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The Water Cycle

by John Huizenga



The water grows warmer under the hot summer sun. As the sun pours its energy into the ocean surface, the water molecules begin to move faster and faster. Bouncing endlessly with its neighbors, one molecule receives a final boost of energy and breaks free from the crest of an ocean wave. It begins to float upwards. Joined by billions of other water molecules, the vapor rises high into the sky. As it climbs, the air becomes cool, and the molecules of water move more slowly until they again begin to stick and clump together into tiny droplets to form clouds.

The tiny droplets of water swirl into a thick fog that blocks the sun from view. Carried on with the constant churning of the atmosphere, the droplets are swept into an area of low atmospheric pressure. Under these changing conditions, the droplets are drawn even more closely together, begin to stick together, and grow heavy. The upwelling of moist air can no longer support them as they fall down toward the earth as rain.

The rains pass on. The sun comes out. The molecule of water soaks down into some newly tilled soil, quickly latching on to some nearby minerals. Within minutes a root hair from a tender young plant sucks it up, minerals and all. They are drawn through long tubes and into green leaves where sunlight powered chlorophyll factories change the minerals into food and building blocks for the plant. Having finished this task, the molecule of water is warmed by the sun and released once again into the air.

Up again, down again, the cycle continues. This time the water comes down on a rock. It picks up a trace of salt. It picks up some oxygen atoms and joins the crowd running toward a stream. Once in the stream, it is sucked into a fish and forced through its gills where the oxygen atom is exchanged for a carbon dioxide molecule. The stream flows into a river, and the water helps carry a boat on its way. Eventually, the molecule again becomes vapor and floats up towards the sky and leaves a little salt for the ocean.

The cycle has continued on through the ages ever since God separated the earth from the waters. The cycle is awesome in power and magnitude as billions of tons of water are carried aloft and sent down to feed living creatures, scrub filth from the earth, and fill the beautiful lakes and oceans. To trace the path of just one molecule of water throughout the ages would be mind boggling. Then we would have to multiply that by the number of water molecules that exist. Incomprehensible! Awesome!

This is what we observe with our natural eye and discover with the tools of science. When we look through the spectacles of Scripture at that molecule of water in the ocean we see so much more; we see the glory of God. We see a marvel of *His* creation, a display of *His* infinite wisdom, and the power of *His* word directing the workings of all creation. We so easily fall into the rut of explaining the weather as though it just happens, but we read in Scripture, "It is he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, and hath founded his troop in the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The Lord is his name" Amos 9:6.

Again we look through the spectacles of Scripture at that molecule of water as it ascends high above the earth. Does it just go up because warm air always rises? Does it just obey a natural law? The

water molecule does follow certain laws, but the important question is “whence that law?” The rising vapor does not just rise, it obeys the command of God as we read in Jeremiah 10:13. “When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.” Just as the word of God caused the water to come into existence on the first day of creation, so God’s word continues to uphold and preserve it for His service. We must hear the voice of God in the thunder and read His command in the rising vapor.

Science says that the sun’s energy and the water molecule’s shape and properties cause the water to evaporate and rise as vapor. The Bible says that God “utters his voice” and “calls” the water to this action. God uses this language for a very good reason. The Bible is God’s word teaching us what He does. The Bible is not a science book that explains the science behind everything God made. There are many who say that God makes water in such a way that it will evaporate and condense all by itself so that God is no longer active in creation. This language of Scripture destroys that idea. We need to remember that science can only explain and describe what it observes. God and his providence can not be observed with the earthly eye. When pressed for deeper answers, the ungodly scientist always goes silent. “Why,” for example, “is the water molecule shaped the way it is, and exactly where does the energy and mass come from?” The ungodly scientist then begins to babble nonsense about the big bang and the constant expansion and condensing of matter naturally into its various forms. God makes known that which man can not know with earthly eyes. The voice of God is the expression of His will. The molecules would not move or evaporate without the express command of God.

The Scriptures also pierce through the thickest clouds to a realm of understanding where no Doppler radar technology in the world can penetrate. There in the dark clouds God calls the vapor together into small drops of water. Man talks of energy and atmospheric pressure, but let us not forget the Creator of these things and the source of all energy; “For he maketh small the drops of water: they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof: Which the clouds do drop and distil upon man abundantly” Job 36:27-28. All these things work together in perfect harmony because it is a work of God’s wisdom. “By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew” (Proverbs 3:20). God displays infinite wisdom and knowledge through every detail of creation. God establishes the laws behind the condensing of water into clouds already at creation (Proverbs 8:28).

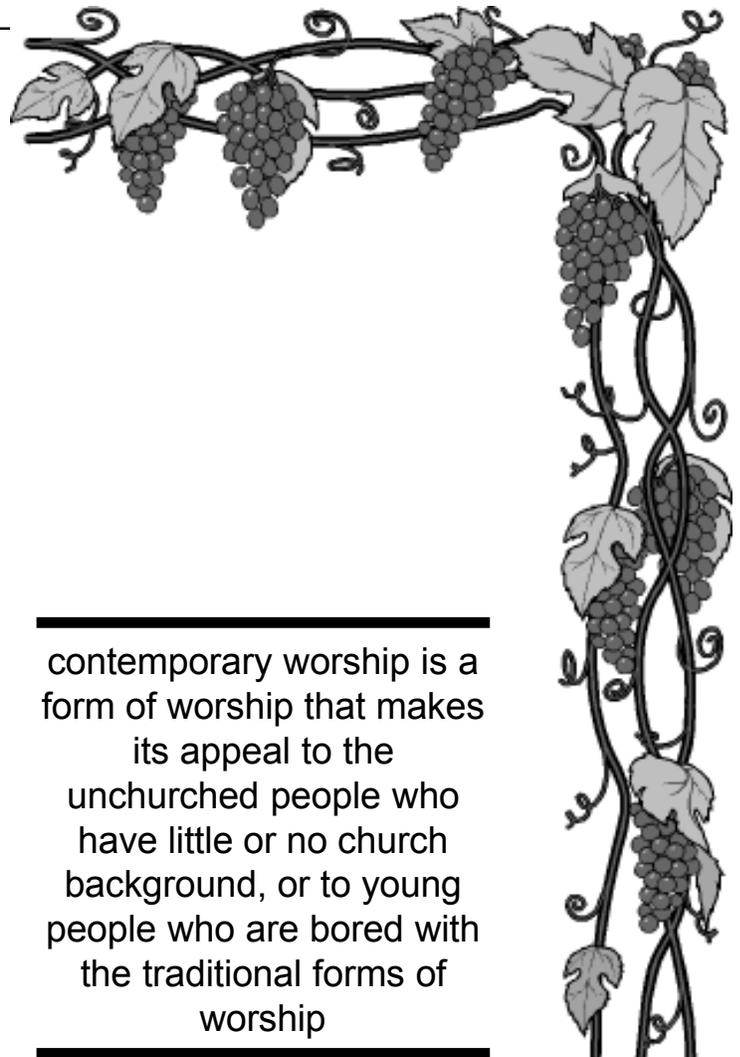
The rain that falls is also the handiwork of God. We read in Job 28:26-28 “When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder: Then did he see it, and declare it; he prepared it, yea, and searched it out. And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.” The entire water cycle is governed in every detail by the will of God.

Looking through the spectacles of Scripture we also see purpose in the water cycle as well as some spiritual truths that are illustrated by the water cycle. Rain upon thirsty ground is often a picture of God coming to care for His people. Psalm 68:9 “Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary.” And in Psalm 72:6 we read “He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.” The spiritual blessings of faith and regeneration also produce fruit just as showers of rain upon carefully tilled ground. Hebrews 6:7 “For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:”

More specifically, rain is a picture of the word of God. In Isaiah 55:10-11 we read “For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” God created water and its properties to accomplish a purpose in nourishing life in creation. Every time the water makes a cycle, it accomplishes something. Sometimes it brings life, and sometimes it brings death and destruction. Even so, the word of God to man brings either life or death, it never goes forth without some effect.

Most important of all in any consideration of creation is the glory of God. Creation itself gives glory to God as we read in Psalm 148:4 “Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.” We also are taught to give praise to God when we consider the water cycle. We read in Psalm 147:7-8 “Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God: Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.” May we be filled with praise this spring as we watch the clouds and listen to the raindrops on the earth. ❖

Fruitful Branches



In the Beauty of Holiness*

by Kristin Brands

* 1997 scholarship essay

An increasing move is being made in our day to leave the traditional form of worship, which we know, for new, contemporary forms of worship. What are these trends? WHY are they present? Are they wrong? What does the Bible have to say on this subject? How are we to respond?

First of all, what are contemporary forms of worship? Essentially, contemporary worship is a form of worship that makes its appeal to the unchurched people who have little or no church background, or to young people who are bored with the traditional forms of wor-

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ship. In an effort to draw in more people and/or to keep the old, many churches have begun to adjust their services in an effort to make them more appealing to these groups.

Having spent one year at Dordt College, I have seen this very plainly among the young people there. “Praise and Worship” services held in the chapel there on Sunday evenings became a church replacement for many of the students there. These “services” consisted solely of singing, primarily of shallow songs filled with emotion-based words and repetition. The audience spent the majority of the time clapping, waving their hands, swaying, or hugging “the friend next to them.”

Although a popular church replacement among students, those services were not officially labeled as such. Other Dordt students attended a newly revised actual

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church service in town to which ½ hour of praise and worship style music had recently been added.

Another example can be seen in Pella, Iowa. According to Rev. Mark Beach from the First Christian Reformed Church (CRC) there, a 5th CRC is organizing there with the deliberate intention of implementing a “contemporary worship style” in order to draw unchurched people to its services. He comments on that:

“You start to change things in your services. The non-religious haven’t much of a feel for the holiness of God, so you do away with silent prayer and expressions of our littleness. Secularists don’t like to confess their sins, so you remove the service of penitence. Without confession of sin, you hardly need the grace notes of assurance of pardon: out it goes. In general, you assume that the non-religious like things simple and upbeat. That’s where much of the popular culture is, after all, so away with lament, away with hard questions, expressions of anguish, dark ambiguities of any kind. While you’re at it, away with creeds and confessions, away with explicit references to Christian doctrine, or to the history of the Christian church.”

In essence what these churches are doing is trying to make church less religious to appeal to the less religious people. This of course is impossible. Making a church service non-religious is like making a basketball game non-athletic. The more it changes, the more it loses its original form.

