet of the lie.

Mohammed was born about 569, in Mecca, Arabia. In early childhood he already showed that he possessed a keen mind and at an early date showed a religious bent of mind. At the age of 13 he visited the bazaars of Damascus where he came into contact with the various streams of religion which at that time criss-crossed through Eurasia. He despised polytheism (the worship of many gods) and desired a "religion" which had but one god instead of many. And no doubt, his active mind was much attracted to this subject.

During the fast of Ramadan, Mohammed is supposed to have spent a few weeks in a cave near Mecca for religious exercises. And here he is supposed to have seen a vision which from that moment on fired his mind to fanatical excesses. The angel Gabriel is supposed to have appeared to him and to have said to him, "There is but one God and Mohammed is his prophet." Notice, by the way, that as true as the first part of the quotation is, so false is the last part. A mixture of truth and lie—ever antichrist's most powerful weapon.

Mohammed now turned to the world as her great prophet. Moses and Jesus were great prophets, but Mohammed was the greatest of them all. He alone would and could bring them the knowledge of God (but, indeed, their god was Allah), so he pretended. After much labor

he managed to convert his wife. At the end of three years of oratory and persuasion he had won but forty converts. Besides, the "guardians of the national idols" would not allow a one-god system. Persecution developed, and the fanatical prophet had to flee to Medina (the Hegira). Here, however, he was received as an accredited messenger from heaven. Mohammed was gaining success. But thirsty for more success than oratory and persuasion could produce, he turned to the sword and decided to spread the faith by means of war. Early he had incorporated into the Koran (their man-made bible) that to whomever died on the battle-field, fighting for Mohammed, heaven's doors would open wide. Yes, and in proportion to the number of "enemies" the mohammedan soldier killed, his joy in heaven would increase.

Spurred on by such wicked and preposterous ideas, the armies of Mohammed soon took to the field, bent now on forcing the faith upon all nations and peoples, baptizing them in their own blood if indeed they did not accept the new religion, otherwise baptizing them in the name of the great Allah and his prophet.

In the meantime Mohammed died, but others arose to lead the inflamed armies. With the inverted half-moon on their banners, riding on Arabian steeds to speed them on, the Moslem hordes pressed first into Syria (which at one time was the center of Christianity). Nothing could hold them. Damascus fell, the walls of Jerusalem toppled, Antioch's power crumbled under their onslaughts, and in a short time the hordes overran Mesopotamia, leaving behind them a crippled if not paralyzed Christianity.

From there the success-mad armies swept on into Persia, they soon conquered the religion of Zoroaster and sacked the Persian empire. Next their war steeds carried them over central Asia, headed now for another citadel of ancient religion, Egypt. After a year of offense and assault Alexandria fell and the mighty Egypt toppled with her. In due time Carthage was razed and North Africa succumbed to the emblem of the inverted moon.

They then turned to Constantinople. But here they failed most miserably. They turned again to the west. Through treachery Spain fell into Moslem hands. Now the way was open for a direct attack upon the mainland of Europe and with that an attack upon Christianity in its new house. With the one tip of the inverted moon on the Gibraltar, the other touching the Bosphorus, they sought now to round its arch and overspread all Europe.

Northward they went, toward what is now Germany, France, Netherlands and finally England.

On their way through France they met the army of the Franks (Germans) under the leadership of Charles Martel. In a pitched battle they met at Tours and here the Moslem army was not only defeated but routed and was sent back to confinement on the shores of the Mediterranean. This marked the end of the Moslem march.

Almost the dragon, the beast and the false prophet had destroyed the woman fleeing in the desert, but God keeps watch. So far could the Moslem danger go and no further. His Moslem armies had done his bidding, and as an ax which has done its work, were cast away. But God's church was kept safe. None can destroy her.

Eleven centuries have passed—it is still his church, beloved in his Son, and he is the same God. ❖

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Our Young People's Federation

Friends

by Jennie Kiel

The doctrine of the covenant teaches us that life long bonds of friendship and fellowship are an essential aspect of life in the church. What role do our "good Christian schools" play in developing such relationships?

Good Christian schools play a huge part with who our children become friends. By doing this, our children make friends of God's covenant people, and not those people of the world. They spend all their day with elect children of God, instead of wicked, reprobate people of the world.

First off, if we send our children to a public school, they become influenced by the children they see every-day of their lives. They would be spending around 35 hours a week in the presence of unbelieving children, not to mention extra curricular activities, sports, and anything else school-related our child is engaged in. It would almost be impossible for our child not to make friends in his school. If he spends this much time with

them, then he will probably befriend some of the kids at his school. If we punish our child for doing this, then we really should punish ourselves also. We put them in that public school, causing temptation to come all around him. All his friends are doing something on Friday night, and he wants to go too. But we say no. He wants to go over to a kid from school's house, but we say no. It is good that we are saying no, but, our child is going to grow up a lonely, young man. He won't know what the word "friend" really means. He will have no true friendships. Sure, he has classmates who talk to him during the school day, but no one to be with after school, who he can really call a friend.

Sending our children to a public high school is even more risky than an elementary school. When children become teenagers, they tend not to always listen. If their parents say "No, don't go over to his house," then that gives the rebellious teenager a reason to go! Teens give into peer pressure a lot easier than a child in elemen-

tary school would give into it. Also, when we become teenagers, we start looking for a mate; and where would be a great place to look for a mate? In the schools, of course. At a public school would be the worst place for our son or daughter to find a mate. I'm not saying there are absolutely none of God's people in public school, but there are many with the name "Christian." They are so-called Christians. They are Christians outwardly, but not inwardly. Our child may be confused by this, and start "falling for them." Before you know it, they get serious and end up marrying a wicked person of this world. But what did we expect when we sent him to a public school? Did we think he wouldn't talk to anyone at his school? He didn't know any Protestant Reformed kids his age. Sure, he went to church with them, but no one knew who he was, and he didn't know who they were. I'm not justifying the sin of this young person, but it just comes to show the importance of a Christian school.

We want our children to be influenced by these kinds of people, not the people at public schools. If our children spend 35+ hours a week with these kids, then we have something to rejoice in. Children in our Christian schools will make friends with other children in the school. They can learn from one another, and talk about matters together. They believe in the same God. That is the most important thing they can have in common. Also, teenagers now can start looking for mates in their schools. We want our children to look for their future husband or wife in our Christian schools. It is always a great blessing when parents know their son or daughter is dating someone of the same faith.

