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Lights



The Lull Before the Storm

by John Huizenga



The lull. Lightning flickers in the distance. Thunder rumbles softly. As the towering wall of dark clouds draw near, an eerie light and strange silence settles across the land. The birds stop singing and scurry for shelter. The sky grows darker and comes swiftly like the gaping mouth of a fish ready to swallow down its white gullet everything in its path. It is time to seek shelter. It's time for any last minute repairs to your shelter. There is no time to waste.

When the torrents of rain and hail driven by wild winds batter the house, flatten the grass, and bend trees to the limit, we are ever so thankful for shelter. We are glad that the loose boards are nailed down, the broken windows are fixed, the shingles replaced. When the wind rises to a howl and the house shutters and creaks, we are glad that the foundation is sure, and the beams solid. We are glad that the shelter was built and maintained to withstand the storm.

We have been blessed with many years of peace in our churches - a time of fair, sunny weather. Are we prepared to endure a storm? Is our shelter secure? Storms will come. We may not know the nature of the storm: whether it will come from within our churches, through the introduction of false doctrine, or from persecution from without but it is not too early to prepare. We do not need to know details about the storm before we begin to prepare for the storm, yet we ought to be on the lookout for any signs. The important thing is that we are prepared. This is not a time to relax. This is a time to remember the storms of the past and make sure our shelter is maintained and built up. Perhaps this is the lull before the storm. If so, there is no time to waste.

We have a shelter from the storms of false doctrine, controversy, personal attacks of Satan against our soul, and persecution, but that shelter is not the church building. Neither is the shelter family, friends, ministers, or our schools; though they are important to maintain the shelter. The shelter we have is our faith. Faith is not a leap into the dark. It is not belief in something that you would like to be true, but can't be sure. Faith is our certain knowledge of God and His salvation as revealed in His Word, and our confidence worked by the Holy Spirit through the word that that salvation is ours personally.

Our shelter from the storms of conflict in the church remains strong when our knowledge of God is strong and certain. If God is vague, unpredictable, changing, and inconsistent, then you have no clear knowledge of God to judge whether or not the ideas you face in the conflict are true or false. If you believe that God loves everyone head for head, then eventually the storms of ideas will drive you to believe that all will be saved. If you believe that God changes His plans in response to the actions of men, then you can be driven to believe most anything about God and salvation. But when you know God distinctly, then you can say with confidence, "no, that is not of God," or "yes, that is of God."

Essential, then, to our faith and the strength of our shelter, is God's revelation of Himself in Scripture. Any ideas about God outside of Scripture come from the mind of man, and are just that: man's ideas, and not God's. This is why the reformers fought so vehemently for *sola scriptura* (scripture alone). So when someone flings at you talk about how "godly" people can be in a foreign nation that has not yet heard the gospel, and how it

must be that God is showing some gracious favor to them, and how He must love even those who do not become Christians, you say “no, that is not the God of scripture.” As soon as you step beyond God’s word, your faith will crumble, your shelter will fall, and you will be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine.

This knowledge of God and His salvation is not a head knowledge that can be discussed scientifically and found inaccurate or misleading. You could be born to godly parents, baptized in the church, memorize the whole Bible and all the creeds and confessions of the church and still be flattened by the storm and swept into hell. On the other hand, you may know only a few verses of the Bible and struggle to understand your catechism lessons, but stand strong in the storm, easily discerning what is right and what is wrong. The shelter of faith is a personal knowledge of God. You may have barely made it through high school with a D- and your brother has a PhD. in biochemistry but if you both read together a letter from your father, you both know with certainty that the letter is your father’s. If one would say “no, I don’t think that letter is from your father,” you immediately respond “yes it is.” “How do I know,” you say, “well because that sounds just like my father.” “How do I know?” your PhD. brother says. Perhaps he could go into many fine details about the letter, or even do some scientific statistical analysis, but the one who attacks the claim can always find some other explanation. In the end, both you and your brother stand on the same confession that you know your father because you are his children. Together you can withstand the most vehement attack against the truth of your confession.

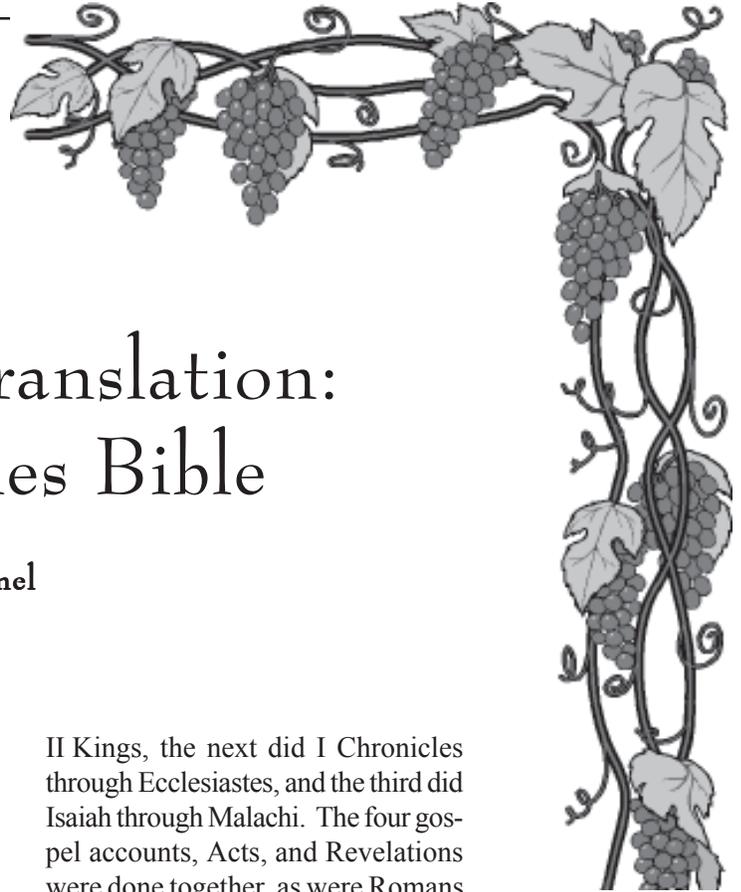
Is your faith able to withstand the subtle, penetrating, fierce blast of the storm? Now, in this time of peace and calm, is the time to build, maintain, and repair. Our relationship with God deepens and develops when we think upon Him in every activity of our lives, pray, read His word, study together in society, examine the structures build by our forefathers in the heat of the storms, and above all, listen carefully as Christ speaks to us through the pure and lively preaching of the word.

Now is the time to stand up from your daily work and scan the horizon for any signs of a storm. Now is the time to examine your faith for any rotting or loose timbers. Does the idea of common grace sound like the grace of your God? Does your God offer a salvation that He hopes you will accept but leaves it up to you? Are you sure of your answer? Can you confirm your answers with the words of God Himself? Do you know what type of worship is pleasing to God? Is it important to know God as a personal God who has revealed Himself to man in history? Is it important to believe that Jesus was born and died on the cross exactly as the Bible says or is it enough to cherish the story and live according to the principles and example of the life of Jesus? Should we strive to prepare the earth for a thousand reign of Christ on this earth? Should we lovingly accept the homosexual as he is into our fellowship? Should we encourage women to exercise leadership in the church if they are able and willing? Are you sure? Why do you think so? These are some of the storm clouds I see round about us. Perhaps you see others. Let us get busy securing the shelter which God has given unto us lest we suddenly find ourselves unprepared in the fearful silence of the lull before the storm. ❖

From the Editor

In this issue you will find a number of articles having to do with the sort of God that we confess as believers. My editorial seeks to illustrate the importance of knowing our God so that we are able to discern the truth in the face of conflict and remain firm in

our relationship with God. The reprint from the *Standard Bearer* points out that our break with the CRC was at bottom, a different view of God. The devotional, guest article, and Where We Stand, rubrics also reflect on the God we worship and praise. ❖



The Superior Translation: The King James Bible

by Tiffany Brummel

In the world today there are many different versions of the Bible. Some try to make the Bible more “interesting,” and others want it to be easier to understand. I believe that the King James Version stands to be the most superior Bible even now, when it is almost 400 years old.

In 1604 there was a meeting between four Puritans and fourteen representatives of the Church of England. The Puritans had objections to some of the practices of the English Church and were hoping that the new king, James I, would help them reform the church. But it wasn't going very well for the Puritans, so one of them suddenly petitioned that a new translation of the Bible be made, since the present ones were corrupt and far from the truth of the original. It seems that the motion had not been planned, but was actually used to keep them from losing ground at the meeting. But God used this petition for His divine purpose. King James ordered the translation to begin, putting Bishop Bancraft in charge.

I've heard people say they think the King James Bible was translated by one man. How false! Bancraft appointed 54 intelligent men from all over the kingdom to help in the work. They were Puritans, Anglicans, scholars, and preachers, and were all male Protestants from within the Church of England. Most were fluent in many languages, including, of course, Hebrew and Greek. But most importantly, they were all godly men who knew that this was the inspired word of God, and that only by God's grace would they get understanding.