In addition to the few examples I have given, there are many other variations of modern contemporary services. Many churches substitute “dialogue” for sermons, which can be either groups on stage discussing a topic, or else discussion between the minister and the congregation. Some churches substitute dramas for the entire service, so that “Go Down Moses,” for example, may replace a sermon on Exodus. Or we hear news about “Clowns for Christ” and their fantastic services for Christ.

The exact form of contemporary worship methods varies slightly from church to church, but all contemporary methods of “worship” have some basic characteristics.

First of all, the idea that the unbeliever needs a boost of therapeutic self-esteem is central. In other words, they believe that the unbeliever needs to be built up emotionally from church in order to enjoy it. Thus the “negative,” unpopular teachings of total depravity or our sinfulness are done away with. No mention is made of God’s holiness or justice, but only of His love, and how He can build up our lives and solve our problems. One who has attended such a service might say, “Now I understand what the Christian faith is all about: it’s not about repentance, or humbling one’s self before God—it’s got nothing to do with boring doctrines; it’s not about the hard, disciplined work of mortifying our old nature and learning to make God’s purposes our own. The Christian faith is mainly about celebration, fun, personal growth, and five ways to boost my self-esteem.”

Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, they all express the attitude that man has the right to make up his own rules regarding worship. Not Scripture, not God, but man is the authority.

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WHY are we seeing these trends? What reasons do people give for putting their innovations above God's? Michael Horton, in his book, *Putting Amazing Back into Grace*, lists 6 reasons commonly given by advocates of contemporary worship styles. They are as follows:

1. The Evangelistic Motivation: what is attractive to the unchurched?
2. The Contemporary Argument: worship has to keep up with the times; the archaic turns people off.
3. The Pragmatic Argument: we have to do what it takes to bring the people in and keep them there.
4. The Domestic Argument: children get little out of the conventional service, so let them have their own.
5. The Emotional Argument: the services are dull! Do something to liven it up!
6. The Ecumenical Motivation: people learn from each other.

Churches improve by sharing with other churches. The pulpit and pew both contribute. One person "up there" can't do it all alone. One denomination can't know it all. Old ways don't have all the answers. Let's share!

While these arguments may overlap, they clearly show the type of thinking which underlies the current contemporary church movement.

What must be our reaction to these attitudes? Quite plainly, we can do none other than to reject them wholeheartedly. The Bible alone must be our guide throughout this life. We must never pretend to be wiser than God by setting our own methods of worship based on what **we** think is best, or will draw the most people. The Heidelberg Catechism speaks concerning this in Lord's Day 35,

"What doth God require in the 2nd Commandment? That we in no wise represent God by images, nor worship Him in any other way than He has commanded in His word."

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The Bible is plain on what is required for worship—the preaching of the Word. That must be the central part

of our worship, not singing programs, lively clapping and arm-waving, emotion-centered personal growth messages, or any other form of "worship."

I Corinthians 1:21 says, "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." What kind of preaching? Of a buddy God who loves us all and will solve all of our problems if only we will allow Him? Verse 23 answers that question for us: "We preach Christ crucified." The preaching of Christ crucified is the preaching of a just and holy God who hates and punishes sin. Christ's death is the clearest example of His just hatred for, and punishment of, sin. As this passage says, to the world this is "foolishness." "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (vs. 27).

We can know that God does not tolerate worship which He has not commanded from a few examples given

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us in the Bible. The first case seen is God's rejection of Cain's offering. Since his offering was not what God had commanded, He had no tolerance for it. Likewise, the kingdom of Israel was torn by God from Saul because he offered the sacrifice without waiting for Samuel to do it as God had commanded.

Thus we can see, that contemporary forms of worship are wrong, first of all, because they pretend to be wiser than God who has chosen the preaching of Christ crucified to be the means of salvation.

Secondly, the contemporary forms of worship are wrong because of the view of God which they display. Man's worship is determined by his understanding of God. Michael Horton says, "What we believe about God and salvation ultimately determines the object, focus, fervor, and direction of our worship." Contemporary forms of worship show, through their worship, that they view God as a cream puff, or a big buddy, rather than a holy God. This is shown through their services where the focus is always on man and His welfare, rather than the great and holy God. Their worship reflects that they view God as kind and compassionate (which He certainly is), but also that He is harmless, morally insin-

cere, and robbed of any holiness that matters. This is not the Biblical view of God which we must have. If we have the correct view of God, it will certainly become manifest in our worship to Him.

How will a proper attitude toward God become manifest in our worship to Him? John 4:24 speaks clearly concerning this: "God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth." We read in Psalm 29:2 to "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." That verse tells us what is beautiful in God's eyes. He delights in holiness, and that is the mood He commands us to be in for worship. Psalm 95:6 records, "O come, let us worship and *bow down*, let us *kneel* before the Lord our maker." As we can see, the Bible repeatedly reveals God to us as a holy God whom we must worship with deep reverence and awe, not with the happy-go-lucky, care-free, man-centered attitude shown in the contemporary forms of worship which seek to appeal to man.

In another place in his book, Michael Horton asks the following questions:

"If Jesus Christ entered at the back of our church on Sunday morning, would we all clap our hands and dance and sing, 'Happy days are here again'? Would we show Him our 'God is rad, he's my dad' sweatshirt? Or would the room be suddenly filled with awe-stricken silence?"

The answer is obvious. Our worship must be reverent or it is not directed to the real God of the Scriptures. It must be obedient in every aspect if it is to have God's blessing.

It is important, too, to remember that the Reformation has always stressed the principle that we are to include in worship services only what is COMMANDED by God. We may not include anything as long as the Scripture does not directly forbid it. Rather, we may include something only if God clearly introduced it. Only God has the authority to determine how He is to be worshipped.

We must not accept these new, contemporary forms of worship, but rather, let us "stand fast, and hold the traditions which we have been taught" (II Thess. 2:15). We must be sure also to teach these truths to our children so that when they are old they "will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). May our worship of God always be God-centered, based on what He commands in His Word, worshipping Him as holy God. May we always "serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:28, 29).

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

From the Web

Doesn't Romans 10:9 Mean That We Must Ask Jesus Into Our Hearts?

by Rev. Moore

Question

I was talking with one of your young people, and she told me what you people believe, and I do not agree with her. You see I go to (another de-

nomination) and we believe that you are to ask God or Jesus into your heart. If you disagree then look to Romans 10:9.

Answer

In the first place it is good to hear that young people are discussing together the doctrines of the Word of God. The only answers to our questions concerning faith are those that are given us by God in his infallible Word. And immediately as we consider together questions that arise in our understanding of God's Word we must understand that the Scripture has not many meanings. The Scripture sets forth the one true teaching of God given to His people. The Bible is not of any private interpretation (II Peter 1:20-21). And by the grace of God being given ears to hear and hearts of understanding we shall hear what God says to His church in the Word.

This means that when we turn to the Scripture for the understanding of any truth we may not use any one verse out of the context of the rest of the Scripture. The Scripture is one organic whole that teaches the one truth of God, this means further that the Scripture can have no errors. If there seems to be contradiction then we know this cannot be, the Holy God gives us a Holy (pure) Word. Thus we must understand each text in the context of that one true and Holy Word.

With respect now to salvation we must understand that repeatedly the salvation of the church is set forth in the Word as the work of God, and not of man. This is repeatedly stated in the whole of God's Word, both in the Old and New Testaments. For the moment we take note that this is literally stated in the passage of God's Word in Ephesians 2:8-10 "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Further, we must understand that Jesus says to us that apart from the work of God we cannot even see the things of God's kingdom. He does this in his reply to Nicodemus in John 3:3 "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Again in the context it is evident that it is the Spirit of God alone that causes us to be born again. As we had nothing to do with our natural birth so we can have nothing to do with our spiritual birth. Paul points out that the fruit of the fall is that God's word in Genesis 2:17 came to pass. When Adam ate of the tree man died, see Romans 5:12. Further, Paul points out that apart from the quickening power of God man is dead in sin and tres-

passes, Ephesians 2:1-3. The dead man can do nothing to make himself alive, nor can we.

The apostle Paul makes this so clear in the ninth chapter of Romans as well. It is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but it is God that showeth mercy.

The Old Testament repeatedly teaches us that same truth. For example, we turn to Ezekiel 36: 21-22 and read "But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went." The only reason that true elect Israel is saved or that we are saved is God's name sake, because of His faithfulness. He does not save us for our sake, but for His Holy name's sake. Malachi 3:6 states this same truth emphatically.

It is in the light then of all of Scripture that we read the text that you have noted in your question. Romans 10:9 "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." In the light of all Scripture we must take this word literally that all those confessing with their mouths the Lord and believing in their heart that God hath raised him from the dead, shall

What if it were true that salvation was dependent on our asking God or Jesus to come into our hearts. Then we are stronger than God, for He must wait for us to do something. Then I have a God who is no more than I let Him be. How terrible!! For I am a sinner, in fact I am dead in sin apart from God's grace. If salvation is dependent upon me then I shall be forever lost, no hope, no comfort.

be saved. This is truth and it is absolute truth. But who then believe? The answer is—those whom God has chosen in Christ, those whom He has redeemed by Christ’s blood, those whom He has quickened (Ephesians 1:3-10), and those that He has powerfully called by the preaching of the Word by the true servants of God whom He has sent. These believe and truly confess the Lord Jesus Christ; which is the immediate context of this text—look ahead to the verses 13 and following.

Besides, there is the practical aspect of your question. What if it were true that salvation was dependent on our asking God or Jesus to come into our hearts. Then we are stronger than God, for He must wait for us to do something. Then I have a God who is no more than I let Him be. How terrible!! For I am a sinner, in fact I am dead in sin apart from God’s grace. If salvation is dependent upon me then I shall be forever lost, no hope, no comfort.

But it is not so. My God is Jehovah, the Sovereign God Who rules and governs all things, and whose work of salvation is His work alone. Then I have comfort because God has given His Only Begotten Son to take away all my sin and to make me His child. He loves me with a saving love, then I have the assurance that nothing can separate me from that love of God. Read Romans 8:28-end in this connection.

I hope this helps. I am glad that you take a sincere interest in the truth, may God grant that you may see the comfort of the true gospel of grace.