Some important texts I found in Scripture that show the warning of making friends of this world are:

1) James 4:4 "...know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." This is teaching us that if we become friends of the world, then we become enemies of God. The words are very clear to us. We must not make friends of this world, if we want to be friends of God.

2) II Corinthians 6:14 "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

This text is teaching us that we don't believe with the people of this world. We have nothing in common. We are light; they are darkness—complete opposites.

3) Isaiah 8:20 "...if they speak not, according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

Once again, the wicked people of this world have

no light in them. They have complete darkness. We can not mix our light with their darkness.

4) Matthew 7:20 "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

Some important texts I found in Scripture that show the blessedness of making friends of God's Covenant people are:

1) I John 1:7 "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

If we walk in the light, we can be assured that Jesus Christ has washed us from all our sins.

2) Ephesians 5:8 "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light."

God tells us to walk as children of the light. We do this by walking with other children of God in home, church, and school.

Christian school should be very important to the true child of God. They are an important part of our godly walk with other. I, myself, went to a Christian school, not a Protestant Reformed school, but a Christian school. There is no Protestant School is Kalamazoo so my parents decided to send me to another Christian school. There were two Protestant Reformed teachers there though. I was very thankful for that. My school was a great school. I was around my Protestant Reformed friends from church, and I also made a very good friend who was United Reformed. I "knew her by her fruits" and could tell she was a child of God. Without my Christian school, I would not have all these great, godly friends that I have today. My boyfriend did go to the Protestant Reformed school in Grand Rapids. I know he is very thankful for that too. I am too. He got a great education by godly teachers. Through his school, I went to various school functions that Covenant had, and I got to know many other Protestant Reformed young people. The Christian school is a great place to walk as children of the light with other children of the light. ❖

Jennie is a member of Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, Michigan. She wrote this article for the Protestant Reformed Young People's Scholarship.

Needed: Teachers

by Michelle Drnek

How important do you consider Christian education to be? Is Protestant Reformed Christian education valuable? Do you recognize the needs of our schools and consider how you can be used of God in them?

I recently finished reading two volumes by Paul Kienel called *A History of Christian School Education*. It was amazing to see the emphasis God's people have placed on Christian education since the time of Jesus. It was important to them to replace pagan education with godliness, to enable their children to read and understand the Scriptures, and to train them in the fear of the Lord. Through many periods of persecution, this education has continued. The zeal for Christian education was renewed at the time of the Reformation. In more recent history, many Christian schools began when public schools became more secular.

Take a look at our own churches. What blessing the Lord has given! Two years ago Lacombe was able to establish a school. This year a new high school was opened in Northwest Iowa. And, Lord willing, Wingham will open a school this coming fall. Besides this, our churches have seen much internal growth so that some of our grade schools and high schools anticipate having to split classes or build extra rooms. Our schools are flourishing!

Are you zealous for Protestant Reformed education? One way to show your love for the children and youth of God's church is to consider becoming a teacher. I would encourage young people to consider this calling. Parents, if you see a gift in your children, encourage them to teach!

Teaching is not for everyone. But there is a great need for godly teachers in our schools. This year some of our schools had a hard time finding teachers. Because of this, there are some young women teaching who would like to be and should be at home caring for their children. These women have felt that the need of the children of the covenant was important and could not be ignored. The work of our schools must go on!

Already there are many bulletin announcements about the need for teachers this coming fall, and more job

openings are likely to come up soon when teachers are given the opportunity to sign contracts. Without knowing exactly who is graduating from college, I would dare say that the demand for teachers exceeds the number of available teachers. There is a great need! It is an obligation to teach our children in the fear of the Lord! This obligation becomes very difficult to carry out if there are not teachers to do the work.

Anyone who has taught knows that teaching is not a simple job. For one thing, it is very demanding of your time. No, it is not an 8:00 to 3:00 job for nine months of the year! Much preparation goes into planning lessons, grading papers and decorating the classroom. And while all of those things are an important part of the work, the most demanding aspect is probably the spiritual care of the children, much like Paul spoke of the care and concern he had for the churches (II Corinthians 11:28).

As difficult as the work can be, teaching is also a blessing. For one thing, at how many jobs are you given the opportunity to open the day with devotions and singing? Also, to see the students learn and grow, especially spiritually, is a precious gift. God uses our teachers for the up-building of his church.

The Lord knows that we need more than just teachers; we need godly teachers. A pastor named Dr. Robert Candlish, speaking for a group of Presbyterian ministers who were beginning their own schools in Scotland, said this: "We (ministers) depend upon the prayers of God's people. We know that many make it a business to pray for spiritual pastors; we urge them to pray also for spiritual teachers... Many pray for us, and for a blessing on our instructions, but few pray for the teachers of their own children, that God would send among the lambs of the flock a shepherd after his own heart" (Kienel, *A History of Christian Education* Vol. 2, p. 296).

Pray for those who teach in our schools. Pray for God to provide teachers. And pray that, if it is his will, God may use you in our schools for his glory. ❖

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

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter

March 19 Read Psalm 37:1-6

In this Psalm we have many beautiful expressions for the child of God to grasp. We worry about those around us. We worry that they will oppress us. We are envious because they have more than we do. Notice in this short section we have two verses to that thought and then four to God's wonderful care over us. Notice the three commands: Trust, Delight, and Commit. Notice the order. Read these expressions again. Meditate upon them. And then pray for his help to make them yours. Sing Psalter 95.

March 20 Read Psalm 37:7-15

It has always been the lot of the child of God not to be patient. We want things to happen immediately. We might see something in the world around us or see someone else with something, and we feel we should have it as well. Or, as the other thought of these verses states, we see the wicked coming against us, and we cannot be patient for God's justice. Verse eleven sounds like one of the beatitudes. We must take comfort in such thoughts and wait for our God to give to us the victory. It will happen; wait patiently. Sing Psalter 96.

March 21 Read Psalm 37:16-22

There are many comparisons throughout this Psalm. Several of them are found in this section. We see responsibility must accompany whatever material blessings God gives to us. There is also the comfort found in whatever God gives to us whether it be much or little. Our most important blessing is not found on this earth; it is a heavenly blessing. Notice in verse 21 the result of that spiritual blessing; God's people are to be merciful. Here we find the basis for the principal of the diaconate. The more I read through this Psalm, the more gems I find in it. Take time to read it over and over. Sing Psalter 97.