These men were divided into six main groups for their work. The first group translated Genesis through

II Kings, the next did I Chronicles through Ecclesiastes, and the third did Isaiah through Malachi. The four gospel accounts, Acts, and Revelations were done together, as were Romans through Jude. The last group translated the Apocrypha. (The Apocrypha was not considered to be part of the inspired Scriptures or equal with Holy Scripture, but was attached to the end of the Bible probably for historic reasons.)

Each man had to work on the section his group had to do. Then the translations were compared and discussed within the group, so that a final translation was made. This, then, was sent to the other five groups. If they found something questionable, they would report it back to the company. As you can see, this was a long process which created, in the end, the most true translation.

Many translations of the Bible have been translated in dynamic fashion, when one translates the ideas but not the words. These men of England translated word for word, so nothing would be missed or incorrectly written. If there was a Greek or Hebrew word that didn't have a corresponding English word, they would write down what it seemed to mean in *italics* so everyone would be able to know. Also, they added 4,223 marginal notes with the literal meaning of the words, and 2,738 notes with alternate translations! Many Bible translators would not take the time to do that.

The best proof that the King James Bible is the truest translation, though, is verses in other translations which

twist or eliminate important truths. The Revised Standard Version says in Isaiah 7:14, "A young woman shall conceive," instead of, "A virgin shall conceive." The miraculous truth of the virgin birth is taken away! In Micah 5:2, where the King James Version says that the coming Christ has been "from everlasting," the RSV says, "from ancient days." What a difference! It denies that Christ is eternal, just saying that He is from a long time ago. The New English Bible which appeared in 1970 also has some verses which I was appalled to find. John 1:1 of the NEB says, "And what God was, the Word was." The original clearly states, "and God was the Word," while the KJV says, "the Word was God." Isaiah 9:6 is a beautiful revelation of the Christ that was to come. But the NEB reads, "For a boy has been born for us...and he shall be called in purpose wonderful, in battle God-like, Father for all time..." Christ is made God-like, and not GOD. Romans 9:13 in the Living Bible states, "I chose to bless Jacob, but not Esau," taking away from God's holy righteous judgment, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

Even the New International Version has some questionable verses and translations. The man who decided to translate the new Bible wanted to make the Bible easier to understand for his children and others. In doing that, he and the other translators changed many words which the Christian generations have understood for centuries. Some of these changes are the following: grace becomes favour (it makes God's grace sound so mild), think becomes feel, and believe becomes trust. These may seem minor, but never is it right to change the Bible. The NIV also casts doubt on the Word of God. It sometimes includes footnotes where there is an omitted or changed verse, but they are often misleading. One example is a footnote that starts out, "Some late manuscripts..." That just confuses people, and causes them to not trust the Bible! Some words were left out in the NIV like the phrase "of Christ" in Romans 1:16, where the KJV says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." Those

two words are important. In Luke 2:33 the Authorized (King James) Version says, "And Joseph and his mother marveled." The NIV says, "The child's father and mother marveled." Of course Joseph was Jesus' father in an adoptive sense, but this verse makes it sound like this special parentage was equally shared by this couple. It puts doubt on the virgin birth of Christ. In Matt. 27:35 the KJV says, "...that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet," concerning the parting of Jesus' garments. The NIV leaves out the quotation of the verse from the Psalms that the KJV quotes, but puts it in a footnote. As if it's not important! When there are quotes of the Old Testament in the New Testament, that shows that the two testaments are joined together, and that God did what He said He would. The NIV makes the prophesy a vague footnote.

These are just some of the passages that show how many translations stray from the truth or become "lukewarm" instead of strong in the truth. We must remember what the Bible says, especially in its last verses, about adding to or taking from God's Word. Only this will convince us which Bible is the truest.

The King James Bible remains strong and true. It was translated by men who had much knowledge and who realized that this was the Word of God. It is a word-for-word translation that reflects the original Hebrew and Greek, and its language is one of respect and reverence for the Almighty God. It contains beautiful and majestic words which are a privilege to be able to read and understand. This version has been recognized for four centuries to be the true Bible, and I pray that my church and others might stay true to this Bible God has blessed us with. ❖

Tiffany is a high school student of our Edgerton, Minnesota congregation.

God Chooses the Moment

by J.P. de Klerk

It was a long, hot and dry summer, that year again there in a small town in the Northern part of Australia. The automatic lawn sprinklers turned around continuously, to keep lawn green. Most factories and offices were closed for a couple of weeks. That had become a tradition. Also the schools were closed. The children played at home in the shadow of old willows and pine trees. Debbie Hill, who was a school teacher, had a meeting that day to attend at the local juvenile work. They organized swim competitions, bushwalks, football, wrestling, campfires, and the usual games, projects, etc. to keep the young people busy. Now that this had been done already for more than fifty years, it had also become a tradition. Always some small things had yet to be done at the last minute.

Afterwards Debbie would have dinner with a sheep farmer and his wife, with whom she had been at school at the time. They lived outside the town and owned a big place there, at a small river that sang, giggled, and chattered on its way to the sea. Frank would pick Debbie up at half past four, after he had done some shopping for his wife, Sue. She preferred to stay at home because she had to look after their four young children. Debbie looked

forward to see them again.

At half past twelve Debbie found it so warm, that she decided to take a cold shower. Indeed, it made her feel a lot better. She had spent the whole morning in the garden, weeding, planting and cleaning up. She had neglected the garden for a while because

of much work at school. She put her bathwrap on and sat in her easy-chair in the livingroom. She closed her eyes to recuperate. She felt languid, dull, a bit strange. Ten minutes later when she stood up and wanted to have a look outside, she suddenly felt weak, nauseating, so that she

quickly sat down again. She was quite at a loss about what was wrong. She was sure she had not eaten something strange. When she had her yearly checkup, the doctor had told her that she was in good health. Her colleagues said Debbie was of an even temper....

Well, the suntanned face of Frank appeared at the agreed time and she woke up in her chair in which she had slumbered, not knowing what to do. They looked at each other and he quickly turned on his heels and ran to the corridor, where the telephone was, and dialled the hospital and asked for an ambulance. Debbie understood, there was something very wrong with her....

Fifteen minutes later she was wheeled into the first aid section of the hospital. A cousin of Debbie, who worked there, encouraged her. A doctor asked her to tell him what she had been doing, but she did not come very far with answering, because suddenly she stammered: "O, I feel sick...." When she regained consciousness she was in a big room and she asked: "Where do all these people come from? What is going on here?"



A doctor told her that her heart had stopped and was “re-started” again. He explained that it had happened at the right moment and the right place, because anywhere else the incident would probably have been fatal. Frank had arrived just in time and brought her where everything was at hand. Debbie realized that *God* had chosen *the right moment* and saved her life. That she felt unwell at home had been a warning sign that she had not recognized....

Later that day the minister of the church came and prayed with her next to the intensive-care machinery. Her next-door neighbors sent her flowers and a “get well” card.

Several days passed by and Debbie was very thankful for all the people did for her. Soon she was allowed more visitors and she was brought to another room. She was amazed to discover that her “story” had gone so quickly all over the place. And it was obvious that nobody had expected that such a thing would happen to her, nor had she herself. Her life was so full of activities. When anyone needed help, she would always be willing and ready. Of course, she was sometimes disappointed, but she quickly got over it.

It was very unusual for Debbie to be quiet, to stop and think. She received tablets and she had to promise that she would not do almost everything at once anymore. She understood. There were limits in life you should not take lightly.

Debbie remained healthy, happy and thankful to the Lord. Two years later she married with a brother of Frank, who came to help her with the garden, and they discovered they were like-minded. God gave them three children. She reminded them, and the children at school, from

Pleasure?

Come with me, let’s drink and dance and play;
Life is so short; take pleasure while you may.
We pass this way but once, you know;
Let’s live it up before we go.

Hey, what is that which I just said?
“Before we go.” Go where? To realms of dead?
I do not want to think of that just now,
I’ll put it from my thoughts. But how?

That thought must be suppressed. It doesn’t fit.
I want to think of fun! Don’t make me quit.
All right—so if I die today, where would I be?
'Tis heaven or hell. Which would it be for me?

The Lord calls back from evil ways His own;
He does not let them wander all alone;
He takes them by the hand and lifts them high,
From depths of sin to heights beyond the sky.

I thank Thee, Lord, that in Thy mercy Thou
Hast changed my heart, has quickened me, and now
I know real joy. There’s peace beyond all measure.
I’m owned by Jesus Christ—the one unfailing treasure.

Thelma Westra

time to time that *He* leads our lives and that *He* chooses the *moment*, for *everything*. ❖

P.S. This had really happened, ten years ago.

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

Child-bearing, Not Child Prevention

by Ken DeJong

When our December issues of the *Beacon Lights* came in the mail, I handed a copy to one of my sons. A little later, he asked if I agreed with the second to last paragraph of “Augustine on Sex and Marriage” by Mr. Spencer, found on pages 21 & 22. After reading it, I explained to him that we agreed with the thrust of the article which brings out how our sexual relations in marriage can and should glorify God, both in the way of bringing forth children and in the intimate oneness a husband and wife enjoy. Scriptures teach that our marriages should reflect the mysterious bond of Christ and His bride, the church. However, I explained to my son that we do not agree with the idea of birth control, as seemed to be implied in the article.