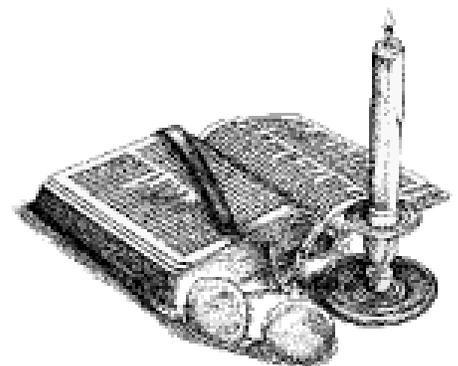
Remember to write your questions to me at revmo@mtc1.mtcnet.net Also feel free to write follow up questions. ❖

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

From the Pastor’s Study

The Wet and the Dry Fleece

by Rev. Richard Smit



In Judges 6:34a we read that “the spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon.” The LORD clothed Gideon in the Spirit of the LORD in order to qualify and equip him with the spiritual strength needed for the battle. The Spirit of the LORD would be his full suit of armour, his coat of mail, his shield and buckler, and his helmet. What the LORD does here shows His faithfulness and His wisdom. Because the battle is the LORD’s, the LORD would not send His servant, Gideon,

into the battle against the Midianites poorly equipped. The LORD equips Gideon with His own Spirit and grace.

When the Spirit of the LORD was bestowed on Gideon for his position of deliverer and judge, we learn that Gideon blew a trumpet and sent messengers throughout Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali in order to gather together for battle against the Midianites. Many heeded Gideon’s call to battle. In so doing, they submitted to him as the God-appointed deliverer. Following

the lead of Gideon, they gathered together to fight against the Midianites.

The number of those who gathered together was not large in comparison to the Midianites who had settled and camped in the valley of Jezreel. In fact we learn that there were also Amalekites and the children of the east with them as well. When Gideon surveyed this situation, there was an obvious difference. His troops numbered only 32,000 men in comparison to the Midianites, who numbered “as grasshoppers for multitude” (Judges 6:5).

In that troubling situation, Gideon sought Jehovah for a sign to strengthen his godly resolve to lead into battle the soldiers which Jehovah had provided. He needed this double sign to stimulate his faith in Jehovah, Who alone delivers His people out of all their troubles.

Gideon besought Jehovah that He would grant a sign to show that indeed He will save His people by the hand of Gideon (Judges 6:14,16). To show the certainty of that promise Gideon asks the LORD to give a sign by a piece of fleece.

“Fleece” is another word for wool from sheep. One of the outstanding characteristics of the fleece, which is important for this passage, is its ability to absorb water. It is a natural water absorber and does it very well.

Gideon would take a cloth of the fleece (like a hand towel) and would lay it on the ground. He asked the LORD that overnight while he slept the dew would appear only upon the fleece, and that the blades of grass and dirt around the fleece would remain completely dry.

The LORD heard the request of Gideon and answered. Behold, in the morning Gideon went and checked the fleece. Sure enough, the fleece was so full of dew that he wrung out a whole bowl full of water. However, after careful inspection, the ground around and all the grass around the fleece was completely dry. Not even one drop of dew was found around the spot where the fleece had lain.

After contemplating the sign, Gideon realized that it is the nature of the fleece to absorb water. Although it was indeed amazing how much water the fleece had absorbed, yet that was according to the nature of the fleece. Gideon realized that this sign by itself was not sufficient to bolster his spiritual trust and resolve. Thus, Gideon requested the second sign.

Gideon besought that the LORD not be angry with him for requesting this second sign. He pleads that the LORD be longsuffering towards him and patiently bear

with the weakness of his faith. Gideon asked in verse 39b, “Let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew.” This sign would also require a miracle. Such a sign would fully reveal truth about God’s Covenant faithfulness in an amazing work of God’s providence to make the fleece not absorb the dew. Only that, Gideon was convinced, would bolster his trust in Jehovah and confirm the promise.

God did so that night as Gideon requested. Gideon woke up the next morning and inspected the fleece. He picked it up, and it was light and dry while there was dew on his shoes, on the blades of grass nearby, and on the ground around the fleece. The LORD had answered Gideon’s request. With this double sign, he was ready to fight.

How did the signs of the wet fleece and then the dry fleece so confirm his faith that he with only 32,000 Israelites was ready to fight the huge host of the Midianites? What did those signs mean?

Some have interpreted the signs to mean that Gideon must be warm (wool) and overflowing (full of dew) with zeal while the other tribes and people were indifferent to the necessity to fight the Midianites. Then when those around him are full of excitement and impatience, Gideon must demonstrate coolness and dryness of heart so that Israel does not rush wildly into the battlefield. Others, as the Rev. G. Ophoff recorded in his commentary on this same passage, have interpreted this double sign as a type of the birth of Christ from the virgin Mary. However, these are not the correct interpretations of the passage.

The best and proper interpretation is found by interpreting this passage in light of other passages of Scripture. We find elsewhere in the Old Testament that dew was very significant. In the Old Testament, God said that when Israel would serve Him, Israel would receive from His hand “the dew of heaven” (Genesis 27:28). When Israel did not serve the LORD, God withheld that the dew of heaven as judgment upon their wickedness. In their disobedience, God caused the heavens to become as brass (Genesis 27:44). That judgment of God was what happened to Israel when they worshipped Baal. The LORD took away the “dew of heaven” by means of the Midianites who stripped the land of its good gifts and left the Israelites terribly oppressed. The LORD chastised His people and revealed His displeasure against a nation that forsook Jehovah.

In light of those passages, we understand that the fleece was a type of Israel, the ground around the fleece

was a type of the surrounding nations, and the dew represented the earthly gifts which God gives to His people.

However, the dew represented more than just earthly gifts of Jehovah to His people. To the believing Israelite, the physical “dew of heaven” and all the earthly gifts of Canaan were a token of God’s Covenant goodness to them. They were signs of the spiritual gifts of the Covenant promise, and those earthly signs pointed them to the heavenly Canaan of perfect peace, prosperity, and fellowship with God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, when the believing Israelite enjoyed with his healthy family the food and abundance of the land, he looked beyond the earthly unto the heavenly reality. As the believing Israelite served the LORD in the fear of His Name, he was consciously aware of God’s Covenant blessings upon him.

When Gideon saw the first sign, he understood that at one time in Israel’s history, they were filled with the dew of heaven. The nation obeyed Jehovah. For example, while Joshua was leader in Israel, Israel served Jehovah faithfully. In that faithfulness, Israel enjoyed the bounty of the land of promise as tokens of God’s Covenant blessings upon them.

However, when Israel swiftly fell into apostasy in virtually one generation, the LORD visited His people in judgment. Then Israel was like the dry fleece. For a time she lacked the tokens of God’s Covenant blessings in the Old Testament type and shadow of prosperity in the land of Canaan. That was true of Manasseh under the oppression of the Midianites. For her idolatry, Israel was like the dry fleece. No doubt, that was difficult for the believing Israelites to endure. Under that oppression of the Midianites, it looked outwardly as though God had forsaken them. Gideon even thought so when the Angel of the LORD visited him.

However, would Jehovah forsake His people? Gideon knew that Jehovah, Who sovereignly withheld the earthly gifts, was in control over the nation as He was over the fleece those two nights. The Midianites did not oppress Israel apart from Jehovah’s control and for His eternal good pleasure. Because they were in God’s sovereign and righteous control, Gideon was assured that God could also remove the Midianites from the land and restore Israel as the wet fleece once again. Gideon learned in this double sign that his and Israel’s hope and help for peace and prosperity was solely in the Name of Jehovah. This Jehovah Who had spoken to Him would not forsake His people.

Of that same truth the child of God today may also be assured. By nature we are like the dry fleece. Because of our sin, we deserve to be void of God’s Covenant blessings. However, according to His eternal good pleasure, God fills us with His Covenant blessings through Jesus Christ our Lord. God did that on the basis of forsaking Christ on the cross for us that we might never be forsaken and without His Covenant fellowship. The result is that since Christ has redeemed us, we are blessed by God with His Covenant blessings. The believer learns through his own life that all our salvation and the enjoyment of that salvation is wholly dependent upon the perfect and finished work of Christ upon the cross. Because of Him, we are like the drenched fleece from a spiritual viewpoint. God causes us to overflow with His abundant goodness. He blesses us with spiritual blessings in our family life, friendships, and worship with the saints on the Lord’s Day. Therefore, though we may be outwardly poor, yet in Christ we are very rich with the blessings of God’s Covenant goodness.

In the principle of that truth Gideon stood by faith. The future deliverance of Israel was solely in Jehovah’s Hand and in His strong Right Arm. Gideon stood convinced of the truth that those who put their trust in Him shall not be confounded. Jehovah shall deliver His people out of all their troubles. Therefore, Gideon was confident that as Jehovah was in control, so Jehovah would use him as one man against a thousand to deliver Israel from the hand of the Midianites.

Was that true? Was Gideon encouraged? We read in Judges 7:1, “Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon... rose up early.” In the encouragement of the double sign, he immediately leads the people into the battle. He was burdened in his heart with the work which the LORD had called him to do. He was willing and ready by faith to fulfil the work of the LORD.

Although Gideon was ready, yet the LORD was not ready for that army to go to the battlefield. What was the problem with Gideon’s army? Do you know?

We will answer that question next time, the Lord willing. ❖

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

Spring

by Rev. Cornelius Hanko

Reprinted from the April, 1941 issue of Beacon Lights.

The boisterous wind picks up the falling rain-drops and flings them clattering against the window pane. All day long heavy skies drop their moisture while icy winds spend their fury in sweeping gusts. Long, naked arms of ice-coated trees bend clumsily before the savage onslaught of the storm. Night closes in swiftly today, changing the misty gloom into murky darkness. Even the corner light looks dismally on as the wind continues to lash the disgruntled spirit of each passerby.

Creations groans.

Yet it groans in hope.

Ah, it seemed to me that it was despair.

Spring, summer, autumn, winter; each giving way before the other, and then all over again.

One moment all is warm and pleasant, fit for the tender rose and snow-white lily, full of vigor and vim. And then the hand of death deliberately wipes it away. Earthquakes, floods, icy winds carrying their burden of snow or rain, burning sun and blistering drought. Devastations of every kind. Ever repeated, over intensified, all through the ages.

One moment the sun strides majestically to the zenith of the heavens, pauses a fleeting second, and then is on his way to the distant West; night stalking in his trail. Passing days and weeks and months and years. As but a shadow. And man's days on earth pass with it. All his wisdom, his inventive genius, his advancements, his treasures, his glories.