March 22 Read Psalm 37:23-31

There are several thoughts in this part of the Psalm. First of all we see the earthly life of the child of God. God will always be with him. Even though we may enter a situation that we think unfavorable, God will be with

us and care for us. What a glorious realization that is! Secondly, God's people must reflect the mercy that he shows to us. This is part of the true religion that James urges us to carry out. Finally, the second part of that true religion is found in the last part of this section. We must walk in the law of God daily. When we do these two things, we can be assured that we are keeping the two great commandments to love God and the neighbor. Sing Psalter 98.

March 23 Read Psalm 37:32-40

There are several verses in this last section of Psalm 37 which would help the Christian throughout his life. Verse 24 gives advice that we would all do well to heed. "Wait on the Lord"! Most of us are not good at waiting. We want answers to our questions now. In the New Testament God, through various writers, teaches us that in our lives we must learn patience with his ways. When we see God's ways, we must keep them. Secondly we see verse 39. Many people in today's world look for plans of salvation from any calamity. What does God tell us? Our salvation is from our covenant-keeping God. He will be our strength in the time of trouble. We will have troubles, but we will have his strength to keep us during those troubles. Thanks be to God. Sing Psalter 99.

March 24 Read John 1:1-5

There are those who say that Genesis 1-6 comprise a myth. They also say that those chapters can be removed from Scripture and not affect our salvation. Those who do that must also remove John 1:1-5. And then you see that it affects our salvation as these verses speak plainly of Christ by whom and for whom all things were made. Christ is our Savior; to remove the creation story is to remove our Savior. Then what do we have? These are most comforting verses. They show us that all things are in our Savior's hand. He will never forsake his creation of which we are a part. Thanks be to God. Sing Psalter 85.

March 25 Read John 1:6-10

In the first verses of this chapter we saw that Jesus is the Word by whom all things were created. Here in these verses we see Jesus as the light. We know what a wonderful thing light is. When a child awakens in the night it is comforting to him to see the little night-light burning. When we are faced with an emergency at night, light is important to figure out what to do. John in his gospels will show that Christ came for men of very race, for Gentiles, and for us. That is the implication of verse 9. Jesus is our light, and as light he shows to us the way of salvation. Even though the darkness of sin may overwhelm us at times, he is the light to show us the way out of that morass. Thanks be to God for the gift of the true Light. Sing Psalter 71.

March 26 Read John 1:11-18

Again we have a passage full of meaning. The crux of the matter is verse 14, Christ came into the world to bring to his people, given to him by the Father, salvation. Our salvation comes by the means of grace and truth. Grace is that unmerited favor toward his people by God. Truth is the absolute knowledge only possessed by God about all things. The Jews of old tried to find salvation by the works of the law. Many in this world try to find salvation by their own works. It is most comforting to us to know that salvation is by grace alone. That's the truth, and there is no other way. This is the comforting way of salvation. When we face death, whether it be the death of an old pilgrim, a young saint, or someone taken in what we call "the prime of life", this gives to us the comfort that those who are the Father's will be saved. Is there anything more comforting than that? Sing Psalter 65.

March 27 Read John 1:19-23

Here we see a faithful man of God. He had every opportunity to claim Christ's identity for his own. But he knew and confessed what he really was. He was the forerunner or as he put it "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." This is what true preaching should be. Ministers should show to the people the way of the Lord. That way is a way of patient waiting for his return. We should not go to church expecting the latest philosophy or self-help instruction, we should go seeking God's way. John the Baptist understood that well. Later he says that he had to become less popular so that the real Word was known. Let us seek the Word made flesh. Let us seek the way of Jehovah. Sing Psalter 334.

March 28 Read John 1:24-34

John the Baptist continues to point the way to Christ. That way to which he points is the way that leads Christ

to the cross as the ultimate sacrifice-the Lamb of God. John was a witness that Jesus was the Messiah even as he baptized Jesus. God sent the Holy Spirit in the form of the dove not only to strengthen Jesus, but also to confirm to John that this was the true Lamb of God. And now John seeks to teach the people and us about Christ. Israel was looking for a Christ. They would later manifest that this was not the Christ they wanted. Are we looking for the Christ? Do we want the Lamb of God? Sing Psalter 140.

March 29 Read John 1:35-41

There are two points in these verses to which I wish to draw your attention. First of all we again see evidence of the humility of John the Baptist as he directs two of his disciples to now follow Jesus. This is a true humility as he turns any spotlight away from himself on to Jesus. Secondly, we see Andrew's concern for his brother as he finds him and takes him to Jesus. We must have this concern first of all, of course for our own family, but secondly for any God has placed in our path. We must show this ultimate concern as children of the heavenly Father. May we daily seek to follow these examples. Sing Psalter 369.

March 30 Read John 1:42-51

Jesus continues to collect those who would be his disciples and later would be ordained as apostles. Each of them has his own characteristics. Each of them would work in the church with those characteristics. It is no different today. The church is made up of men and women with different characteristics. Each of them make up the whole body of Christ using those characteristics in God's service. He has a place for us and will use us according to those gifts that he has given to us. May we all be like Nathaneal-true Israelites with no guile. May we all confess that Jesus is the Son of God, King of his church. Let us "work out our salvation with fear and trembling" using what gifts God has given to us. Sing Psalter 368.

April 1 Read John 2:1-11

Here we have the familiar account of Jesus's first miracle. Even though miracles themselves are astonishing, what they picture is even more astonishing. We cannot look at a miracle unless we see grace. For in every miracle is a picture of the grace that brings us to salvation. Jesus himself pointed toward that salvation when he said, "Mine hour is not yet come." He knew he had an hour to work. That hour was the time he spent on the cross. For us that is truly the miracle. Even in death this miracle works for God's people. For even in death salvation is present for those who have been chosen

before the foundation of the world. In the wonders we see daily, we must see the wonderful gift of grace given to us by Christ. Sing Psalter 215.

April 2 Read John 2:12-17

Does the zeal of our Father's house eat us up? Are we as jealous for the church as our eldest Brother was? Because Jesus lived in the old dispensation the physical building was still important. Therefore to see the temple desecrated as it had been pained him. We live in the age in which we must worship in spirit and truth. Therefore it is not the physical but the spiritual over which we must be zealous. Do we prepare for church as we should? Do we seek to be there week in and week out? Does it pain us when we are unable to attend church, or when things are not done decently and in good order? The day will come in which we may not be able to worship as we do now. Let us take advantage of the freedom which we have, and worship our heavenly Father properly. Sing Psalter 311.