My main concern, therefore, is with what the author left un-said about the use of birth control. It is not my intent to attack the views of the writer. It is my view that using birth control is wrong, except perhaps in “extreme” cases. We should not allow ourselves to be conned into thinking we can enjoy the pleasures of the sexual relationship in marriage, a wonderful gift of God, and at the same time avoid the normal responsibilities connected with that. After all, who really ever thinks they have enough time or finances for raising children? What guideline will determine when there is enough time or money for the needs of the family? Because of our sinful natures, we can quickly think up all kinds of excuses, but where in God’s Word is birth control ever supported?

After Adam and Eve sinned, did not God tell Eve He would multiply her sorrow and conception? And are we now going to ease the sorrow through use of birth control? In my younger days, if someone would have promoted birth control they would have been strongly warned that this was a form of murder. This may seem extreme today, but when considered from the point of view that a person’s life is being prevented we can better understand the reasoning. Such thinking can very easily lead to justification for abortions. Do we have God’s approval to prevent or to take life? God controls all things, including the marvel of conception in a mother’s womb, and should we tamper with this?

Many related questions come up in this connection. Do we read in the Bible anywhere that God suggests married couples may decide when or how many children they want? Do we really believe the Scriptures that a woman shall be saved in child-bearing (I Tim. 2:15), which also includes all the sorrows that go along with it? Are we becoming so educated we reason things to our own advantage? Today’s modern world, which is headed for final destruction, emphasizes the need for birth control. Are we slowly becoming immune to our calling to bear the children God may be pleased to give us?

My wife and I struggled whether we may have had a legitimate reason to use birth control. A doctor had told us we should not have any more children. He claimed that the way he had to do the cesarean section, should my wife become pregnant, would lead to her death. In fact, he informed us he would not do another maternity case for us. We sought advice from other doctors, and our Christian friends, and finally decided there was not enough evidence to support our doctor’s contention. Therefore, rather than practicing birth control, we left the matter in God’s hands. Later, the Lord saw fit to give us another child, an adorable little girl, to raise with the sorrows spoken of in His Word, but also with the joys that are in Christ. If we had practiced birth control, this child would have been prevented. Christ said, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not.” (Mark 10:14) Why did he say this? Was it not because he loved them and would give His life for them, too?

During that time, friends and ministers gave varying views, but ultimately our decision was based on our understanding of Scripture’s teaching that children are not our own but very really gifts from God (Ps. 127:2). Therefore, after seriously questioning whether we had one of those “extreme” cases, we came to the conclusion we did not and did not take such an important matter into our own hands. If the pregnancy would have resulted in the death of the mother, we would leave it in the hands of Him who gives life and takes life. (So, perhaps there really are no “extreme” cases.) I am very thankful for the oneness that my wife and I had through this trial. At times my wife shed some tears, but her life testified of a

deep love for God and evidenced godly submission to His ways, knowing He does all things righteously.

We realize there are many difficulties and sacrifices involved in having and raising many children. For this reason, it is important that all of us appreciate all the effort and energy our wives and mothers exert in the

bearing and nurturing of our covenant children in the fear of God.

May God use these thoughts as a warning for us to be faithful to Him in our calling to bring forth the covenant seed. (Gen. 1:28, 9:1, Psalm 127:3-5) ❖

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

Guest Article

Me a Theologian?

by Allan Baird

When we hear the word “theologian,” a certain picture is conjured up in our minds. A grim-faced man is sitting over a desk with heaps of books piled around him. The man has one hand holding up his head and is trying to write with the other. Perhaps he is an elder of some sort in a church, or more likely a lecturer at a secular university with more letters after his name than in it. His daily labor involves the use of large, technical words which are of such a concocted nature that ordinary Christians, such as you and me, could hardly pronounce, never mind understand them. But then, theology is not for the ordinary Christian...or is it?

Since the Middle Ages certain individuals have tried to define theology only in scientific terms and limit its practice only to a few. Before this, and during the Reformation, it was thought of as an act of worship to God which involved meditation of God as He has revealed Himself to us in His Word. This is a far better way of understanding theology, because it allows for the fact that all true thought about God must be carried out in faith, on the basis of Scripture, as an activity of our whole selves which should lead us to glorify and enjoy the true object of theology—the Triune God.

One of your greatest theologians, the Puritan Jonathan Edwards, wrote that theology (or divinity, as he called it) should not be thought of so much as an art of science, but as the doctrine that comprehends all those truths and rules, articles of faith and practice, which concern the great business and activity of the Christian religion. Unlike other branches of learning it does not depend on man’s natural reason, but fully on revelation, and is taught by God Himself in a book full of instruction which He has

given us for this purpose. This is the only infallible rule of our theology given by God to guide us in searching after the knowledge of God, whom to know is life eternal.

Theology, then, is a very practical activity, and is the concern of all the Christians, even we young people. As those who have been recreated after the image of God in knowledge, there is a universal office of prophet among all believers, young and old, by which they teach and admonish one another. Part of this office is fulfilled in our calling to be theologians, as theology is the doctrine of living to God through Jesus Christ. By it the Christian understands and applies the Word of God to every area of his or her life, submitting to the sovereign rule of God with reverence and gratitude.

Questions for further consideration:

- 1) Does thinking of myself as a theologian in any way change the way I view what it means to be a Christian?
- 2) How much time and effort do I spend trying to read and understand God’s Word, the final source of my theology?
- 3) Are there any aspects of my life that I have not considered from a Christian perspective?
- 4) Might it be a worthwhile activity for me to try and discuss with my Christian friends some of the issues which affect us as Reformed young people? ❖

Allen is a member of the British Reformed Fellowship in Northern Ireland.

The Songs of Zion

A New Psalter-Psalm Devotional

by John Huizenga

Please note that these devotionals are designed to be used with our Psalter. Your devotions will be greatly enhanced if you read the text and sing or read the corresponding Psalter number. I hope they can also be used in our schools with the children.

January 13 (inadvertently missed last month)

Psalm 5:4-6

Do you welcome murderers, robbers, and foul mouthed liars to live in your house with your family? Neither does God. God is holy, free from every evil, set distinctly apart from sin. God hates all who sin and rebel against Him. God drives them far from His house—His sphere of perfect covenant fellowship and happiness. “Evil shall not dwell with [Him]” Psalter 9:2. God would drive you and me away too, but He has chosen a people from every tribe, tongue and nation that is cleansed from sin in the blood of Christ. The wicked hate God’s people just as they hate God. Do the wicked tempt you, mock you, persecute you? Does your own sinful nature afflict your new man in Christ? Cry out as David does to your covenant Friend in prayer. Sing Psalter #9:2; read the *Standard Bearer* vol. 2, 167; 16, 86 for further meditation.



February 1

Psalm 5:7

Verse 7 completes the first part of this Psalm which establishes the grounds for the approach of the mere man David to the sovereign and holy God. The title of Psalter #10 describes this verse well. Our knowledge of who God is compels every child of God to be mindful of redemption in Christ before speaking with our God. When we see ourselves cleansed from sin, when we consider the great mercy of God, then we come to God as a child who walks freely into the house of his father. There, in the house of God, in the consciousness of His love and fellowship, we humbly express our gratitude in thankful obedience and songs of praise. Sing Psalter #10:1.

February 2

Psalm 5:8

“Lead me in *thy* righteousness,... make *thy* way before me plain” David prays and we sing in Psalters 9 & 10. This verse is summarized in the title of Psalter #9. It is dark, the eyes of the wicked, sin, and

death glow all around him. David is afraid, but he knows God has established a path for him. David has come to the house of his heavenly Father to ask for help. The way of God for His children is the way of blessedness, the way of knowing God’s love and righteousness through the trials of life, the way that leads to heaven. Does sin stare back at you no matter which way you look? Do you need a guiding hand and light to shine on the path? Come to God in prayer. Meditate upon His word. Sing Psalter #9:3.

February 3

Psalm 5:9

Wicked to the core are those outside of Christ. You will not find a more graphic description of the wicked. These are first of all the words of Christ because He alone was without sin and surrounded by sinners. Paul quotes this verse when he describes the depraved nature of every man. “Their throat is an open sepulchre,...the poison of asps under their lips...mouth is full of cursing and bitterness... feet swift to shed blood...the way of peace have they not known...no fear of God before their eyes” (Romans 3:13-18). But the elect are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (verse 24). Let us praise God for so great a salvation. Sing Psalter #10:2.

February 4

Psalm 5:10

Is it right for us to pray for the destruction of our enemies? Does not Christ exhort us to love our enemies and forgive them? Yes, we must forgive our enemies, but we can not forgive God’s enemies. We know our God to be the just judge of all the earth who will not let sin go unpunished. God must destroy “for against Thee and Thy law they have set themselves to fight.” Christ had to die because He took upon Himself the iniquity of His people. Open your Psalter and notice that the words of Psalter numbers 9-11 can all be sung with any of the three tunes. Try singing the second half of 10:1 with either 9 or 11.