“Toiling, rejoicing, sorrowing,

Onward through life he goes.

Each morning sees his task begun,

Each evening sees it close.”



And when I looked at man, I said: All is vanity.

Why does the "vicious circle" always go on revolving? Why does not creation give up in despair? Why continue groaning wearily under the curse?

Why should it, if it did not groan in hope?

* * * * *

No wind now, no sign of rain, nor a single fleecy cloud in the unspotted azure bright and clear over head. A yellow glow has streaked the eastern sky. The trees stand in rapt attention before the triumphant march of day, banishing darkness before it. A daring robin bursts into song in response to the challenge of the dawn.

The trees have been aroused from their long slumber and have donned a new garment of youthful green. The fields have also come to life, adorning themselves in sparkling splendor. The seedlings in the earth awaken to the warm rays of the sun.

Spring time is the time of resurrection.

For creation groans. Even audibly.

Always groaning in hope.

Almighty God speaks to us in parable.

He who called the things that were not as if they were, and sustains them in His power, causes the heavens to declare His glory, the day to utter speech and night to show forth wisdom.

He sustains all things on the basis of His promise, even while He subjects the unwilling creature to vanity, in hope. Therefore, the creature waits in earnest expectation for the manifestation of the sons of God. (Rom. 89:19-22). It, too, will be delivered from the bondage of corruption in that day when He shall make all things new.

Hope maketh not ashamed.

This we know, for once the heavens were rent and the Son of God came into the likeness of our sinful flesh. In our human nature He entered into death and burst its portals wide open.

Death is swallowed up in victory, for GOD raised JESUS from the dead. At the break of dawn.

The firstfruits of our resurrection.

He lives, and we, too, shall live.

Even as we have hoped in THEE. ❖

Rev. Hanko is an emeritus minister of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America and is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

The Bridegroom Comes

*The bridegroom soon shall come
His bride, the church, to claim;
May we await with longing hearts
And reverence for His name.*

*Let not our earthly cares
Our minds and hearts so fill
That just a fraction of our time
Is centered on His will.*

*May our whole being thrill
In every act and thought
That we've been chosen to be His—
Unworthy souls He bought!*

*Lord, make us faithful be
In expectation true,
In faith attuned to Thee;
Our lives, O Lord, renew.*

*That when the cry is heard,
"The Bridegroom comes!" may we
In confidence approach
Our wedding feast with Thee.*

Thelma Westra



The Song of Zion

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

by Skip Hunter

April 1 Read Psalm 90

Psalm 90:1 It is thought that Moses penned the words of this Psalm as a prayer for Israel just before his death. If this is so, then think of the volumes it speaks about the goodness of Jehovah. Moses had tasted that goodness for 120 years. He had had many trials during his life. At the end of his life he can confess that the covenant God has been his dwelling place. A dwelling place or a home is a place where peace and comfort are found. Moses had lived in all sorts of dwelling places. The one he finds most comforting is the presence of his heavenly Father. Moses confesses that God had been his dwelling place wherever he had been. That included the palace in Egypt, the solitude of the Midian desert, and the troubles of the forty years of wandering with the people of God. God had been his dwelling place in all of those situations. Is He our dwelling place? Is He yours personally? Stop and think about this today. Sing Psalters 244:1 and 247:1-2.

April 2 Read Acts 17:22-31

Psalm 90:2 Who created God? Who created the heavens and the earth? From where did everything we see around us come? These questions are debated over and over. There is probably no place we can go, except for where the Word of God is truly understood, that we are not bombarded with the idea that God is not the creator. Moses had no such troubles. He was assured of whom His God was. Moses heard at Mt. Sinai that "in six days the Lord made heaven and earth". He was not skeptical. He did not try to redefine words. He believed by faith. We must have the same faith as Moses. Why? Because it is a sustaining saving faith. That faith will sustain us through all kinds of troubles. That faith has made us whole through the blood of Christ. Don't be confused, young people, your creator has been from before the foundation of this earth. Your savior will be when this earth is destroyed. Our God is a sure God. We may have this as our comfort. By doing this, we will escape the world's uncertainties. Sing Psalters 245:1 and 247:3.

April 3 Read II Peter 3:1-13

Psalm 90:3-4 Time. We never seem to have enough of it. We always seemed to be hemmed in by its passing. But what time means to us is different for God. What we think of taking a long time, happens very quickly in His sight. Moses probably thought that he was in the wilderness a long time with the children of Israel. But he knew better. He knew that a thousand years in God's sight were as nothing. Peter had the same knowledge. These two men had been given by God the knowledge that time was nothing for God. We, too, need to pray for this grace. We must not be a slave to time, but rather we must be a slave to God and His glory. Then we will notice that what seems to be taking a long time is but a short time in His sight. We need this realization so that we can last in this vale of tears. God will come to us, He will come in time. Sing Psalters 244:2, 245:2, and 247:4.

BEACON LIGHTS

April 4 Read Isaiah 40:1-8

Psalm 90:5-6 Death surrounds man. Every where we look we see death. Even a newborn baby has evidence of death in and on it. We know that the reason for death is sin. Death reminds us of sin. Does it remind us of our sins? But in death is great comfort. We know that our sins have been paid for by the blood of Christ. The death that we see is not the end. No, it is the beginning. Death is the entrance into the beginning of that life in heaven. Are you going to stand by an open grave today? Have you stood by an open grave lately? Find comfort, people of God, that death of the loved one delivered them from this valley of tears. If they suffered from afflicting disease, find comfort in that they now rest in heaven with no pain or affliction. Was the one who died an elderly saint? Find comfort in the fact that they rest in heaven where there is no time. Death is around us, but we need not fear death. Find comfort in the true knowledge of Easter. As we celebrated the death and resurrection of Christ, were we comforted by it? Sing Psalters 245:3 and 247:5.

April 5 Read Jeremiah 16:10-21

Psalm 90:7-8 Yesterday we spoke of death and sin. Today we need to spend some time contemplating our sins. What is sin? Simply put, sin is to disobey God. We know that our sins rise up against us prevailing day by day. What do we do about them? Do we attempt to hide them? Do we attempt to rationalize them away? Do

Devotionals

The *Beacon Lights* staff is looking for someone willing to help out with writing devotionals. Please consider whether your time and life experience could be used for this task. The spiritual blessings from writing them are boundless, and the future of these devotionals may depend upon your willingness to share some of the responsibility. If you are interested, please contact John Huizenga at (920) 326-6186 or by the email or mail listed on the inside cover.

YP Discussion Outlines

Beacon Lights is looking for topical discussion outlines and materials to publish for use in other young peoples societies. Please send outlines, articles, or other material useful for a good discussion to the editorial office. Your efforts in sending this material will be much appreciated by society leaders throughout our churches.

we cover up our sins with more sin? Our sin is displeasing to God. When we sin, He is angry with us. He can see all our sins even those which we think are hidden within our hearts. Are we without hope? By no means. Our hope is founded on the blood and death of our Savior Christ Jesus. What must we do about our sins? We must pray for forgiveness. We must confess our sins one with another. We must stop sinning! Only then will our heavenly Father not be angry with us. We can do this, too because He has prepared for us a way. That way is through the blood of Christ. Sing Psalms 245:4 and 247:6.

April 6 Read Ecclesiastes 6:1-12

Psalm 90:9-10 How old are you? This may seem a strange question in this setting, but that is the thrust of these verses. Whether we be very young or very old, these verses speak to us. Moses was very old when he uttered this Psalm. He had seen much in his life. One of the things that he had seen was the seeming futility of life. From the outside it looked as if very little had been accomplished. He, like Solomon, could understand this because of the special wisdom God had given them. They have passed that wisdom to us in the words of our reading and today's verses. We must see the futility of our lives if we live them for our own glory. It is another story if we have lived them for God's glory, however. If we have done that, than our days, no matter how few or how many they have been, have been full. People of God, no matter your age, glorify God and live life to the fullest in this way. Sing Psalm 244:3.

April 7 Read Hebrews 10:19-31

Psalm 90:11 This verse serves as the summary to the previous section. We have seen that God is angry with our sin. We have seen the sureness of death. We have seen the futility of life lived to man's glory. What must we conclude? We must fear God. We must throw ourselves upon the mercy seat of Christ. We must realize that the fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom. It is not our wisdom which profiteth little, but it is God's wisdom which profiteth much. God is powerful, but He is also merciful. Let us partake of the goodness of that mercy today and every day. Sing Psalm 245:5.

April 8 Read Ephesians 5:6-17

Psalm 90:12 Moses once again comes back to the idea of time. But now he looks at it from our point of view in God's eyes. He realizes that time is a gift from God that must be used in the right way. His prayer is that God will help him use his time in the pursuit of God's wisdom. So for what are we using our time? Are all of our pursuits for God's wisdom? Have we fallen into the trap of the writers of the *Declaration of Independence* that time should be used for the "pursuit of happiness"? Time is precious. Are we using it to make the most of the opportunities that God has afforded us? Young people, how are you using your time? Fathers and Mothers, what about you? Employers and employees, is your time well-spent as you carry out your daily work? We need to face these questions now, and we will also face these questions at judgment day. Let us pray that God will teach us to number our days so that we may seek after his wisdom. Sing Psalm 244:4.

April 9 Read Deuteronomy 32:35-47

Psalm 90:13-14 After spending forty years in the wilderness with the children of Israel, it is easy to see why Moses utters these words. It was not out of frustration, though we know Moses fell into that sin. But rather it was because of the care that he had for the church of God. Officebearers through out all ages know that God's people need to taste of His mercy. He knew that it was necessary to taste of this mercy in order for them to rejoice and to feel the joy of their

salvation. We need to make this our prayer. We must pray this for our family's sake. We need this as churches. We may only do this in the way of knowledge of our sin and knowledge of our Savior. We also know that God will answer such a prayer because He loves us. God's mercy is satisfying because it contains all the spiritual nutrients that we need. Pray for this mercy for yourselves and for your fellow believers. Sing Psalm 246:1.

April 10 Read Habakkuk 3:1-13

Psalm 90:15-16 Moses continues to ask God to show the goodness that He has decreed for His church. This goodness may not always be apparent to the child of God. This goodness may be manifested in affliction, but it is the goodness of God to His people. Of that there may be no doubt! To think anything else of God would belittle His attribute of goodness. God's work unto His people is unlike any work of man. We confess that "even our best works are as filthy rags." God's works are always full of glory. Do we pray to God to make us glad in His works whatever they may be? Do we look for His glory in those works? Let us pray to Him "from whom all blessings flow", and let us pray to be glad in the trials that He sends upon us. Sing Psalms 244:5 and 246:2.