April 3 Read John 2:18-25

Notice verses 24-25. Jesus knows all men. Stop and think about that for a moment. In Jesus's day and in ours, there are many who clamor after religion. They do so for many reasons. Do they do so for the right reasons? Some like to follow a crowd. Some think it is the "in" thing to do. Our following and believing must be of those who wish to be redeemed in the blood of the Lamb. Not many in that day or today want to believe in a bloody sacrifice. What about us? Whom do we confess as Savior? Do we believe in the miracle of the resurrection? May we cling to that miracle, and may we seek the Lamb of God who was slain for our sins. Sing Psalter 83.

April 4 Read John 3:1-8

Here we have a very well known but misunderstood chapter of Scripture. Do we like Nicodemus lack the faith to come to Jesus openly? Do we shy away from letting our lights shine before others? Jesus exposed Nicodemus immediately. Instead of basking in Nicodemus' platitudes, he asks of Nicodemus' faith. And in doing so, he taught him the wonderful doctrine of regeneration. He taught him that regeneration like all of salvation is not man's work. None of Nicodemus' Phariseeistic works, none of our "good" works will profit us anything. As a hymn puts it, "Not what my hands have done..." Let us rejoice in God's work in us, and let us let our lights shine before men that our Father in heaven be glorified. Sing Psalter 278.

April 5 Read John 3:9-17

Can you believe the love shown in verse 16? Often the beauty of this verse is obscured by the wrong interpretations concerning it. We may think we love someone. We may think we have love toward a parent, a spouse, a child, or someone else that is very precious to us. That love is only a faint, dim reflection of the love God has for us and his creation. He loved what he had made, and he sent his Son to appease his wrath because of our sin. Israel of the Old Testament only had types and shadows of what this love was. We, by faith, know this love intimately. Let us daily give thanks for the love God shows to us by our sanctified walk made possible by Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Sing Psalter 109.

April 6 Read John 3:18-24

The requirement for salvation is to believe in the name of Christ. The only way to accomplish this requirement is through the regeneration accomplished by the Holy Spirit. Nicodemus had to learn this fact; we, too, must know that there is only one way to salvation. It is not what we do; it is what God had done because he loved the world. We must love the light, we must walk in the light; we must do the deeds of the light. There is no other way. Sing Psalter 88.

April 7 Read John 3:25-36

Notice verse 35. Here we see evidence of the blessed covenant of friendship that God has within himself but has also graciously extended to us. The Father loves the Son! He loves us as well. All things have been given to Christ concerning the salvation of his people. All things! No matter what happens to us in the life, it is in Christ's hand, and by implication it is in God's hand as well. All things work together for good to them the love God! This is a great comfort. This is a great benefit for us in our salvation. Our hearts need not be troubled in affliction, because that affliction is in the hand of Christ who showed no greater love in that he died for his friends. Many times in our lives we may worry that Christ is not controlling something. We may worry that something bad may take our salvation from us. We need not worry; all things are in Christ's hands and because all things are in his hands our salvation and everlasting life is sure. Thanks be to God. Sing Psalter 62.

April 8 Read John 4:1-6

There are two ideas of importance in this short passage of Scripture. First of all verse 4. Jesus had to go through Samaria. What a wonderful thought that was for the woman! What a wonderful thought that is for us! He had needs to come to this earth. We were those needs. We,

whom the Father had given Jesus, needed salvation. He was the only way in which that salvation could be accomplished. Secondly look at verse 6. Only a Jesus who could tire could accomplish that salvation for us. Man had sinned. Only man could pay for those sins. Israel had killed thousands of animals. Their blood was only a picture of the blood of the Lamb who was sacrificed for his people. Jesus would die for us. What a comfort to know that we have a Lamb! Sing Psalter 262.

April 9 Read John 4:7-15

Can you imagine the surprise of this woman when Jesus said that she should ask him for water? Jesus got her attention, however. Does he have our attention? Do we ask for living water? We, too, need this living water. Nothing on this earth can have the effect of a drink from the water of life. This is John's message over the past few chapters. Salvation is from Christ alone. We must seek the "Word who dwelt among us." Even this seeking is only by faith as Jesus draws us to him. Because we have that Word so close to us, let us seek him daily by reading the Bible, meditating upon it, and through prayer. Then we will be truly refreshed ready to face the day. Sing Psalter 333.

April 10 Read John 4:16-24

Man wishes to worship. That is his nature as is testified in Romans 1. But not all men worship correctly. They worship idols, people, and often themselves. We must worship God. Christ has brought a new manner of worship to his people. No more would they worship at Jerusalem with the worship of types and shadows. Now the church must worship in spirit and truth. That must be our worship. We must worship the living God in Spirit. Our worship must be the true worship that he has ordained in Scripture. Each week as we attend the house of God as he permits us, we must make sure that the hallmarks of worship as given by Christ are present. There is no other way. Sing Psalter 349.

April 11 Read John 4:25-29

"Come see a man..." Do we do this? After listening to or reading the Word of God, do we go find our friends and tell them about it? Are we willing to confess Christ to others? This is what we must do. We must not hide our light under a bushel; we must let the light that God has lit within us shine. For this woman to tell the townspeople to come listen to a Jew was not an easy thing. But she knew that here was the truth, and it did not matter what nationality he was, her friends needed the truth. This must be our reaction to hearing the truth. Each of us must do

this in the office of believer as prophets. May God give us the grace to say, "Come see a man." Sing Psalter 36.

April 12 Read John 4:30-38

Fields white unto harvest. What a picture our Lord gives to us! We who live in an area in which we see this every fall can understand what he is saying. Do we understand the picture? Do we know that God's people are out there waiting to hear the word? Each of us in the office of believer may have opportunity to bring that word to men and women just like the Samaritan woman. Some of the boys and men may have the special calling of minister. We need them to fulfill the calling that God has given to us. As we read his word, hear his word from the mouths of faithful preachers, and meditate on that word, each of us must then take that word and use it. Each of us in some way can help with the harvest. Sing Psalter 195.

April 13 Read John 4:39-45

Notice the difference between the two groups of people mentioned here. The Samaritans believed because of the Word that Jesus preached unto them. The Galileans received him, because they saw the miracles. They were not interested in the Word of God. They wanted miracles. What about us? Do we believe because we hear the word of God that is Christ, or do we only receive him because we thought the church service suited us? There is a big difference, you know. We must listen to the word preached, and we must believe because of that word alone. That is the true gospel and the one that we must cling to by faith. Let our worship be one of Spirit and truth for that is the true worship of Jehovah God of our salvation. Sing Psalter 40.