February 5

Psalm 5:11

From death we turn again to life. The Psalms are full of the antithesis. From the putrid belching of throat sepulchres we turn to the refreshing sounds of the joyful shout and rejoicing. We enter again into the house and fellowship of our God and shut the door on the hellish

snarling beasts without. God is our shelter and defense. In Him we put our trust. Whence springs this life out of death? Only in Christ who has crushed the head of the serpent and destroyed the power of death. Pray that God will strengthen your faith and put your trust in Him. There you will find peace and security. Sing Psalter #11:3.

February 6

Psalm 5:11

The last two and first three verses of this Psalm are put together in Psalter # 11 leaving out all the verses that speak of the wicked. Something very important is missing if we sing this number by itself because we need to know how great our sins and miseries are before we can find joy in salvation. One way to sing this whole Psalm with some variety in tune is to begin with 11:1 & 2, then sing 9:2 & 3, 10:2, and finish with the beautiful words of 11:4. God's grace and favor is a shield that completely surrounds us. No matter what accusations the enemy might fling at us, we can turn to God's grace for an answer. When the enemy casts our own sins before us as proof that we also are forsaken of God, we find shelter in God's grace and favor. That is the only explanation of our salvation.

February 7

Psalm 6:1

Does your spiritual life feel at times like a roller coaster? From the delightful fellowship within God's house David now wallows in tears under the chastening hand of God. David reminds us of a small child who one minute plays happily, but the next, having strayed into mischief, cries out under the angry face and hard hand of his father. David has fallen into great sin, and now guilt wells up within as he hears the word of God by Nathan the prophet. David sees God's face red with anger and can not stand it. David knows he deserves the wrath of God, but he wants the assurance that he is being chastened, not in anger, but in covenant love. Like Jeremiah, David wants to be corrected, but not in anger (Jer. 10:24). He wants some sign of God's love, so he prays for healing. Sing Psalter #12:1.



February 8

Psalm 6:2

Sometimes guilt and shame so overwhelms us that we become physically ill. We may go through long periods of depression in which shame and sorrow press down until we can stand it no longer. The original may be read "I am one who droops." His beauty and glory have faded like a withered flower. He is limp. Even his bones, the strength of his body, are vexed (shaken). Our Psalter reads "chastened sore I waste away." Like a child having been chastened, he crumples to the ground, deflated, and sobbing. He is a physical wreck. May we also have the grace to humble ourselves before the rebuke of God, be it through the words of a brother or sister in the church, the preaching, or personal mediation upon the word of God. Sing Psalter #12:1.

February 9

Psalm 6:3

Words can hardly express the feelings of despair which fill the child of God who knows his guilt before God. "Sore vexed" means "violently shaken." Jesus used the same expression in Matt. 26:38 when he said in the garden "my soul is exceeding sorrowful." Our bodies may wilt under the afflictions of this earth, but when God's love is hidden, then there

is no more hope and our soul withers as well. David can sink no further, and so asks "O Jehovah, how long?" How long will it be before I see your face of love? Jesus cried out on the cross "my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" These are the words of one cut off from covenant fellowship. Let us thank and praise God for sending His Son to take that guilt away. Sing Psalter #12:1.

February 10

Psalm 6:4-5

Feeling as though God had forsaken him and left, David prays for His return. Nothing will revive his soul except the return of God, his Lord and Friend, to his side. Why should God return? Why come back to one who has despised you and trampled your name in the dirt? There is no reason apart from the mercy and love revealed in Christ. Mercy is to lift one who is low to a higher place. It is "loving-kindness" (Psalter). God is one who exalts the lowly. God has determined to reveal his attribute of mercy to the elect in Christ. In mercy, God has chosen his people from all eternity. God has so determined human life and the fall into sin that He demonstrates His mercy through our experiences of sin and guilt. David knows His covenant God and clings now to His mercy. He also expresses his desire to give thanks and praise once again to his God, something he is unable to do apart from God's presence. Sing Psalter #12:2.

February 11

Psalm 6:6-7

Tears, tears, and more tears. Tears enough to make a bed swim and soak a couch. Tears that cause the eyes to swell, grow tired, and dim. The Lord who numbers the hairs of our head, also measures our tears in a bottle (Psalm 56:8). Not only does the child of God sorrow over sin, but in this weakened state, the wicked also mock and taunt "where now is the God in whom you trust? You are no better than the rest of us, God has forsaken you." If it is not the wicked who salt our wounds of guilt, it is our own sinful nature that casts a shadow of doubt over our soul. They tempt us also to forsake God and find pleasure in sin. Weak and helpless in ourselves, we find our only strength in God. Sing Psalter #12:3.

February 12

Psalm 6:8-10

Before his prayer is finished, God puts in David's heart the assurance that the prayer is heard. It is one thing to confess our guilt and feeling of being forsaken, but it is quite another for the wicked to say that God has forsaken you. Though you may feel that God has forsaken you, God is really right there with you. Perhaps it takes the lies of the wicked to remind you of God's true promises and cleansing in Christ. Three times David says "Jehovah has heard my prayer." God exposes their lies, and their accusations of guilt fall upon their own head. Sing Psalter #12:4.

February 13

Psalm 7

Have you suffered under slander? Someone whispers that you have done some shameful deed and soon your name wallows in the gutter. Slander is like poison, a deadly tool of the wicked. It makes even friends suspicious. In holy anger you can come only to God who knows the heart. This Psalm is the response of David to the slander of Cush

the Benjamite who stirred up Israel against David by saying that David was rebelling against Saul even though Saul had been good to David. The varied, jumpy style of this Psalm in the original reflects the agitation of David. “Painful unrest, defiant self-confidence, triumphant ecstasy, calm trust, prophetic certainty—all these states of mind find expression in the irregular arrangement of the strophes of this Davidic dithyramb” (Keil & Delitzsch 139). If anything, we should sing Psalter #13 with a fast tempo to convey the right mood.

February 14

Psalm 7:1-2

You know it is out there, but you can't see it. Now and then you catch a glimpse of a shadow. You hear a noise, turn, and see nothing. You run, but footsteps follow even more closely. Any moment now, the enemy will make its final attack. With a paralyzing roar, it will leap and tear your soul to pieces. Such is the tension which builds within one who is the object of slander. Groups of friends hush when you draw near and then talk about the weather. You turn around and people look the other way. Some cast a furtive glance when you enter. With no one to trust, your soul is about to burst. To whom will you turn? Turn to Jehovah in prayer. Sing Psalter #13:1 “Jehovah my God, on Thy help I depend.” Pray also that you may never be one to slander your brother or sister in the Lord.

February 15

Psalm 7:3-5

An oath is a serious matter. The “selah” directs us to pause and consider this matter, the musical tone changes to accent this courageous confession. God is called upon to search whether or not your heart is true in all that you say. David cried out to Saul after he had left the cave and said to him “I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it. The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee.” And Saul replied “Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil” (1 Samuel 24:12, 17). Let us also take care that our actions are right and true before the eyes of God. Let us take care to live all of our life in Christ. Sing Psalter #13:2.



February 16

Psalm 7:6-7

Are we not roused up in anger when we hear about heartless hijackers shooting people point blank, mothers who kill their unborn children, or kidnapers who snatch children from their homes? Do not we demand that such be punished? How much more is God angered when his creatures rebel against Him, hate one another, and persecute those whom He has redeemed and made His own children! Our God does not shrug His shoulders at injustice, He does not ignore the hatred and pride of man, He is angry with the wicked. He does not wring His hands in frustration, but He justly punishes the sinner with hell. There are few today who are willing to sing praises to this God of justice. Sing His praises in Psalter #13:3.

February 17

Psalm 7:8

Who but Christ could ever say “judge me, O Jehovah, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me.” Yes,

and that righteousness of Christ the Head is imputed to the church, His body. David speaks here as a type of Christ, and also as a saint who knows by faith that God's own work of righteousness dwells within him. “As if a burning and shining candle should say, Judge me according to the flame which is upon me, that is, not that wherewith I am myself, but that whereby I shine enkindled of thee” (Augustine). Does your light also shine in the world? Let us also come boldly to the throne of grace and sing the words of this verse in Psalter #13:4.

February 18

Psalm 7:9-10

“Establish the righteous” we sing. Build them up, make them strong and enduring. Build them up upon the solid rock of Christ like the wise man built his house which stood firm in the storm. The foolish man built his house of pride, haughty rebellion against God, persecution of the righteous, and wickedness upon the sands of disobedience. May that house come to ruin after it is built up as a lofty tower. Then at last we will be free from the fearful stalking and violent attacks of Satan. God will do this because he looks into the heart, and even to the reigns (the seat of the emotions) of His people in Christ, and finds them to be pure. May you also find this confidence that your sins are cleansed. Put your trust in God, our shield and defense. Sing Psalter #13:5.