April 11 Read Psalm 90

Psalm 90:17 It has been thought by some that this last verse refers to the covenant work God has wrought in us through our children. We see the beauty of God being first in the covenant He has within Himself. Then He has chosen to extend that beauty by establishing that covenant with us. Finally that covenant is worked out by Him and Him alone through our children. Our children are nothing less than the expression of God's covenant with us. Do we comprehend them as such? Do we see in them the beauty of the Lord? Do we wish to have our quivers full to the measure that God has ordained for us? What are we doing with the covenant children God has given us? What are we doing with them this Lord's Day? Are we teaching them by word and example the full meaning of the Fourth Commandment? Many questions have been asked. These questions were also asked at baptism? Our answer was yes then; what is our answer today? Sing Psalm 246:3.

April 12 Read Psalm 91

Psalm 91:1 Monday morning... another week of work or school ahead of us. What are our thoughts as we begin this week? Are they full of dread as we look at what lies ahead? Do we have some difficult moments confronting us? As we learned in the last Psalm, God gives to us afflictions in His goodness. But in His mercy He provides for us a way of escape. That way of escape is in the secret places of the most High. Are you dwelling there, people of God? If you are, then you dwell under the shadow of Almighty God. That shadow is not the ineffectual shadow that we cast upon the ground. That shadow is as mighty as the Almighty. That shadow provides utmost comfort whatever our situation. Dwelling is active. We must actively dwell in that secret place. This must be a life long work. We do not do it by our own strength, of course. But dwell there we must. Sing Psalm 248:1.

April 13 Read I Samuel 23:7-14

Psalm 91:2 This verse bears out the truth that the shadow cast by God is not ineffectual. That shadow is a refuge and fortress. In days gone by soldiers looked for shelter in some kind of fortress. They looked for either a natural fortress on one that had been built for that purpose. It is said that some of the cities during Bible times had walls so thick that chariots could ride on them. God provides us with such a refuge. When we face trials and tribulations in this

life, we must run to the refuge that He provides. By trusting in Him our afflictions are light lasting only a moment. To trust in any other fortress is to face disaster. Face your afflictions, people of God, by running to the refuge provided by the most High. Sing Psalter 248:2.

April 14 Read I Samuel 23:19-29

Psalm 91:3 Even though it is thought that David did not write this Psalm, the thoughts in it were his experience. We see that from the reading yesterday and today. David felt oppression from Saul. He also felt oppression from those whom he thought were his friends. But yet he could know that God would protect him from all evil. Is this our experience? By dwelling in God's secret places we can rest assured that He will save us when we are in distress. This is not hope in the human sense of the word. No, this is the hope that has its firm foundation in the faith given to us by God through Christ. Let us pray for this hope to carry us through all afflictions set in our paths. Sing Psalter 248:3.

April 15 Read Deuteronomy 32:7-14

Psalm 91:4 It is thought by some that this Psalm is a continuation of Psalm 90 written by Moses. Moses used the figure of an eagle in his writings in Deuteronomy. This was no idle picture. It was the picture provided to him and the church at Sinai. Even as an eagle is jealous for her young, so God is jealous for His church. With that confidence we can rest assured that He will protect us. The idea of truth is also introduced in this verse. Do you know what truth is? Do you confess the truth of God? Do you walk in that truth? There is where we will find protection. Protection is never found in the philosophies and inventions of man. Protection is found in the Word of God. Walk in truth, young people, and "the truth will make you free". Sing Psalter 248:4.

April 16 Read Job 5:17-27

Psalm 91:5-6 When evening falls, where do our thoughts turn? For a child the dark is fearful. They do not like it if Mom and Dad are not around. They like a little light burning in the hall for comfort. For those who fear death the night may be a time of terror. Death may come upon them in their sleep, and they find no comfort in that. For those who must be on the roads at night, there are fears then as well. They find trouble around every corner. Even the most confident of people can worry about what might happen when they sleep. The child of God ought not to fear the night. The child of God should sleep in the comfort that the almighty God "never slumbers or sleeps." God will protect us in either day or night. Pray for such protection and dwell in His secret place. Sing Psalter 248:5.

April 17 Read I Samuel 18:5-16

Psalm 91:7 David returned from the battles hearing the women singing about the ten thousands that he had slain. David knew that this was not in his power. He had to go to battle in the confidence that God would fight for him. This was the confidence that he used when he told Saul that even as God helped him to kill a lion and bear, He would help Him kill Goliath. This is the confidence of faith. As we fight the fight of faith, are we fighting in the confidence of faith? Are we armed with the sword of the Spirit? If we are, we will experience the falling of the wicked around us. We will not fall, but we will stand. As we prepare for church tomorrow, let us work to arm ourselves with the Word of God. Let us not sleep but let us prepare to do battle against the forces of evil. Sing Psalter 248:6.

April 18 Read Revelation 18:20-24

Psalm 91:8 The wicked have a reward. It is a reward that we deserve because of our sin. This morning as we hear the law read,

let us concentrate on the grace that has allowed us to escape the reward of the wicked. That law not only shows us our sin; it also shows us the way of deliverance through the blood of Christ. That reward of the wicked we will see at the end of time. As the captain of our salvation leads us to eternal life, He will also destroy the wicked before our eyes. This is a comfort for us in these wicked days. Even when it appears that the wicked prosper, we can know that they will fall. This is not for our glory but rather for our comfort. In their fall is our salvation. Sing Psalter 248:6.

April 19 Read II Thessalonians 3:1-5

Psalm 91:9-10 When we look at these verses, we may be quick to claim credit for the good sense that we have to flee to God for safety. We like to make ourselves look better than we really are. We would like to have a hand in our own salvation. This has been true throughout history beginning with Adam who tried to cover his nakedness with fig leaves. But we know from all of Scripture that this is not so. Left to our own devices we would do as Adam and use fig leaves as salvation. Left to our own devices we would be left with shriveled up leaves which would cover nothing. No, it is only by grace that we can make the Lord our refuge. It is only by grace that we will obey the command to make him our refuge. It is not our work but rather the work of God in us that allows us to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." The rewards are great. No evil shall overcome us. Our place is secure from all plagues because our dwelling place is God. Sing Psalter 249:1.

April 20 Read Hebrews 11:1-14

Psalm 91:11 These verse of today's reading are very familiar to us. We read of the heroes of faith. These men through the grace of God conquered the evil that was around them. They did not do this in their own strength they did this by the power of God. They also had the help of angels. God has given to His people messengers. These messengers serve to strengthen the church in the fight against Satan and his armies. These angels were at Sinai when the law was given. These angels surround the church daily. They keep us in all our ways. This is not the way we choose to go. This is the way God sets for his people. Even as he set the way of the flood before Noah, He sets a certain way before us. But we do not walk that way alone. We walk that way in the charge of the angels of Jehovah. Sing Psalter 249:2.

April 21 Read Matthew 4:1-11

Psalm 91:12 As further evidence of the truth of angels watching over us, we have the experience of our elder brother Christ. Satan was buffeting Him on every side for forty days and nights. Christ was not alone; He had the company of heaven around him. Even when Satan tried to use this very text to entrap Him, Christ endured that temptation. Satan left off the important words "to keep thee in all thy ways." Christ's way was that of the cross. We have a way as well. Angels guard us in that way just as they were with Christ. They could not bear the wrath of God, but they could provide comfort. They did it in the wilderness, they did it in the garden, and they did it at the cross. We have been given into their charge. Let us go forward in the confidence that we will never dash our foot upon the stone of Satan's evil. Sing Psalter 249:2.

April 22 Read II Samuel 23:18-23

Psalm 91:13 What are your worst fears? What sin do you fear may cause you to fall away from the truth? We all have these fears. We all must fight against them. These fears must be fought against in our lives. We have the example of today's reading to guide us. Israel had foes that they had to withstand in order to remain in the

promised land. We have foes that must be withstood in order for us to enjoy the assurance of our salvation. We have the armor of salvation, and most comforting of all we have the blessing of faith. Because God is on our side our worst fears, however fierce they may be, can be overcome. Let us walk in thanksgiving for the confidence of faith. And let us trample under our feet our worst fears. Sing Psalter 249:3.

April 23 Read Philippians 2:5-11

Psalm 91:14 In this Psalm there seems to be a change in who is addressed. In the first part of the Psalm it is the child of God. In the second part it is Christ. Christ loved His heavenly Father. He loved Him so much that He obeyed Him and walked on this earth giving Himself on the cross. He gave up all that He had in heaven, emptied Himself of His divinity, and came to suffer on this earth. What was God's response? He set Him at His right hand in heaven. Do we obey our heavenly Father? Do we willingly walk the way He has ordained for us? Do we confess His name among all kinds of people? Let us do this as we dwell in His secret place, and let us live the life of the confidence of faith. Sing Psalter 249:4.

April 24 Read Matthew 7:7-12

Psalm 91:15 When Christ uttered His last words on the cross, He did so in the confidence that God would answer Him. We can have that same confidence as we read in our reading for today. When we call upon the Lord in prayer, we can rest assured that He will answer us, and that His answer will be good for us. He will care for us in all of our afflictions, He will comfort us in all of our sorrows, and He will give to us what we need for both our spiritual and physical lives. People of God, dwelling in the secret place of the most High gives to us the right to call upon Him. It is, of course, not a right that we have earned, but rather a right that has been granted to us. Call upon Him for He is near. Sing Psalter 249:5.

April 25 Read Psalm 91

Psalm 91:16 We come to the end of this very comforting Psalm. It is a Psalm which can aid us no matter what our age. It is a Psalm for the church of all ages. It reveals a blessed reward. Through all of our trials and tribulations we have the confidence of eternal life. This is not pie in the sky. This is the real hope of the child of God. It is the essence of our salvation. We will enjoy the fellowship signified in the covenant with our elder brother and with our faithful covenant God. Trust in the Lord in all evil and He will provide the way of deliverance. Nothing can overcome us while we walk in the shadow of the most High. Let us be satisfied with blessings from above not with earthly trifles. Sing Psalter 249:6.