April 14 Read John 4:46-54

Again we see the contrast between those from Jesus's hometown and a true believer. In verse 48 Jesus is speaking in the plural to a group of people. That group of people is those from Galilee who want more signs and wonders. In verse 50 Jesus is speaking in the singular to the nobleman. That nobleman believed. That is this portion of Scripture put very succinctly. Do we believe? We might want to see a miracle, but we have the word. Yes, we may have sick ones to whom we would like to see health given. If it is the Father's will, than health will be given. If that is not his will, we have the assurance that Father's will is best. Let us pray with another father, "Lord I believe, help thou my unbelief." Sing Psalter 187.

I Remember Herman Hoeksema: Personal Remembrances of a Great Man (6)

by Prof. David J. Engelsma

A Pastoral Heart (cont.)

Herman Hoeksema had the heart of a pastor.

His sermons were a public expression of his pastoral heart, as I demonstrated in the previous article.

I saw this heart in Hoeksema's ministry "from house to house" (Acts 20:20).

It was the late spring of 1960.

Grandpa Jasper Koole was dying. He asked me whether Rev. Hoeksema would be willing to call on him as he, Grandpa Koole, lay on what he knew to be his deathbed. And would I make the request of Rev. Hoeksema for him. The reason he asked me was that I had just enrolled to enter the Protestant Reformed Seminary in the fall of 1960.

Jasper Koole was a lifelong, faithful member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In fact, he was a charter member of First Church. He suffered the reproach of Christ with Herman Hoeksema, the consistory, and many other members of Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church in being cast out of the Christian Reformed Church for the confession of the sovereign, particular grace of God in Jesus Christ.

But Jasper Koole, who believed in Jesus Christ as presented in the gospel, was plagued with doubt concerning his salvation. For many years, he remained only a baptized member of First Church. At the baptism of his first three children, Jasper Koole remained seated and silent as Bessie, his wife, stood before the large congregation of First Church, answering the questions of the baptism form and holding the children as the minister sprinkled them with water in the name of the triune God. Only when the fourth child was to be baptized was he able to make public confession of his faith and thus present his child for baptism. Jasper Koole was forty.

His children relate that when First Church celebrated the Lord's Supper, their father would walk them to church from Batavia Place, see his wife and them into the sanctuary, and then disappear. For the hour and a half of the service, he would walk the streets of Grand Rapids, until the service of the holy Supper was finished.

Then he would appear again to walk them home. He felt himself unworthy even to be present at a worship service that included the Supper of the body and the blood of the Savior.

My mother tells how, as a child, she stumbled upon her father in his bedroom, wholly unaware of her presence, on his knees at the side of the bed, groaning aloud to God over his sins.

Therein was not his weakness.

Whether we groan aloud (and this is not foreign to any believer), all believers abhor themselves on account of their sinfulness and sins. "O wretched man that I am!" (Rom. 7:24) It is no small part of our sin that we do not abhor ourselves sufficiently. We ought to be on our knees groaning over our guilt and shame more than we are. Much more.

But the weakness of Jasper Koole was his failure to trust the promise of the gospel to every penitent sinner, even such a great sinner as Jasper Koole knew himself to be (and as every one of us in fact is), that God will forgive his sins for the sake of the death of Jesus Christ.

This was a grievous weakness.

There were reasons for the weakness, reasons for doubting his salvation. Not excuses or justification, for there is no excuse or justification for the sin of unbelieving doubt. But reasons.

Grandpa Koole was a Zeelander, having emigrated with his parents to the United States from that province in the Netherlands when he was three years old. Zeelanders are given to feelings in religion. They are prone to mysticism and doubt.

His upbringing in the home (how vital, how determinative is a child's upbringing at home! parents, take heed!) was heavily influenced by the "nadere reformatie" ("further reformation"), Zeeland being a very fertile field for that movement of religious feelings, with its insistence that all children of church members are unregenerated until they grow up and have an extraordinary experience; its overpowering message of the darkness of sin with hardly a note of deliverance or a ray of light

for the miserable sinner in the glad tidings of the abounding grace of God in the cross of Christ; its urging of doubt of one's salvation as normal for most, if not all, church members for many years; its supercilious criticism of believers in other churches who dare to be sure of their salvation as "light," that is, superficial, people (as though assurance were a vice and doubt, a virtue); and its strong suggestion, if not blunt assertion, that the only way to be certain of salvation is the experience of an extraordinary, mysterious, mystical experience.

The gloomy and mystical Puritan theology of the "further reformation" is powerful, stubbornly resistant to the preaching of the gospel of certainty and assurance. It took years of Hoeksema's preaching of grace to heal Jasper Koole's disease of doubt. Even then, the struggle with doubt continued.

And a reason was Satan, malignant minister of doubt (as the Holy Spirit is the blessed agent of certainty), who is delighted to use a corrupted Reformed theology, bad spiritual physicians of the souls of church members, and misled parents to deprive multitudes of professing people of God of the assurance of salvation.

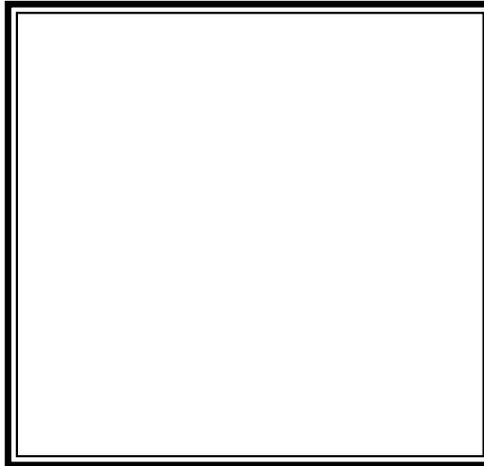
Now Grandpa Koole lay dying.

As the dark shadows of death deepen, our sins rise up against us in their exceeding great number and in their exceeding great evil. In the deep shadows of death appear the minions of the prince of darkness for the final assault. "Can you be a child of God? You? Remember your sins! Here they are! Look at them! Did you ever really love God? Did you ever really do anything for his sake? And if you cry out, you wretch, that you believe in Jesus, are you sure? Absolutely sure? The God who stands on the other side of your last breath, which comes quickly, awaits your entrance into eternity, to damn you."

The climactic struggle of faith against doubt.

Especially for a Zeelander, brought up to doubt, doubting for forty years, struggling with doubt all his life.