February 19

Psalm 7:11-16

Do we not find perfect justice in the story of wicked Haman's death by the gallows which he made out of envy for righteous Mordecai? Such is the justice which David seeks for the wicked who persecute him. The wicked one who is pregnant with iniquity devotes all his energy to bring forth lies for the destruction of the truth. He digs a pit and carefully disguises it as innocence and truth so that the righteous may fall into it and be destroyed. But God who is sovereign over all things, even the wicked deeds of men, is angry with the wicked every day and will cause them to

fall into their own pits of destruction. The cup of iniquity is not yet full, but God has sharpened His sword of judgment, and has bent His bow with the arrow ready. Except one repent, he will surely perish in the judgment. Stand in awe before our holy God and sing Psalter #13:5.

February 20

Psalm 7:17

The hard, bloody language of our righteous God is cause for singing in the heart of him who knows what sin is all about. We sing to our God who has revealed Himself as the almighty Judge, the gracious Deliverer, whose name is Jehovah, the covenant God who changes not and is forever. How could we know these depths of our God except in the way of sin and suffering in this life. Comforted that we belong to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ, we can live and die happily knowing how great our sins and miseries are, how we are delivered, and how to express our gratitude. Express your gratitude now and the rest of the day by singing Psalter #13:7.

February 21

Psalm 8

Are you weary of all the struggles with your sin and wicked men? God has provided an oasis which every child of God can visit and

refresh himself, and forget for awhile the troubles of this life. Step outside some cloudless night, or drive out into the country away from the city lights and look up at the moon and stars. Your jumbled thoughts will be drawn back into perspective. When David found this oasis, he was filled with delight and sang a joyful song to Jehovah. The heading of this Psalm recommends that this Psalm be accompanied by the Gittith, an instrument that gives forth a joyous sound. Our Psalter has two numbers for this Psalm entitled "The Name of the Lord," and "God's Glory in His Works." These titles are fitting because this Psalm begins and ends exclaiming the excellency of God's name, and that name is His glory revealed in His works. Sing Psalter #15:1.

February 22

Psalm 8:1

When we look at the stars at night, we see the glory of God. The glory of God is His beauty, honor, and majesty. We can also read the text "who hast covered the heavens with thy glory!" A poster has recently gone into print showing a nebula (beautiful cluster of stars and glowing gas) viewed through a powerful telescope. It is truly a majestic and glorious picture. This nebula looks like fingers of a hand and the poster is entitled "The Hand of God." Man can find no other words to describe the beauty of the stars than words which point them to the very name of God. The name of God is His Being as He is revealed to us. God created those stars with His Word. He is infinite in power and wisdom and beauty. This is Jehovah, our covenant God, and Lord. With the whole church of God sing Psalter #14:1.

February 23

Psalm 8:2

The words of little children have power to silence the ungodly scientists who devote their lives to a study of the stars in the heavens but with high sounding learned words vehemently deny and fight against the truth of God's glorious name. God is pleased to create victorious power for Himself out of the mouths of children that confess His name. God hath chosen that which is foolish and weak in the eyes of the world to put to shame the wise and that which is strong. While the scientist next door pours over data late into the night using million dollar equipment and supercomputers, may the light sweet voice of our children singing this Psalm as they look out their bedroom window at the stars drift into his ears and reveal the answer. With childlike faith sing Psalter #14:2.

February 24

Psalm 8:3-4

As we look at the stars and begin to consider their great number, distance, and magnitude, then we begin to feel how small we are. All the thoughts of pride which had lifted you up throughout the day and roused up feelings of anger when others looked down upon you begin to bring shame to your soul. I am nothing! I am but a speck of dust in this big universe! And, even more astounding, the glorious God Whose name I see exalted high above all creation, is always thinking about me with fatherly love and remembering me! God's love for me and my salvation is really the only thing that is important. All the petty little worries and squabbles melt away in this wonderful oasis. Sing Psalter #15:2 & 14:3, 4.

February 25

Psalm 8:5

Yes, God is mindful of His people. He never forsook them throughout the Old Testament and in the time appointed, sent His Son to visit and redeem us for heavenly glory. Though very small and frail in the vast creation, God created man in His image so that he could enter into covenant fellowship with Him. Our Psalter interprets the words "lower than the angels" in terms of God giving His wisdom to man and power that is nearly divine. God has crowned man as king with glory and honor. David is thinking of the position that Adam was given in Paradise in light of God's promise that man will be exalted to an even more glorious state in the coming Redeemer (cf. Hebrews 2:6-8). "Man" in this text refers to the church which is composed of men and women from every tribe, tongue, and nation. That is why the Psalm begins with "O LORD our Lord." This is the song of the Church. Let us sing Psalter #14:5.

February 26

Psalm 8:6-8

Not only does man have an exalted position in relation to God, man is also given dominion over all creation. When God created the world, He made all things ready for man before creating man and placing him in the creation. The vast expanse of the stars in heaven was made for man. Man is so small and insignificant, yet at the same time he is created to enter into fellowship with God. This incomprehensible wonder only points us to our God and the glory of His name. The magnitude of the universe which was created for man is a picture of the overflowing abundance of grace which God has for His people. Humble yourself before God and with a thankful heart sing Psalter #14:6.

February 27

I Corinthians 15:25-27

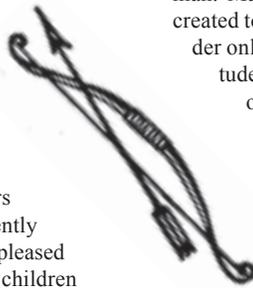
cf. Ephesians 1:22

We do not always feel like a king of creation. Man does not have dominion, glory, and honor of himself. We are nothing in ourselves. Our honor, glory, and dominion comes only in connection with God being mindful of us and visiting us. David sang Psalm 8 in the hope of God's promise. We sing it knowing that God has fulfilled His promise in Christ. Christ, who has destroyed death does have glory, honor, and dominion over all things. We have a beginning of this glory and dominion on this earth when we fight against sin and by God's grace draw closer to Him. When the church is taken to heaven, then we will have this glory and dominion in full. Do you long for that day? Sing Psalter #15:3.

February 28

Psalm 8:9

The Psalm ends with the same words found in verse one "O Jehovah our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth." John Calvin writes in his commentary "The sum is this: God, in creating man, gave a demonstration of his infinite grace and more than fatherly love towards him." When God reveals His grace and love in Christ to His elect children, we can do nothing but praise Him. Our praise for God must arise out of a correct understanding of His grace and love. There is nothing worthy of praise in a grace that is powerless to save or a love that is powerless to draw the children of God irresistibly. Thank God that He has given unto us faithful preachers who preach the truth of sovereign grace. Sing Psalter #14:7.



MORNING MEDITATION*

by Rev. Gerrit Vos

The fifth psalm is a morning meditation. Many years later we find a quotation taken from this psalm and quoted in the New Testament (Rom. 3:13).

I cannot help but think: how few people will today meditate like the saint in this psalm.

Today there is a very different tenor in the meditations of those who “look up” and “direct their prayer in the morning.”

There are not a few divines who explain (?) this psalm as a sinful outburst of selfishness on the part of David. Some do not try to explain it at all. Some think it a cruel, Old Testament view of God. The “vloek psalmen” are not very popular in our day. Even the purest churches on earth are strangely silent about them.

Many years ago we heard a president of a certain synod say that we have a peculiar view of God and that therefore we teach as we do. Our view of God was not his view. And I am persuaded that one reason for this diversity of views is our appreciation of the “vloek psalmen.” We would also incorporate them in our system of thought.

And why should we not?

Paul did. He quotes them. He needs them in order to preach the blessed gospel of God’s Son. He needs them in order to paint “so great a death!” from which we are saved.

Besides, even these psalms that speak of God’s great indignation over against the wicked are part and parcel

of the Self-revelation of God, most blessed forever! They tell us not only God’s inclination or disposition over against the reprobate but also His carriage, His bearing, His deportment, and His attitude over against these same unhappy men. (See Psalm 18:26.) Certainly these psalms are the product of the Holy Spirit. Certainly also of Psalm 5 it may be said that holy men, driven by the Holy Spirit, have spoken and subsequently written the Word of God.

However, if you should ask me, “But are not these

psalms terrible?” I would make answer in the affirmative. I could make answer through the same David. Favoring the Holland translation I would say with him in Psalm 119:20: “The hair of my flesh trembleth for fear of Thee; and I am afraid of Thy judgments!”

But we may not react even as the seed of the serpent. When they read, hear, or see the indignation and holy wrath of God, they hate God. Listen to Isaiah’s appraisal of these people: “The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” Isa. 33:14

It is no cause for wonder that natural man reacts as he does. And there are two reasons.

The first reason is God’s appraisal of the wicked.

The fifth psalm is very short; only 12 verses. Moreover, there are only 5 of these 12 verses that deal with the reprobate. But what a terrible appraisal of the wicked!

Many years ago we heard a president of a certain synod say that we have a peculiar view of God and that therefore we teach as we do.

Listen to this: they are: the foolish; workers of iniquity; those that speak leasing (deceit); the man of blood (in the Hebrew the plural is used: intensity); rebels against God; transgressors; unfaithful mouths; wickedness for inward parts; throats that are open sepulchers; flattering, oily tongues; falling counsels; and multiple transgressors!