April 26 Read Psalm 92

Psalm 92:1-3 The title in my Bible is a "Psalm or song for the sabbath day". Did we sing yesterday? Did we sing with feeling? Did we sing expressing all the joy of our salvation? What about today? Verse two of this psalm mentions God's faithfulness every night. Singing is a means of expression of gratitude that God has given to us. Do we sing? Do we sing daily? The child of God who sings the songs of Zion will be rewarded with peace in his soul. Oh, you think that you can't sing? Is the blood of Christ unable to render your noise sweet in the ears of God? Singing is not for a select few; singing is for every one of the saints of every age. Young people, are you singing the songs of Zion with each other? Adults, are you by your good example singing those songs which glorify only our heavenly Father? Sing because it is a "good thing." Sing Psalters 250:1 and 251:1.

April 27 Read Isaiah 40:12-17

Psalm 92:4-6 People of God, are you glad in the works of the Lord? Do we want to enjoy those works, whatever they may be. The works of Jehovah are many. They range from the most majestic mountain to the smallest atom. We saw yesterday that it is good to sing of God's works rather than man's. It is also good to confess the greatness of those works. Those works range from creation to His voice in nature. Did a late winter storm bring our lives to a standstill? Was there news of an earthquake or destructive volcano? These are God's works which should make us glad. They make us glad because they witness to us of His great power. A power so great that it could release us from the power of sin and Satan. The world cannot understand these things. But we can, and we must. Sing Psalter 250:2.

April 28 Read Malachi 3:8-18

Psalm 92:7-9 Do we speak of the goodness of God to each other? No, I do not mean the organized speaking in society or after church. But are our lives marked by speaking of God's care for us? Malachi said that this is one of the marks of those who fear God. Because of this speaking, God will mark it in His book. It is the goodness which destroys the enemies of Jehovah in our sight. We see these enemies and we sometimes wish to join them. This is not good for us. It can only bring trouble in our lives. We need to join with those with whom we can speak of God's goodness toward His people. These are the people with which we must surround ourselves. Israel knew this by experience, and we can know this by His word and works. Sing Psalters 250:3 and 251:2.

April 29 Read 2 Timothy 4:14-18

Psalm 92:10-11 Paul had many trials in life. He felt oppression from both groups of people and also from individuals. But Paul also knew that God's grace was sufficient to deliver him from such trials. The writer of this Psalm had the same confidence. He knew that with God on his side he would prevail against what ever evil his enemies devised. People of God, is that our confidence? Do we see that God will deliver us from the enemy? Can we hear their cries of defeat over against their mocking and scoffing of our life and its life style? If we can, we are assured of the blessing of salvation. If we can't, something must change. Are we fighting? Paul fought. David fought. We, too, must fight the fight of faith knowing that we will win the victory through faith which comes from Christ and not from ourselves. Sing Psalter 250:4.

April 30 Read Psalm 92

Psalm 92:12-15 Verse 12-14 of this Psalm speak of the rewards of the righteous. We could look at each of the pictures and see their significance, but we have done that before and we will have opportunity to do it again. But there is one thought to which I wish to draw your attention. That is the opening words of verse 13. Being planted in the house of God is a synonym, I believe, for dwelling in the secret place of the most high. It is also a synonym for the dwelling place of Psalm 90. What a glorious thought this is for us! What a blessed idea! What is the purpose? Is it for us? Is it because we are so good? No, that can never be. We find in verse 15 that our lot in life is given to us so that it can be shown that Jehovah is upright. Go back and reread the three Psalms that we have considered this month. We will find nothing of man's goodness in them. We will find all of God's goodness. God is good, righteous, and upright. Of that there is no doubt. Should we really want it any other way? Sing Psalters 250:5 and 251:3.

Psalter 113—The Friend of the Poor

By Beth De Vries

We turn this month to the only versification of Psalm 41 in the Psalter. David in this Psalm, as in many others, demonstrates that he is a type of Christ in that he befriends the weak and resists the attacks of enemies, including a betrayal by a friend. This Psalm speaks about the faithfulness of God as He protects David and His people. It also emphasizes our need to follow the example of our Lord and be a friend to the poor and weak.

We know that David in his life was an earthly type of Christ. When David first gathered his men, those that came were those in distress, in debt, and discontent. We will not discuss the correctness of these men's motives, but remember that David took them in and taught them. (I Samuel 22:2). We know also that Christ did not choose as His disciples those of the Pharisees and rulers, but rather He chose fishermen and a publican (Luke 5:9-11, 27). We are to follow the example set by our Lord throughout His earthly ministry of helping the poor. In this Psalm, we are called to befriend the poor and needy. We are told that God will bless this kindness shown to others when it is to glorify God and not for our own glory.

We are led next to meditate on God's faithfulness to us amid the many foes that assault us. The Lord sends enemies to attack us on all sides. These enemies speak against us and scorn our very name and more importantly the name of our God. They plot together to bring us low. The worst of these attacks is when a friend turns

on us. David speaks in verse 9 of Psalm 41 of the one in whom he trusted and with whom he ate bread and who later betrayed him. Many commentators believe that this refers to Ahithophel when he counseled with Absalom against David (II Sam. 15:12). Psalm 41:9 is quoted in John 13:18 in reference to the betrayal of Jesus by Judas

Iscariot. God gave the strength David needed in these trials; so shall He also give to us His people strength when trials come upon us. Jesus is always our friend and will never betray us. This brings comfort to God's people when they think that all are against them.

This Psalm concludes by giving God praise. We are reminded to trust in God to give us strength. We realize that God will bring His justice upon the wicked. We are assured when we sing this versification of Psalm 41 that we are loved by God and that God is the victor. The many foes God sends upon us are

to strengthen us and remind us to trust in God. God upholds us in His righteousness and causes us to dwell in His presence forevermore. We sing triumphantly the 12th stanza of Psalter 113:

*Blest be Jehovah, Israel's God
For evermore. Amen.
Let age to age eternally
Repeat His praise. Amen. ❖*

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

113 The Friend of the Poor
PSALM 41 C. M. SOUTHPORT George Kingsley

1. How blest the man who thought-fully The poor and weak be-friends;
2. The Lord will keep him, guard his life. On earth he shall be blest;
3. Up-on the bed of suf-fer-ing Je-ho-vah will sus-tain.
4. O Lord, to Thee my try-as-onds, Let me Thy ear-ey see;
5. My en-e-mies a-gainst me speak, And they my life have scorned;
6. My tee, de-est-fel, vi-site me, By seem-ing kind-ness led,

De-vo-tion in the e-vil day To him Je-Lo-vah sends.
The Lord will not sur-ren-der him By foes to be-dis-tressed.
And in his sick-ness God will sooth The waa-si-ness and pain.
Heal Thou my soul, for I have aimed, I have of-fend-ed Thee.
They wish my name to pass a-way, Un-hon-ored and un-mour-ed.
His heart in-tent on gath-ar-ing Some hurt-ful news to spread.

A Precious Jewel*

by Rev. John A. Heys

* Reprinted from *the Standard Bearer*, vol. 47, pp. 255-257.

They were neighbors.

In fact, they had lived next door to each other for over forty years.

It could be said that they got along quite well, even during those years when the children did the usual damage to lawns and gardens—and to an occasional window. They settled the quarrels of their children without becoming personally involved. Their respective pets, a dog and a cat, had various exciting confrontations; yet this did not spill over to build the barrier between them. In fact, neither one of them at any time even thought of building some kind of fence between their yards.

They did, however, carry on all these years a verbal battle—let us call it a controversy—in which neither one would budge an inch, and in which neither one could be said to have bested the other and to have run away with the victory.

Mr. Noel was a science teacher in the local high school. He had a keen mind, was well educated...

You see, Mr. Noel was a science teacher in the local high school. He had a keen mind, was well-educated, and was wholly dedicated to his work. He lived in the fifteen-room house which his father had built; and he was living there as a college student when Mr. Adams bought the smaller house next door and moved in with his blushing bride. This being a university city, Mr. Noel was at home all through his years of education. And though his father died the year before Mr. Adams moved in next door, there was plenty of money for the full education of this only child. Upon finishing his education

and upon obtaining this teaching position, Mr. Noel moved in with his attractive bride into the home where he had been living all these years with his mother. After all, a fifteen-room house of this type could accommodate three conveniently and give privacy. Mrs. Noel, Sr., died shortly after the second birthday of the first grandchild. And now Noel and Adams were family men living next door to each other.

Mr. Adams was a certified public accountant, a man quick with numbers, but a man also quick with his mind in other matters, possessing a clear and logical mind.

Mr. Adams was a certified public accountant, a man quick with numbers, but a man also quick with his mind in other matters, possessing a clear and logical mind. He had always wanted to go to law school; and his ambition had been that of a trial lawyer. But there never were funds to make this possible; and he settled for his present position. He did delight in debate and did not hesitate to vie with his educated neighbour in this verbal battle, or contest, whatever you want to call it. In fact, they both seemed to enjoy these sessions of controversy, which they kept on a high level, never parting with any harsh words or ridicule of each other.

We must point out, however, that there was a tremendously important difference between these two men. Mr. Adams was a believer, and for years he served in an office in the church across the street and halfway up the block on the corner. He was not just a member. He was a very active and zealous member, never ashamed of

defending the position of his church. Mr. Noel was an unbeliever and had never in his life entered a church to hear as much as a Sunday School lesson. His god was science; and he worshipped his god with a fervent devotion. His Sundays were spent out in the field, on some scientific research, or in sports. He was not a lazy man who would use that day to lie around and waste time. He was far too energetic for that.

Their verbal battlefield almost always was Darwinism, evolution, the origin of this world, and its development. But there was not victor in this “battle,” and really could not be because they could not agree on a common set of rules.

Their verbal battlefield almost always was Darwinism, evolution, the origin of this world, and its development. But there was not a victor in this “battle,” and really could not be because they could not agree on a common set of rules. Mr. Noel would not accept the Word of God; and Mr. Adams would not put stock in the “findings” of men who contradicted anything in Scripture. Mr. Adams often would appeal to the flood for his proof; but Mr. Noel would remind him that the Bible was nothing more than a beautiful piece of human literature. His “proof” was the words of men whose breath was in their nostrils, and who so often contradicted each other.

Mr. Adams, wishing to continue the debate that carried on through all these years, sought to undermine Mr. Noel’s claims by scientific reasoning. He did much research also to find scientists whose “findings” varied with those Mr. Noel held to and defended with all his ability. He tried in every way apart from quoting the Scriptures to show the impossibility of Mr. Noel’s position and theories about the universe and the origin of the creatures.