Would Rev. Hoeksema be willing to call on him? Grandpa Koole was serious with the question. He wondered whether Rev. Hoeksema would be willing. To Grandpa Koole, Rev. Hoeksema was a great man of God, probably far too busy with important duties of the church to call on the likes of Jasper Koole. Justifiably, too busy. Grandpa Koole knew himself to be an insignifi-



Jasper Koole (1887–1960)
FROM THE ARCHIVES OF DAVID J. ENGELSMA

cant member of First Church, as by all human standards he was. He was not sure Rev. Hoeksema would even know who he was. He mentioned that Rev. Hoeksema had never visited him at his home, at least socially (which struck me as very strange, being myself a member of a small church in which the minister visited with all the families).

I called Rev. Hoeksema. Would he pay a pastoral visit to his dying parishioner, Jasper Koole? Unsure whether he did indeed know Grandpa Koole, I began identifying my grandfather. Rev. Hoeksema interrupted

me, "I know Jasper Koole. I will be over right away. Will you be there to let me in?"

Within the hour, the big car pulled up to the curb on Thomas Street. I led Rev. Hoeksema to the little bedroom where a wan and wasted Jasper Koole lay on his deathbed. Then I shut the door on the two old men, Rev. Hoeksema, age seventy-four, and my grandfather, age seventy-three.

No human knows what went on in that room. Neither Grandpa Koole nor Rev. Hoeksema ever said a word to me or to anyone else what went on between them, and between the devils of hell and the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

But today I am as sure of what was said there as if I had listened at the door.

Jasper Koole cried out in misery about his sins and in fear about his salvation.

Hoeksema heard him out.

When Grandpa Koole had finished, Hoeksema responded in the house of his parishioner, whom he loved as one of Christ's own, as he had preached Sunday after Sunday in the pulpit of First Church. I can hear Hoeksema begin by affirming that Jasper Koole was as great a sinner as he confessed himself to be, indeed, worse, far worse. There is no way to assurance of salvation by denying or minimizing sin. Then he brought to Jasper Koole, penitent sinner and believer, the promise of God himself, who cannot lie, that his sins were forgiven and blotted out for the sake of the cross of Christ, in the eternal love of God for him, so that death for Jasper Koole would be entrance into eternal life and glory.

Certainly!

Absolutely certainly!

Without any doubt!

Having read the Bible and prayed, Rev. Hoeksema

went his way.

Within a month or so, Grandpa Koole died in faith's assurance of salvation.

Not without the means of a genuinely pastoral heart, a heart able and willing to bring the comfort of the gospel, both publicly from the pulpit and from house to house.

Many thousands have died, and will die, as Jasper Koole died and as God wills his beloved people to die, in the assurance of salvation and in the confidence of the

resurrection, by means of the gospel—the pure, sound Reformed faith—as preached by Herman Hoeksema and by those whom he instructed.

With God, this counts for greatness.
Because it is from God. ❖

Prof. Engelsma is professor emeritus of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary.

Gem of the Month

History

Time/Infinity

*In the beginning God created time.
Before that, there was GOD...
Always—in eternity, stretching out forever—
Our finite minds cannot really grasp infinity.*

*In time the first six days
Our God created all things by His all-
powerful Word.
God did not use a million years...
He spoke and it came forth.*

*The Triune God was always there:
In the beginning was the Word,
And the Word was with God,
And the Word was God.*

The Word

*The Word was made flesh and dwelt
among us.
We beheld His glory,
The glory of the only begotten of the Father
Full of grace and truth.*

*That Word was the pure expression of
the Father:
Perfection! As God is perfect.
Filled with unfathomable love:
He is the essence of love.*

*There is no love apart from Him;
We love Him because He first loved us.
Greater love hath no man than this:
That a man lay down His life for His friends.*

Children of God

*Mortals, lost in a mire of sin and
corruption;
There is none that doeth good; no, not one!
Yet because of the infinite love of the Holy One
His chosen people were lifted from that mire.*

*Unutterable transformation: the filthy
and defiled,
The hopelessly depraved
Through the precious blood shed on Calvary
Became children of the Living God!*

*The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all
sin.
God sees not our sin and guilt;
He sees us through the blood of the Lamb;
He sees Christ's righteousness as ours,
Hallelujah!*

Thelma Westra

Questions for Theistic Evolutionists (and “progressive creationists”)

<http://www.cprf.co.uk/articles.htm>

1. The Bible says, “God is good,” and God described his just-finished creation as “very good” (Gen. 1:31). How do you understand the goodness of God if he used evolution, “nature red in tooth and claw,” to “create” everything?

2. The Bible says Adam was created from “the dust of the ground” and would return to the dust when he died because of his sin. If you believe that the dust from which Adam was created represents an ape from which he evolved, did he turn back into an ape when he died?

3. According to the evolutionist’s understanding, fossils show death, disease and bloodshed before the evolution of people. Doesn’t that mean that you can’t believe the Bible when it says that everything is in “bondage to decay” (Romans 8) because of Adam’s sin. In the evolutionary view, hasn’t the “bondage to decay” always been there? And if death and suffering did not arise with Adam’s sin and the resulting curse, how can Jesus’ suffering and physical death pay the penalty for sin and give us eternal life, as the Bible clearly says (e.g., I Cor. 15:22: “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all shall be made alive”).

4. If the Genesis accounts of creation, the fall, the origin of nations, the flood and the Tower of Babel—the first 11 chapters—are not historical, although they are written as historical narrative and understood by Jesus to be so, what other unfashionable parts of the Bible do

you discard?

5. The biblical account of creation in Genesis seems very specific with six days of creative activity, each having an evening and a morning. The biblical order of creation is all wrong, according to the evolutionary view. Do you think God should have inspired an account more in keeping with evolution, the truth as you see it, if indeed he did use evolution to create everything?

6. If God created an evolutionary world, then the existing earth is as it always has been and as God intended it to be. Why then should he want to destroy it and create a new heavens and a new earth (II Peter 3 and other places)?

7. Darwin formulated evolution theory to eliminate God from the realm of biological origins. Is it not philosophically inconsistent to marry God (theism) with evolution (naturalism)? If God “created” using the mode invented to make him unnecessary, how can God’s “eternal power and divine nature” be “clearly seen” in creation, as Romans 1:20 says?

8. Evolution has no purpose, no direction and no goal. The God of the Bible is all about purpose. How do you reconcile the purposelessness of evolution with the purposes of God? What does God have to do in an evolutionary world? Is not God an “unnecessary hypothesis?” ❖

Author unknown

Current Events

Does the Bible Teach a Blessed Future for Israel?

by Martyn McGeown

Today many think that the State of Israel is the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, but keep in mind that, Abraham *never* possessed the land, not even enough “to set his foot on” (Acts 7:5). The patriarchs inherited the heavenly Canaan (Heb. 11:16), of which the earthly is but a type.