Such appraisal of God of the wicked makes him hate God the more.

The second reason why the wicked react unfavorably against God is God's attitude and disposition over against them.

Also this we find in the fifth psalm.

Attend to: God hath no pleasure in their wickedness; evil does not dwell with Him; the foolish do not stand in His sight; He hates the workers of iniquity; destroys the liars; and abhors the bloody and deceitful man!

And man, natural man, reacts.

But why should the church of Jesus Christ react unfavorably?

Or why should the church be so concerned about the wicked that they whitewash him at every opportunity, even to the corrupting of Scripture? Every text that *seems* to be in favor of the common grace idea (and they are few indeed) is looked at through the loupe; but the countless texts that clearly speak of God's wrath and fiery indignation is simply ignored or wrested into its very opposite.

Let us see this.

You all know that the very heart of the common grace theory is that God loves the wicked, be it for this time only. They may call it favor, goodness, favorable attitude or disposition, grace that is common, longsuffering and what not; but the fact remains that they teach that God loves the wicked somehow.

But I read in Psalm 5 that God *hates the workers of iniquity!*

I read that God *abhors the bloody and deceitful man!*

I ask in all seriousness: cannot these men read? I am reminded of the ironical question of Jesus: "Have ye never read?"

And when we confront these men with such clear references as quoted before, they make answer and say: "God's ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts than our thoughts." Then they say: "Yes, we agree: God hates the wicked, but He also loves them, and that is a mystery. Somehow there is a logic with God that is so high and metaphysical that we cannot even grasp it. God's

love and God's hatred for the same person can be harmonized in God's own being."

But this is terrible even to think.

And we would add that these men who talk such nonsense cannot believe that themselves. We cannot believe a nonsensical thing or thought. It militates against everything that God has revealed of Himself in man.

No, the real reason why men talk such nonsense is that they would like to have it so. They cannot swallow the bitter pill of God's appraisal of natural man. It cuts them to the quick. They realize that if the truth be so, that then they themselves are also comprised in this terrible judgment. For also the child of God has "members" upon the earth which are called "fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col. 3:5). In short: if we are to accept the judgment of God on the natural state of man, we will have to humble ourselves too much. That is the reason why we have such nonsensical appraisal of man in our day.

Instead, beloved reader, let us accept the terrible judgment of God upon our vile nature and seek our salvation outside of ourselves in Jesus Christ. And even that seeking without our nature is a gift of grace. Let us realize that.

Does this grace find and does this grace change us into a new creature, then everything becomes different. Listen also in this same psalm to a description of that new man that is created in Christ Jesus unto all good works: those that pray in the morning; those that look up (watch); those that direct their prayer (set it in order before God's face); those that come into God's house; those that worship in fear towards God's holy temple; they are longing for righteousness; for a straight way (by which they mean God's way); the righteous; they that put their trust in God; that love His name; that cry and call God their King and their God!

What a tremendous contrast between the wicked and the righteous.

And in order that all ground for pride and arrogance be taken away from us, let me point to a small but very significant earmark of the righteous. Verse 7 tells us that all the endeavor unto goodness happens *in* the multitude of God's mercy and *in* His fear! It shows us that our entire walk is in the sphere of God's own virtue, the virtue that is communicated to us. It is the urge of the Holy Spirit Who is given unto us in the moment of regeneration and never leaves us again. It takes away all ground

for boasting and exalts God in His glorious work of redemption.

Does a man walk this way of righteousness, then he may be assured of a wondrous protection. For we read in the same psalm that he will be defended by God; that he will be blessed of God and that God's favor shall encompass him as with a shield.

Let us then not try and be wiser than God or let us not charge God foolishly. He knows better than we.

It is the Holy Spirit of God, Who even searches the deep things of God, that has searched the heart of man. And if that Spirit tells us that the very inward part of natural man is very wickedness, let us then not turn around and say: "Well, that may be so, but we also find in man very much that is commendable, good, virtuous, and righteous." If need be, for the sake of discourse among men, we will speak of civil righteousness of the godless, but we would plead with you to understand that when we say this we do not mean that this so-called righteousness is goodness before God. And also that this civil righteousness, so-called, is abomination before the Almighty. For God does never see the deed apart from the deep heart. He connects heart, word and deed and judges that ev-

erything breathes cruelty, deceit, abomination and wickedness. When God shall cause natural man to stand in the light of His eye in the day of days, then He will show to the satisfaction of every man, be he saint or sinner; to the devil and his angels and to the light-spirits about the throne—that this natural man in the so many thousand years of his idle existence on earth has produced nothing but horrible iniquity, so that when they shall be driven to outer darkness the punishment shall fit the crime.

This yet: if you see this now in prospect through the light of Spirit and Word, you will chant in unison with David: "Thou shalt destroy them!" Or, with Asaph: "Thou shalt despise their image!"

But cry aloud, thou inhabitants of Zion! For great is the Holy One of Israel in the *midst* of thee!

"En zoo komt God tot Zijn eer!" ❖

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Rev. Gerrit Vos served the Protestant Reformed Churches as an active minister from 1927 to 1966.

Where We Stand

Crucial Questions for the Christian

By Jeff Potjer

Question 1: How do we know if we belong to the proper church? Question 2: Is our worship satisfactory or is it just a means of making ourselves feel good? In conjunction with question 2 is this question: How do we display, by our actions, that we are true christians? Most christians probably cannot answer these questions. If you or I were confronted with these questions do you think we could answer them? Even more so could we answer them properly?

To answer the previous questions let's cover them individually. First main question: Do I belong to the proper church? When considering whether or not you belong to

the proper church; think about the marks of the true church, which are:

1. The Pure Preaching of God's Infallible Word
2. The Proper Administration of the Sacraments
3. The Faithful Execution of Christian Discipline

Does the church you attend preach the truth? In church the preaching must be the largest portion of each service. In conjunction with this it must be based on God's Infallible and Inspired Word; not man's bible or commentary as many churches use today.

A true christian will seek out the scriptures and needs to be continually reminded of what he believes so he can

stand up for the truth. Whereas one who does not hear and understand God's Word cannot defend the truth. We need also to study God's Word so that we can maintain the truth. We do so by watching over the preaching; whereby we can exercise the office of all-believers.

Does the church you attend administer the sacraments properly? I Cor. 10 : 16-17 describes this very well both what the sacrament of communion should be and why, when it says:

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."

This describes well the communion of the saints and indirectly why worshipping together on a regular basis in the proper church is important.

Baptism enhances this communion of the saints by the significance of the covenant bond of God with the church.

While in itself, baptism does not save one from eternal damnation, it is a symbol of God washing away of our sins. Throughout all we can remember that the sacraments are constant reminders of what God has done for us.

A chief means of showing that we are christians is expressed by our christian discipline. If children as well as adults are not disciplined, they soon become spoiled and think they can do whatever they wish. It is also true in the church; for example, the less we attend church services and functions the more we don't want to attend them.

We must frequent the Lord's house. Reasons why we should come into the church of God with a pure heart and true faith is based on the Word of God in John 15:5,6: "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." This explains what will happen to (the christian) man if he does not continue to enter into God's house.

Second main question: Is our worship satisfactory or is it just a means of making ourselves feel good? Even more so, do we only go to God when times are bad or when we feel guilty because of the sins which we have committed? Every individual needs to answer this ques-

tion for him / herself. To answer these questions we can evaluate ourselves with this phrase: "To know God, is to love Him"; And vice versa: "To love God, is to know Him."

"To know God, is to love Him." What does this mean? If you know God you will glorify Him in everyway possible because of what He has done for you. For example, your parents give birth to you, clothe you, feed you, provide shelter for you. In turn you love them because they are your parents and have done so much for you. Furthermore you show it by your constant affection to them and your obedience to them. Likewise we should love

God by glorifying Him in every thing that we say and do because He has done so much for us - to the extent that He gave the life of His Only Begotten Son so that we who are dead in trespasses and sins, might live. If it were not for Him we would all end up in eternal damnation. God is certainly worthy of our love and faithfulness to Him by our obedience of His com-

mandments.

"To love God, is to know Him." What does this mean? Do you love someone you do not know? And how could you love them, if you did not know them? When you love someone you want to know everything about them. Why else would we want to date someone or spend every bit of time with them as we could? Better yet do as much for them as we possibly could.

Many people forfeit their Sunday worship for things of this earth. Or in other terms they spend the Sabbath Day in self-service and not serving God. Is not the fourth commandment: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy;..." (Gen. 2: 1-3). You should attend the Lord's House as much as possible, seek out and study the scriptures, to learn more about God. And glorify Him in everything that you say and do.

Fellow saints abide in the church that preaches the truth of God's Word. Live a life of fellowship with other christians. Frequent the Lord's House. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy..." And do all this so that God may be glorified! ❖

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

[I] - Pride

Number One in My Life

by Tom Bergman

I woke up this morning. It was a short night. Going to bed late last night, I got only five and a half hours sleep. But, I am awake. I need my shower to get things rolling. Shower should be quite hot. I like it very hot, almost scalding. Better hurry, though, or I might miss my ride to school.