When Mr. Noel spoke so freely of the billions of years it took for this to form and that to happen, Mr.

Adams would insist that a half-billion-year period of darkness would with its freezing, sub-zero cold kill off all life that had begun to form in the half-billion-year period of the lighted part of that day. But Mr. Noel would remind him that he was going back to Scripture which spoke of six days, and of an evening and a morning for each of these days. He, Mr. Noel, claimed no such one-day and one-evening period in that billion-year stretch of time when things began to evolve. He preferred a

It was the question as to where that first cell, or that first gaseous vapour came from.

gradual warming up or cooling off through all the billions of years.

One argument that Mr. Adams kept bringing up did irk Mr. Noel and gave him trouble, even though he did not want to admit it. It was the question as to where that first cell, or that first gaseous vapour came from. From what did it evolve? Mr. Adams did note, though, a bit of hesitation, no matter how slight it was, in Mr. Noel’s defence and counter-question as to where his, Mr. Adams’, God came from.

Mr. Adams pressed his point at a later friendly session on the edge of their lawns and asked Mr. Noel whether it was really scientific to maintain that dead matter can produce life. Living matter dies. But what has science to show that dead matter can produce life? And that first cell, or gaseous vapour, that was there, how could it change without something else being there to feed it or to exert influence upon it? There must have been something more to feed that cell. There must have been something more to cool off or heat up that gaseous vapor.

Mr. Noel boasted of the latest achievements of science to create life in a test tube. But Mr. Adams pointed out that this was not a case of dead matter bringing forth life and that he, Mr. Noel, was overlooking the fact that *living men* were combining chemicals to produce what seemed to have life. And so the controversy went on from year to year, assuming different forms, but always about this difference of beliefs of the two men.

Shortly after one of the most heated discussions on this subject of dead matter moving toward life—and Mr. Noel did not like the way the matter was going—the funeral of Mrs. Adams was held in the corner church. Out of courtesy and sincere sympathy Mr. Noel went to the funeral service. The text was those words of Jesus to Martha in John 11:25,26, “I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” The pastor explained that the dead believer will rise again to glory. But he also took time to emphasize that there is a worse death than this physical death. He quoted Ephesians 2:1 to point out that there is also a spiritual death wherein people who are physically alive may be. He pointed out that God told Adam that the *day* he ate, he would die, and that this did happen. Adam died spiritually that day. And when Jesus says, “Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die,” He is not giving a promise to the believer that he will never die physically, but that the spiritually alive will never experience the eternal death of hell. The man who dies physically while spiritually dead dies hopelessly. The man who is spiritually alive when he dies physically shall never lose his spiritual life, nor enter the lake of fire.

Seeing Mr. Noel in the audience, the pastor “pulled out a couple of extra stops” and, looking right at him, stated, “The spiritually dead are not without hope as long as they still live physically. You still have a chance. Let God have His way with you. Tell Him right now that you want to become spiritually alive; and He will give that life to you. He will make you spiritually alive. Just ask Him. He is waiting.”

Even in the midst of his deep sorrow Mr. Adams was grateful for those words of the pastor to his neighbor and hoped that they were well received.

Days later, knowing that Mr. Adams was lonely, Mr. Noel went one evening to visit him, not intending to introduce their controversy. But Mr. Adams brought up the matter without really intending to do so. He began by thanking Mr. Noel for his presence and concern to

“Adams,” he said, “I did not know that your pastor was an evolutionist, or I might have visited him long ago.”

take off from his teaching to attend the service. He added that he hoped that the message was well received by Mr. Noel.

Mr. Noel’s answer startled him so much that he jumped right out of his chair. “Adams,” he said, “I did not know that your pastor was an evolutionist, or I might have visited him long ago.” “He is not,” almost shouted the shocked Mr. Adams, “he and I both hold to the infallibility of the Bible, and believe the first eleven chapters of Genesis to be fact, undeniable fact. We both believe that God created all things in six successive days of twenty-four hours each.”

“O,” replied Mr. Noel, “I did not mean that he believes that the earth and the universe came into being by the process of evolution. I never heard him speak anything about that in the sermon. But I have my answer now to your question about dead matter producing life; and your pastor gave it to me. He told us that men are born spiritually dead but that they can become spiritually alive by an act of their own. He also spoke of a change of species: the sinner can change himself into a saint by an act of his dead will. The dead have in themselves the power to reach out for life.”

“Adams,” he said, “either admit that the Bible is fallible and that the *man* who wrote Genesis chose the wrong word and should have said, ‘God said, In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt become very weak and sick’; and that the man—I believe it was Paul—who wrote that man is ‘*dead* in trespasses and sins’ should have been more careful and written that man is spiritually weak and sickly, and therefore he trespasses and sins; or tell

You speak of creation by an almighty God; but in the realm of salvation you hold on to an evolutionistic process whereby the dead initiate the act toward life.

your pastor to preach that dead matter cannot desire life and cannot make the movement unto life. Otherwise you are not consistent. You speak of creation by an almighty God; but in the realm of salvation you hold on to an evolutionistic process whereby the dead initiate the act toward life. You speak of a sovereign creator, but you also hold to a sovereign sinner who can hold off your

sovereign saviour. You teach that God *calls* all the creatures into being, but you also teach that spiritually dead creatures *call* God into the act of saving. I find it hard to follow, and very unscientific.”

Indeed, we must be consistent in our defence of the truth of creation. But consistency is also a precious jewel in our defence of the truth of salvation by grace, and as

the work of a sovereign God Who *creates* us in Christ Jesus as HIS workmanship (Eph. 2:10), and does not wait for the spiritually dead sinner to step forward to obtain life. There is no more evolution in salvation than there is in creation. ❖

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

Church History

Through Strife to Victory

Chapter 15

Through Strife to Victory

by Rev. C. Hanko

As teen-agers we sang with all the enthusiasm we could muster:

*The fight is on, O be not weary,
Be strong and in His might hold fast.
With banners gleaming, with colors streaming,
We'll bear the victor's crown at last.*

Little did we realize all that would be involved in heeding the admonition of Christ: “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10)

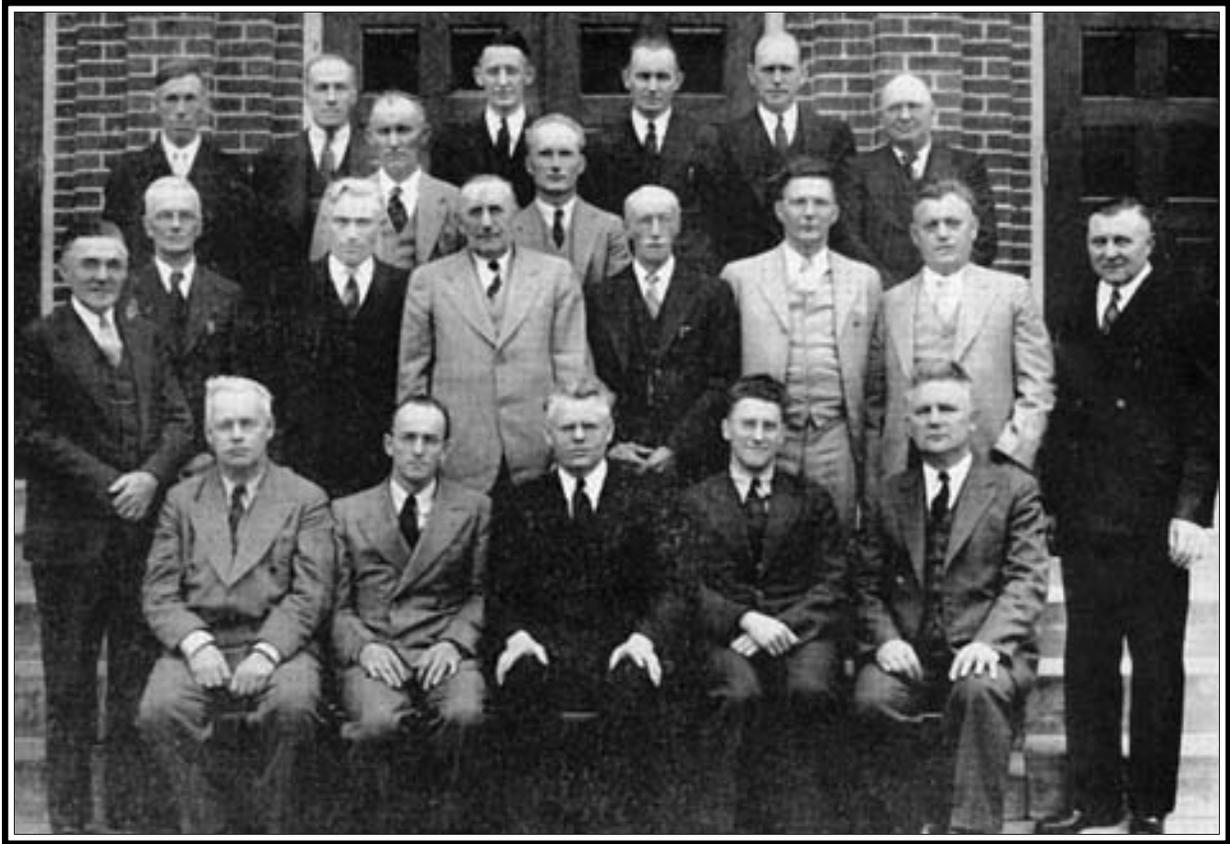
In the early years of our existence we were branded as a sect, followers of a man and riding a certain hobby horse, with no prospect for a future. It is, indeed, characteristic of a sect that it thrives for a time in the excitement of having discovered something new, but soon fades into oblivion. Many small segments have broken away from the main stream of the church to become stagnant pools along the side. We were given five years, then ten years, then as long as our leaders lived, but that would be the end. Yet all these predictions of an early death have been put to shame.

At this time we have twenty-seven churches, twenty-five of which are located in the United States and two in Canada. There are twenty-three ministers in the active

ministry, with six retired. We have a home missionary who is working in the area of Alamosa, Colorado, a missionary working in the Protestant Reformed Church of Northern Ireland, and a minister on loan in the sister churches, the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore. According to earthly standards, especially in our time, we are too small to be recognized among the large denominations in America. Yet we can well exclaim: What has God wrought!

True, compared to the average denominations of our day, we are very small in number, hardly even recognized. From the point of view of the defense of the Reformed faith, we stand almost alone. There are other adherents, but they are also small in number and widely scattered throughout England, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand and possibly elsewhere. And like them, we are regarded often as bigoted, short-sighted and narrow minded.