Hebrews 3:19 teaches that the Israelites “could not enter in because of unbelief.” In Ezekiel 33:25-26, God asks the rhetorical question, “Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes towards your idols, and shed blood, and shall ye possess the land? Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his

neighbour's wife, and shall ye possess the land?" Clearly impenitence and unbelief were *barriers* to inheriting the land, so how could *unbelieving* Jews possessing Palestine in 1948 be the fulfilment of prophecy?

To interpret prophecy with bald literalism requires consistency. Shall the Gentiles keep the feast of tabernacles at Jerusalem (Zech. 14:16-19)? Jesus indicates that geographically-determined worship will cease: "...believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father" (John 4:21). Wouldn't some future return to the feast of tabernacles be a step back into the shadows (Col. 2:17), and a turning again to the "weak and beggarly elements" of the law (Gal. 4:9-11)? Isaiah prophesies that "it shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set his hand the second time to recover the remnant of his people" (Isa. 11:11). If this glorious promise, as some maintain, was fulfilled in 1948 with the establishment of a national Israel, where is the restoration of the Philistines, Edom, Moab, and the children of Ammon who are to be her vassals? These nations have disappeared and were not restored in 1948. A literal fulfilment of Isaiah 11 requires that Israel "shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west...they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab, and the children of Ammon shall obey them" (v. 14). God hated the Edomites and "laid [their] mountains and [their] heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness" (Mal. 1:3). Although the Edomites attempted to rebuild, God threw them down again (v. 4). Indeed, for Jacob's sake, whom he loved, God had indignation against the Edomites forever (v. 4). That certainly rules out a literal restoration of Edom! Yet a literal future fulfilment of Isaiah 11 requires the restoration of the Edomites and the other obsolete nations (v. 14). To understand what Isaiah means by "the second time" that God brings back his people from captivity (v. 11), we should understand that the first time was the Exodus from Egypt (v. 16). Logically, then, the second return was from Babylon and not in 1948.

The New Testament sheds light on the Old Testament prophecies. How should we understand them since the literalist view leads to absurdities?

The New Testament, as indeed the Old, is chiefly concerned with *spiritual* Israel. The wider "nation" consisted of the elect, "the children of the promise" who were "counted for the seed" (Rom. 9:8), and the reprobate, "the children of the flesh" (Rom. 9:8) who often led the nation into idolatry. In every age, God willed to save *spiritual Israel*. In the Old Testament, *spiritual Israel* was found mainly in the nation of Israel.

If non-ethnic Jews were saved, such as Ruth and Rahab, they joined the nation of Israel. In the New Testament spiritual Israel consists of *all believers in Jesus Christ*. New Testament Christians, although consisting largely of Gentiles, are "Jews inwardly" and are circumcised "in the heart" (Rom. 2:28-29; cf. Deut. 30:6; Jer. 4:4). Paul tells largely Gentile believers in Philippi, they are "the circumcision" (Phil. 3:3). Furthermore, Christians are citizens of heavenly Jerusalem (Gal. 4:26) and those who "have come to mount Zion" (Heb. 12:22).

An unbelieving ethnic Jew, although he may dwell in Jerusalem itself, is not a *spiritual* child of Abraham (Gal. 3:7) for "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Rom. 9:6). John the Baptist, Christ and the apostles, who themselves were Israelites "concerning the flesh" (Rom. 9:5; Phil. 3:5), repeatedly pointed this out to the unbelievers in Palestine in their day, and they were certainly not anti-Semitic (Matt. 3:9; John 8:39; Acts 7:51; Rom. 9:7). In Christ there is "neither Jew nor Greek" (Gal. 3:28-29), for "neither circumcision availeth anything, or uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6).

"Israel" will never cease to be a "nation" (Jer. 31:36) but the "holy nation" meant is the church (I Peter 2:9) consisting of Jews and Gentiles, the one spoken of in Matthew 21:43 which was to replace the old theocratic nation of Israel. God has always had a "holy nation." In the Old Testament it was mainly Jewish, but in the New Testament, that same "holy nation" has become catholic, or universal. All peoples, tribes and tongues are included, yet there is always a remnant of Jews saved with the Gentiles (Rom. 11:5).

Many evangelicals believe in a future for national Israel because so many Old Testament prophecies, when read superficially, *seem* to be speaking about the nation. For example, Amos 9:11-15 promises that the "tabernacle of David" will be raised up and rebuilt "as in the days of old," and that "the captivity of my people of Israel" will be brought back.

Incidentally, the promise is also made here that Israel will "possess the remnant of Edom and of the heathen" (Amos 9:12). We have seen that the prophet Malachi rules out any restoration of Edom. It is also absurd to imagine that king David would be resurrected to rule in Jerusalem, and it is inconsistent for the literalist to say that David refers to Christ. Again, a literal interpretation demands consistency!

However, Acts 15:14-18 provides the *authoritative, apostolic interpretation* of Amos' prophecy. It has *nothing* to do with the establishment of a national Israel, and

everything to do with the gathering of the Gentiles into the New Testament Church. Isaiah 54 is similar: “Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited” (vv. 2-3). Why is the tent to be enlarged? So the Gentiles can come in! James (in Acts 15) uses the prophecy of Amos to make the same point.

Similarly, Hosea promises that the children of Judah and Israel shall be “gathered together” as the number of “the sand of the sea” (Hos. 1:10-11; 2:14-23) but this has its fulfilment in Romans 9:25-28 and I Peter 2:9-10, not in 1948 when the modern state of Israel was founded. Again, the new covenant made with “the house of Israel; and with the house of Judah” (Jer. 31:31-34) was fulfilled in the New Testament salvation of the church of Jesus Christ (Heb. 8:8-12; 10:16-17).

But why did the prophets not just say that? The church of the Old Testament was “under a schoolmaster” (Gal. 3:24). It was taught using *figurative* language

(the land, the temple, reunification of the nation under David, etc). All the types and shadows of the Law were to teach the Old Testament church about Christ. “Had the prophets spoken plainly of the New Testament age, *without* using figures, the Old Testament saints could not have borne such excess of light” (W. J. Grier, “The Momentous Event” [*Banner*], p. 39). The New Testament therefore gives us the key to interpreting Old Testament prophecy: the prophecies are *spiritual* (for a spiritual people), not literal.