Breakfast is not an option. I never eat breakfast. Once in a while, I grab a glass of juice, but I am not an eggs-n-toast person at all. Hopefully, Mom packed a good lunch for me.

I throw on my jeans and a long-sleeve denim shirt. It's a deep forest green. I just bought it this past weekend. It looks cool. I look cool. Five minutes is enough time to make sure my hair is alright, my breath doesn't knock people over, and I'm out the door.

My ride has been waiting a couple of minutes, but I don't care. I won't be tardy or anything. I am riding shotgun on this zippy five minute drive, so I do the channel surfing. Great song, but we are almost there.

I walk into school in the middle of devotions. It is a good Christian school. I like it pretty well. I fit in, and I have a lot of friends here. First hour, second hour, break!...

"What do you know? Did you hear?...I can't believe it...! I saw it too. That was quite something."

Third hour, fourth hour, fourth hour, still fourth hour...lunch. Missed the prayer, but heard the "Amen." This is the time to hang around with my friends. We are just a fun-loving bunch, although we get a little bit silly sometimes. None of us drink or smoke. Most of us have never even been to a party. I like this group of friends. We all keep each other company and have fun without getting into trouble. We are good people. It's a Christian school.

The afternoon is fun today. Normally, I prefer to do cool things in class. School is too boring otherwise. I don't like boring. But, my parents send me here. It's OK, I guess. It is a Christian school.

All the basketball and soccer players stick around after school, but not me. With my friends, I head over to the college to work on biology projects. Mine might not be the very best, but it will be awesome. I put a lot of work into it, and it is something I will be very proud of. I cannot stick around very long, though. I have to be at work by 5:00.

Like the rest of my day, work isn't so bad either. It just kind of goes. It is nice to make friends from some of the other area high schools. I cannot believe some of the things that go on in their schools! I am glad I go to a Christian school.

Punch out, drive home. It is my mom's car (station change!). Once home, I stuff down a frozen pizza, finish my homework, and head to bed. By the time I have showered and brushed my teeth, I realize how exhausted I am. I am ready to fall asleep right when my head hits the pillow. "Tomorrow is another..." I think to myself when a thought crosses my mind and makes my blood run cold. Ashamed, I ask:

**Did I just go through an entire day, in sinful pride, thinking that I don't need God for anything? Uhhh...that's going to be a problem. Who is number one in my life?*

Lord most holy and Father in heaven,

Thy name is to be praised for all the works I see around me and inside my heart. For Jesus sake, be merciful unto me and forgive me for my faithless pride. Such pride dishonors Thy name and hurts the health of my church family. Help me to forgive those who hurt me with their pride. Be near me in all things, Father. After all, not my will, but Thine. Grant me grace, strength, and wisdom for tomorrow. And when tomorrow is done, teach me to come again to Thy presence to render thanks for such blessings. This is my prayer in Jesus' name. Amen. ❖

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



The Battle of Tours, 732 A.D.

by Mike Feenstra

There is no question that the many victories of the Islamic empire in the 7th and 8th centuries terrorized the lands in their path. In a short period of time Tierney says that, “The followers of a new prophet, Mohammed, snatched away from the Byzantine Empire all the ancient Christian lands of the eastern Mediterranean and North Africa” (81). After these triumphs, the Mohammedans accompanied by the Berbers from North Africa invaded and conquered Spain in 711. What lay before them was the whole continent of Europe, the land of Luther and Calvin, and for most of us, the land of our forefathers.

The danger was very real as Tierney explains: “No one thinks of the seventh and eighth centuries as a great age in the history of Europe - but if the events of that period had turned out differently, there might never have been a Europe at all” (81). The main event he refers to is the Battle of Tours: “the scene of the great victory won by Charles Martel over the Saracens [Mohammedans, MPF], A.D. 732, which gave a decisive check to the career of Arab conquest in Western Europe, rescued Christendom from Islam” (Creasy 157). When reading about this battle the truth that God protects His church stares you in the face. God used the Battle of Tours to save His church, though weak, from the rule of the dreaded Mohammedans.

The sovereign control of God in this victory becomes evident when you look at the state of Frankish Gaul (now France) before Tours. During that time the Merovingian line of kings ruled Gaul beginning with the reign of Clovis in the early 6th century. Although his reign was strong, the line of succeeding rulers gradually decreased in power. The region they ruled had been converted to Christianity by Scotch and Irish monks, but Schaff says that much of the christianization, “was a wholesale conversion, or a

conversion of nations under the command of their leaders.” He goes on to say that the conversion was mostly superficial for the barbarians were children in knowledge (17-19). Moss says that Frankish Gaul under the Merovingians was marked with famine, murder, and sudden death. Beggars and highwaymen infested the roads, and the churches were not safe from rapine (195).

The situation with the rulers themselves was no different. The Merovingians were constantly feuding and warring against each other. The worst of these rulers were Chilperic, the grandson of Clovis, and Fredegund his wicked wife who once had an assassin kill Chilperic’s brother, Sigibert, with a poison dart after Sigibert defeated Chilperic in 575 A.D.

In time the degenerate Merovingians were overcome by the Carolingians, who used the office of the mayor of the palace to usurp the crown. The event that marked the overthrow was the Battle of Tertry in 687 A.D. After that battle, Theodoric III was made ruler of all Gaul. He ruled until 714, when Pepin II was made king. His illegitimate son’s name would be known as Charles Martel.

That was the Gaul the Mohammedans saw from Spain. It’s no wonder that Gibbon says: “The decline of the French monarchy invited the attack of these insatiate fanatics.” This campaign of the Mohammedans (summ. from Gibbon, 1855ff) led by the great Abderame started with a defeat at Toulouse by the Franks under the leadership of Eudes, a noble from the province of Aquitaine (Southern Gaul) who usurped the title of “King”. But this defeat only fueled a revenge among the Mohammedans so that they attacked and captured Narbonne from the hands of Eudes.

Eudes, seeking any way to stop the imminent slaughter on the rest of Gaul, even gave his own daughter

in marriage to a Moorish rebel leader to persuade his army to fight Abderame's army. This rebel leader was defeated and Abderame sent the daughter of Eudes to Damascus. Abderame proceeded to defeat a Christian army at Arles, allowing his forces to pass over the Garonne and the Dordogne rivers. There, Eudes again met Abderame only to be crushed by the Mohammedans. Following this victory over Eudes, the Mohammedans overran Aquitaine, spelling its apparent end. At this point Gibbon admits that, "A victorious march had been prolonged above a thousand miles from the rock of Gibraltar to the banks of the Loire" (1859). Who could stop Abderame and his host of Mohammedans?

When considering the extent of the Mohammedan conquest into Gaul we must understand that Tours and the river Loire are in the middle of France. The Battle at Tours was no border skirmish because the whole southern part of Gaul was under Islam at that time. To increase the serious nature of the battle we must note that, according to Moslem chroniclers, the Moslem army, "brought with them all their armor, and whatever they had, as if they were thenceforth always to dwell in France" (Creasy, 163). Charles Martel knew the danger of the Moslem threat but he waited until the Moslems reached Tours to confront Abderame. Historians list different factors why Charles waited so long, but the fact remains that Charles was ready to meet Abderame with a prepared army exactly at the right time considering that some of his troops were at the end of their allotted time.

So Charles, an experienced leader by this time through wars against the Frisians and Germans, finally collected his forces and went to meet Abderame at Tours. The well-conducted march by Charles covered many hills by Tours so that they surprised Abderame when they attacked. Six days of desultory combat ensued with the Moslem horseman and archers holding the advantage. Then on the seventh day, "At last they set themselves in battle array, and the nations from the North standing firm as a wall, and impenetrable as a zone of ice, utterly slay[ed] the Arabs with the edge of the sword" (Creasy, 164). The next morning Charles Martel's army was ready to fight again, but there were no Arabs! They sent out men to see if the Arabs were setting an ambush, but that was not so. The mighty Abderame had been slain, and

the Arabs were in retreat! Europe was saved from Islam!

But, before we give the credit to Charles Martel and his army let us see that it was God who stopped Abderame and his Mohammedans. God protected Europe from the religion of Islam. A religion which probably would have supplanted Christianity in Europe, just as it did in North Africa and other parts of the then known world. The life under Islam would indeed have been miserable. In addition to all the abominations of this false religion, consider what Schaff has to say

God protected Europe from the religion of Islam.

about the reward for the Moslem conqueror: "Concubinage with female slaves is allowed to all without limitation. The violation of captive women is the legitimate reward of the conqueror" (189).

From such atrocities God saved His church! After such a victory the question arises: What then happened in the Christian lands of Europe? One would think that all of Europe should have turned to God in thanksgiving, and that the truth would be treasured as never before. But instead of thanksgiving, the church centered in Rome wrongfully began to ally herself with the state. Yes, indeed Christianity was being spread in the wake of Tours by missionaries such as Boniface, but at this time Rome began to build its power as Von Ranke says:

The Pope of Rome—allied himself with this prince [Charles Martel, MPF] and his successors; as he received assistance from them, and bestowed in return the favor and protection of the spiritual authority, the compound of military and sacerdotal government which forms the basis of all European civilization from that moment arose into being.