What is more important than that is the fact that as to the truth, the Lord has preserved us in a bond of unity. The remark is sometimes made that the various ministers have their own gifts and talents, their own manner of presenting the truth, but they are basically all in full



The first synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Seated (left to right): Rev. G. M. Ophoff, Rev. M. Gritters, Rev. G. Vos, Rev. P. De Boer, Rev. H. Hoeksema.

Second Row: P. Dykema, N. Yonker, T. Kooima, M. Vander Vennen, J. Cammenga, Rev. L. Vermeer, Rev. Wm. Verhill, F. LaGrange.

Third Row: J. Brock, Rev. A. Cammenga, M. Flikkema, Rev. C. Hanko, C. Doezema, Rev. J. DeJong, Rev. B. Kok, C. Vander Molen.

agreement with the truth of the Scripture and the Confessions. The charge has been brought against us that we are a negative church, existing only to oppose the teaching of common grace and a general, well-meant offer of salvation. Any one who knows us knows that this is not true. The Lord has privileged us that our leaders have and do develop the basic truth of the sovereignty of God as revealed in the Scriptures and the Confessions. This is also true of the doctrine of God's covenant as a relationship of friendship between God and His people in Christ. We have been given a clearer insight into God's revelation, providence, the miracles of the Scriptures and other truths.

We did go through a period of unrest and strife some forty odd years ago. There were those among us who attempted to undermine the truth of God's sovereign grace by introducing a conditional promise to the covenant. At that time a Declaration of Principles was drawn up by our synod and adopted by our consistories in which we expressed, particularly for labor in the mission field, our stand on the theory of common grace, the error of the general, well-meant offer and the conditional promise of the covenant as taught in the Scripture and our Confessions. This declaration met with much opposition, causing us to pass through an unpleasant and difficult time. Though it pained us to break with those who erred, we were compelled to cling firmly to the truth we

cherished. Looking back, we realize that had this split not occurred, we would long have lost our right of existence.

As has already been mentioned in the previous chapters, from the very beginning of our history the Lord has made it possible for us to have our own seminary. If any church is to continue to exist and to remain faithful in doctrine, it is absolutely essential that this church have its own seminary. For many years the seminary met in a church basement, but in more recent times we have obtained our own seminary building, which is fully equipped for the purpose it serves. This institution has proved to be invaluable, for it has not only been the means of developing the truth that is most precious to us, but it has also prepared many men for the ministry of the Word by founding them in the truth. A large number of students have graduated from this institution throughout the years, some of whom have passed on into glory, some are retired, and some are in the active ministry, either in our churches or beyond the sphere of our churches.

The *Standard Bearer* has begun its seventy-fifth volume, still as a powerful witness of God's sovereign grace, not only among our own people, but spreading its witness far and wide.

A large supply of literature has been prepared during the past years, much of which is still available to any one who is interested. Books, pamphlets, and syllabi of various kinds have been written on matters directly related to the Scriptures, or to doctrine, or to other important subjects. Ever since 1940 we have had our own radio broadcasts, sending forth the Word in many areas. Besides these means of witnessing, we also have our public lectures and conferences which are held from

time to time in various places throughout our churches, and at time by lecture tours in other countries.

Moreover, we can never cease to be grateful for the fact that most of our churches have our own Christian schools. There is nothing more important than the training of the covenant youth of the church, who become the fathers and mothers, as well as leaders of the church in the future. God has so adapted the child that he learns readily, absorbs what he learns very easily, and remembers in an amazing manner throughout the rest of his life much of what he learned in his early years. The truth of the Scriptures must permeate the souls of our children as a sure guide to them throughout their lives. We have dedicated teachers, who labor diligently in the charge entrusted to them. We have school board members who devote much of their time and effort to make sure that our children have the proper training. Although these schools are maintained only with great effort and great outlay of money, the training that covenant youth receive in the schools is worth all the expense and effort put into it. Under the blessing of God, there lies the future of our churches.

We do well to conclude with the words of Ephesians 3:20 and 21:

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. ❖

Rev. Hanko is an emeritus minister of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America and is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

Church News

Church News

BAPTISMS

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

Mark 16:16

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

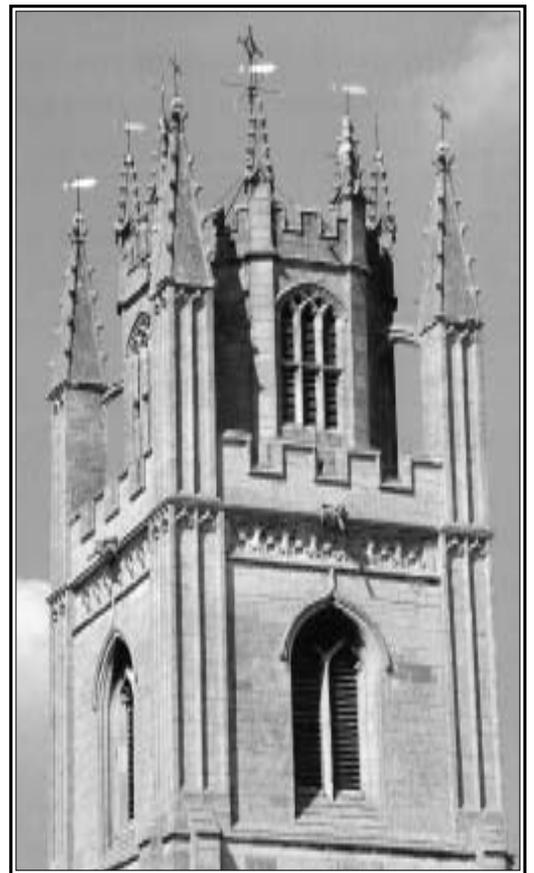
Nikolas James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Terry Holstege—Byron Center, MI
Kelsie Nicole, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Cornelis Kleyn—Byron Center, MI
Hannah Jean, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Bob Bos—Loveland, CO

The Old Peter Church of Lowick

by J.P. de Klerk



This is an English church, in the shire of Northampton, seven miles southeast of Corby. The experts agree that it is one of the finest medieval churches of the country. The tower has twelve pinnacles, representing the twelve disciples of the Lord. Each one of them has a weather vane. Inside there are several monuments, made by the Chelleston alabaster quarries in Derbyshire, remembering people who were well-known in the district, like Sir Ralph Greene and his wife (1420), and his descendant, the Earl of Wiltshire, also the fifth Duke of Dorset. In the fifteenth century, Henry Greene restored parts of the church, especially the nave and aisles. In 1625 a notable memorial was added in the chapel for the son of the first Earl of Peterborough, who died at just eighty-two days old. It is a protestant church now (Normandic style) and most visitors come to the Lord's Day from the city of Northampton, which is not far from here. ❖



Close-up of the twelve pinnacles on the tower of the Peter Church in Lowick (England).

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

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

Just One

Michelle hastily pulled her sweater on and ran outdoors. The sun was too bright to look at, but she took her time gazing at the grass and trees. No matter how much she treasured this glorious spring day, though, she mayn't forget her mission: "Bring two eggs to Grandma's house—and don't waste time and don't break the eggs." That's what Mother had said.

Michelle clutched the paper sack that held the eggs and began her walk. It wasn't far to Grandma's house. But even before she left her own yard, Michelle set the sack down while she stopped to examine the ground. She was sure it had been bare soil yesterday, but today some kind of plants were poking out! Maybe Grandma would know what kind they were. Digging out just one wouldn't hurt.

Quickly she ran to find a small spade and dug into the soil. The plant seemed to be a small brown ball with a green part growing out the top, and little white "strings" growing out the bottom. She dropped it in her bag with the eggs and hurried to Grandma's house. Oh, won't Grandma be pleased!

"Come in, Michelle! Wasn't it a nice day for a walk?" Grandma's voice crackled with kindness. "Sit here, dear, and have some milk while I finish my cake batter with those eggs."

With arched brow Grandma took the soiled bag from the little girl's hands. She opened the bag and found the flower bulb with two slightly cracked eggs underneath.

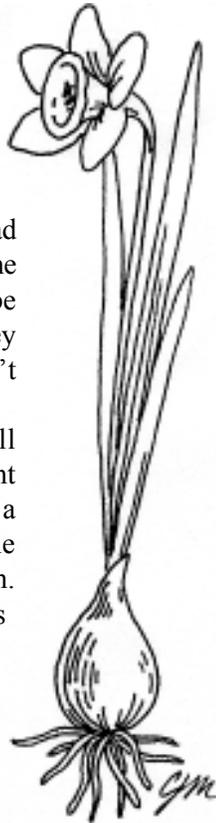
"Hm, what's this, Michelle?"

"Oh, I dug up one of those for you! I thought maybe you could tell me what it is."

"Where did you get it, dear?"

"In our yard, by the big rock."

Grandma shook her head, but smiled anyway. She did the best she could with the eggs, and then set the bulb in front of Michelle.



"This is a daffodil bulb," she explained. "These white things are the roots, and this green part is the flower starting to grow out."

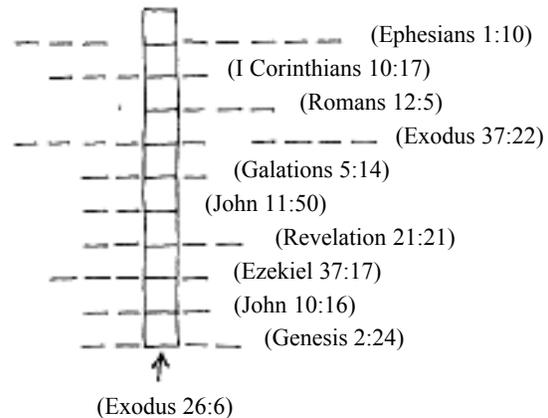
"Oh, daffodils are so pretty!"

"Yes," said Grandma, "it's hard to imagine that such a pretty flower is part of this ugly brown bulb. But even in all of its parts, it's one whole plant. In fact, a lot of things are like that. The eggs that you brought me, along with some other ingredients, will become *one* cake."

Michelle gently touched the bulb and asked, "Do you think it will still get its flower part if I put it back in the ground?"

"Sure," Grandma hugged Michelle, "and I'll help you replant it—right after we have a piece of cake!"

Grandma had some other things in mind that are "one," too. Look up these verses and find out what is "one" in each of them:



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

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