None of this (a denial of an earthly future for the Jewish people) is anti-Semitism. Jews will be saved in the same way as Gentiles, by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. There is no other way of salvation for Jew or Gentile. It is not part of one’s duty as a Christian to support the modern state of Israel, or to expect future blessings for it, but it is Christ’s command to “love thy neighbour” and seek his salvation, no matter what his ethnicity may be. ❖

Martyn is a member of Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Ballymena, Northern Ireland. This article can be found at <http://www.cprf.co.uk/articles.htm>.

Church News

Church News

BAPTISMS

“He is the LORD our God: ...He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations.” Psalm 105:7, 8

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Wyatt Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brandon Wassink—Faith, MI

Gerrit Jonathan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Nate Bol—First, MI

Jacob Edward, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Hop—First, MI

Isaiah Steven, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ben Kortz—First, MI

Chase Andrew, son of Mr. & Mrs. Pete VanPutten—First, MI

Kent Allen, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brian Kuiper—Grandville, MI

Tyler Daniel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Kaiser—Grandville, MI

Mallory Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jordan

VanderKolk—Grandville, MI

Emma Nicole, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Gritters—

Hudsonville, MI

Boyd Bryon, son of Mr. & Mrs. Travis Groeneweg—Hull, IA

Keely Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brad Groeneweg—Hull, IA

Allanna May, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Alex Kalsbeek—Peace, IL

Darren Joel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kenton Kalsbeek—Peace, IL

Everly Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jordan Schipper—Providence, MI

Lydia Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nate Price—Trinity, MI

Levi David and Madison Lea, twins of Mr. & Mrs. Mitch Schimmel—Trinity, MI

Rebekah Jo, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Steve Bylsma—Trinity, MI

Shelby Kay, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Hib Kuiper—Trinity, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

“Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end.” Psalm 119:33

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

Luke Wolfer—Holland, MI

Kyle Soodsma—Randolph, WI

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. Tim Key and Miss Lacey VanBemmel—Grandville, MI

Mr. Chase DeGroot and Miss Beth VanMaanen—Sioux Falls, SD/Edgerton, MN

500 Years Ago...

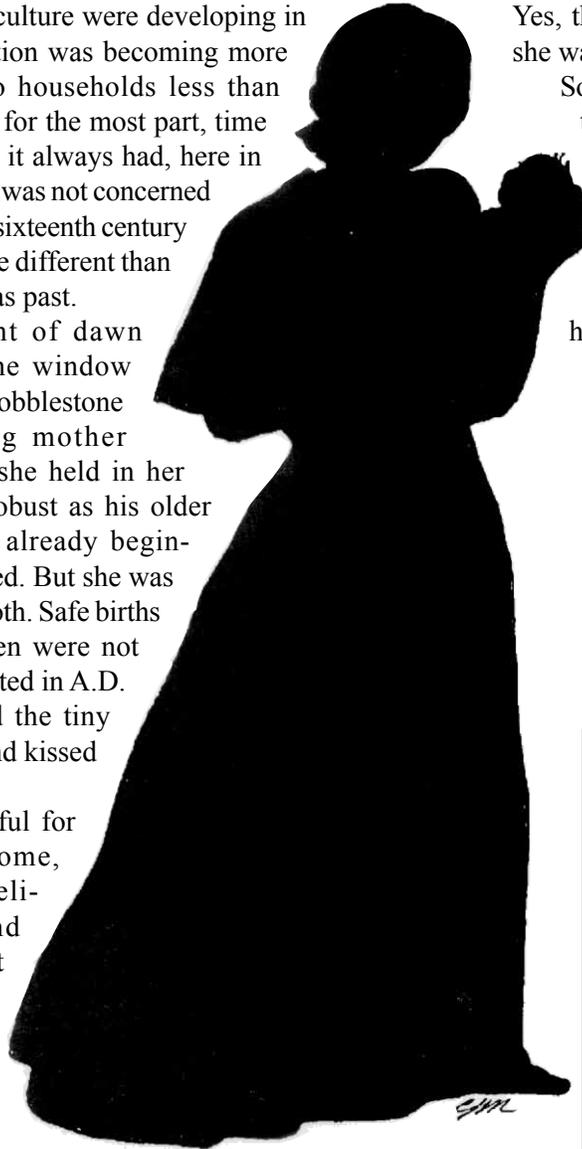
“Let Us Find the Truth!”

(1)

A lone candle lit the darkened room where a mother held her newborn son. “Little Jean,” she whispered. She softly sang a French lullaby and kissed his head. She had heard the world was just beginning to change. The effect of the invention of the printing press was already being felt. Art and culture were developing in other lands. Education was becoming more important, even to households less than rich like theirs. Yet for the most part, time seemed to go on as it always had, here in Noyon, France. She was not concerned about changes. The sixteenth century would likely be little different than the fifteenth that was past.

The pink light of dawn peeked through the window of their medieval cobblestone home. The young mother smiled. The baby she held in her arms was not so robust as his older brother, who was already beginning to stir in his bed. But she was thankful for them both. Safe births and healthy children were not to be taken for granted in A.D. 1509. She brushed the tiny infant’s forehead and kissed him again.

She was thankful for the Church of Rome, too. She was a religious woman, and the Church brought opportunities. Her husband Gerard held the position of secretary to the bishop, among other titles. He was a busy and ambitious man. He had already begun to form plans for their sons. Gerard Chauvin had connections. Jean would receive a fine education with those wealthier than themselves. He might even become a priest. Priests



"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

were paid well in these days. She fingered little Jean’s brow. The light had increased now and she could see his tiny fingers grasping her shawl. A firm grip for such a delicate body. She reached over to snuff the candle. Unconsciously she smelled the furling trail of smoke. Yes, the Church would be the place for this little one, she was sure.

Soon light came through in yellow streams. She laid the babe down to tend to other chores. She sighed. What would this child accomplish in his life? Might he be great and noble? Would history remember his name? The day was bright and hopes were high.

She did not know how wrong—and right—her hopes would be.

Find the underlined words in the puzzle below:

“For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.” Psalm 139:13, 14

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

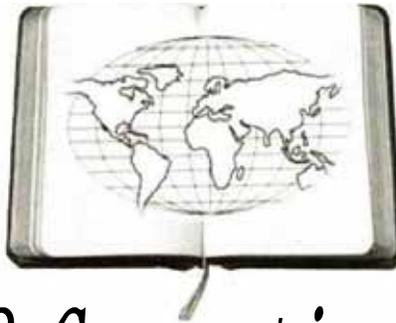
Connie is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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