From that time conquest and conversion went hand in hand. "As soon," says the author of the life of St. Boniface, "as the authority of the glorious Prince Charles over the Frisians was confirmed, the trumpet of the sacred word was heard." (2-3) That the pope was beginning to increase in power is also Schaff's point in connection with the coronation of Charles Martel's son, Pepin, by Pope Zacharias (741-752). Schaff says, "this elevation and coronation was made the basis of papal superiority over the crowns of France and Germany" (234).

When reading about the rise of the power of Rome and the events of the dark ages following the battle of Tours it is hard for us to see God's plan in it all. At times

we ask ourselves whether God had His church in Europe at all. These problems are solved when we see how God used the Battle of Tours and all the subsequent events of 800 years to bring about the great Reformation of the 16th century.

God brought about the Reformation by means of such men as Gottschalk who lived in the 9th century. He was a man who lived during a time when the church was apostate. He taught the views of the great Augustine such as election and reprobation, and he was persecuted for it. Another man God used to bring the Reformation was the pre-reformer John Huss who was burned at the stake because he preached the truth over against mighty Rome.

The lives of these men and others such as the Waldensians show us that God did have his church during the Middle Ages even though the instituted church was hopelessly apostate. He showed this also through preserving His Word during these dark days. Therefore, we see that God always preserves His church on this earth. He preserved it through means such as the victory at the Battle of Tours.

We as Christians give the praise and glory for this victory to our King Jesus Christ. This is only one event in history that Christ uses to bring about His second triumphant return to this world. He is the King who said in

Matthew 28:18b to His disciples after His resurrection: "All power is given unto me in Heaven and in Earth." Our King's power was mightily evident at the battle of Tours. No mere man or all the host of Mohammedanism can stop God who says, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isaiah 46:10b). ❖

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

Church History

In Uithuizermeeden

by J.P. de Klerk



In the Northern part of the Dutch province of Groningen you find a village with the name Uithuizermeeden, close to the coast of the "Waddensee" (where the Frisian Islands are). This place is never in the news. The Church with Manse is of the Liberated Reformed Churches of The Netherlands. There are about 800 members; no Roman-Catholics in this place, but many State-Reformed people.

Most of the inhabitants are farmers or they grow vegetables, at the soil of a mixture of clay and sand. A part of the "Waddensee" has been reclaimed. ❖

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

What Is Just (3)

"Philip, Philip, come quick!" Josh whispered back to me as I scrambled up the slope. "Hurry!"

Looking through the trees on top of the hill, I saw why Josh was so excited. We had been hiking on the nature trail all morning and so far had seen only squirrels and sparrows. But now, below us in a meadow, were two bucks and four does. What a sight the six deer made!

"Do they sense us?" I asked.

"I don't think so. We're hid by these trees and the wind is in our favor."

I think something else was in our favor, too. They were preoccupied with each other.

"The bucks look like they're going to fight!" Josh whispered.

We watched as they snorted and pawed the ground. Carefully they positioned themselves. Finally they struck. It was antler against antler at first, but soon it was antler against flesh. The larger deer drove the smaller one onto its knees. Then with a twitch of its tail the victor pranced into the forest with all four does close behind. The loser was left in the meadow, bleeding.

Josh and I stared at each other in amazement. "What a story we can tell our friends back in school!" exclaimed Josh.

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

"Yeah, that was incredible! But do you think that deer is dead?" I asked.

"Let's find out!" Josh replied. Before we were far off the trail, though, it struggled to its feet and walked away.

"Well, that answers that," said Josh. "C'mon, let's go back onto the trail."

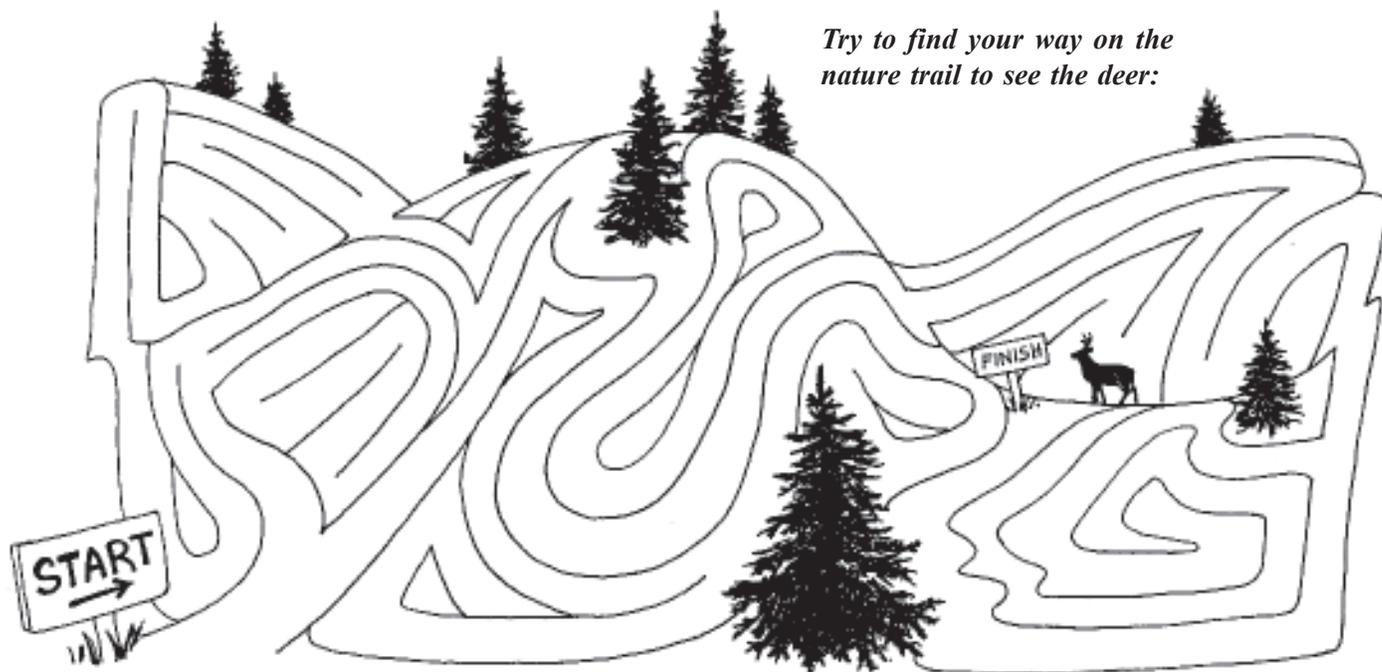
As we continued to walk, I wondered how animals could fight like that. It was "winner takes all" and no one helped the loser. It didn't seem fair! Then I remembered seeing a fight at school. That wasn't fair, either. Hm, sometimes things aren't fair, but at least I can be fair and just in how I treat others.

I kept on walking and thinking.

* * * * *

"Finally, brethren, . . . whatsoever things are just, . . . think on these things" Philippians 4:8. ❖

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



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Church News

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

Mark 16:16

BYRON CENTER, MI

Mr. & Mrs. Duane Mingerink presented their daughter, Karli Sue, for baptism.

The sacrament of baptism was administered to Daniel Scott, son of Mr. & Mrs. Marvin Gritters.

FAITH, MI

Gerrit Daniel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Lane was presented for holy baptism.

GEORGETOWN, MI

Baptism was administered to Tyler Timothy, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Decker and to Megan Ranae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brent DeYoung.

HULL, IA

Nicole Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brian Gritters, and Jordan Scott, son of Mr. & Mrs. Glenn Kooima were presented for baptism.

REDLANDS, CA

Mr. & Mrs. John DeBoer presented their son, Brock Sydney, for baptism.

SOUTH HOLLAND, IL

Holy baptism was administered to Kyle Ross, son of Mr. & Mrs. Bob VanBaren.

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

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

Romans 10:10

BETHEL, IL

Confession of faith in our Saviour was made by Katie Jankovic.

BYRON CENTER, MI

Public confession of faith in Jesus Christ was made by Ben Boverhof and Jonathan Kuiper.

GRACE, MI

David Meulenberg and Tom VanDenTop have made their confession of faith in Jesus Christ public.

HUDSONVILLE, MI

Public confession of faith was made by Peggy Jansma, Penny Jansma, and Molly MacGraw.

SOUTH HOLLAND, MI

Confession of faith in our Lord was made by Kathy Van Baren.

William Hanemaayer has made public his confession in the Lord Jesus.

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

Matthew 19:5

GEORGETOWN, MI

Joined in marriage were Mr. Titus Kamps and Miss Charlynn Van Dyke.

HUDSONVILLE, MI

Mr. Matt Kamps and Miss Lynae Becksvoort were united in holy matrimony.

Thank -you to those of you who sent in bulletins this month. Please continue to send them in. We *welcome* more news from the other churches who have not yet sent in their bulletins. You may send your bulletins to:

Melinda DeMeester

1171 Sunset Hills NW

Grand Rapids, MI 49544

or e-mail to:

melindad@juno.com