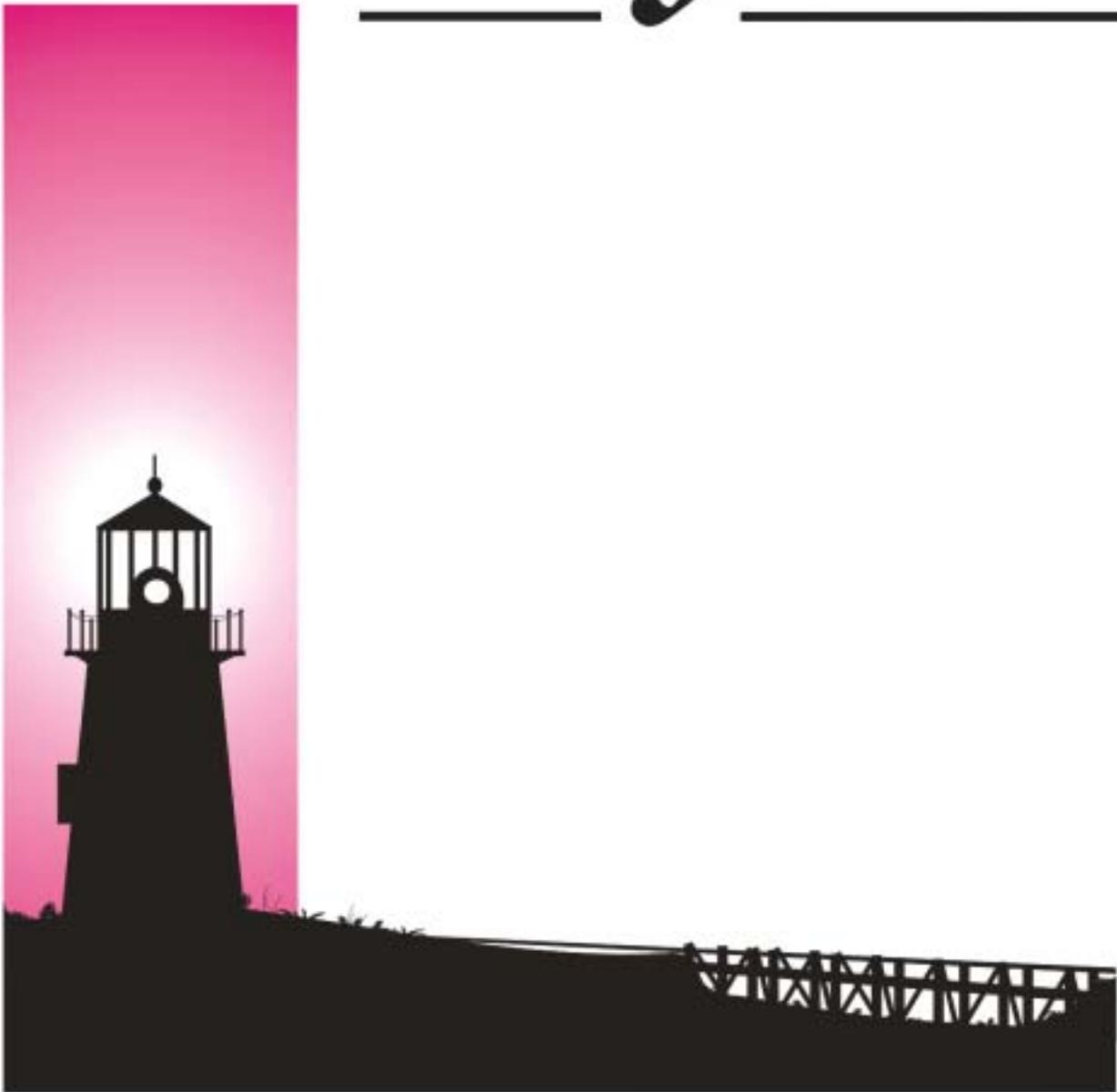


# *Beacon Lights*

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2000

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## Fleeing Sin (3)



by Aaron J. Cleveland

We ended last time with a view to looking at how separating from sin and impenitent sinners takes place only in the true church where sharp antithetical preaching is found and where discipline is administered. This we will do in the final article beginning with a look at our creeds. All three of our creeds speak of the importance of sound doctrinal preaching. In varying ways and to varying degrees all three of them also speak of the importance of belonging to the true church where this kind of preaching is found and how antithetical preaching is a means of Christ to purify His church and remove from it those who live impenitently. First, in the Canons, 5th Head, Article 14, we read that it pleases God by “the preaching of the gospel” to preserve us in the way of grace. Later in the article, it is evident that the “exhortations, threatenings, and promises” of the preaching are God’s means to continue and perfect His work of grace in us. Many in the Reformed church world today would agree with the “promise” element of the preaching. (We must remember that in the theology of false and departing churches, the “promise” is conditioned upon the good works of man apart from grace, and therefore, is no “promise” at all.) It is good that we understand just exactly what the “promise of the gospel” is and why it must be preached.

Rev. Hoeksema defines “the promise of the gospel” in *The Triple Knowledge*, his commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism. Question 84 of the Catechism asks, “How is the kingdom of heaven opened and shut by the preaching of the holy gospel?” The answer, in its most distilled form, is “by the preaching of the *promise of the gospel*.” Before we go on and define what exactly that promise is, it is important to notice the seriousness of the question asked. The question deals with the opening and shutting of the kingdom of heaven. This is not a minor question. How often do we go to church on Sunday and listen to the sermon consciously aware of the fact that the kingdom of heaven is being opened to us as Christ speaks to us through the preaching? The preaching, then, is God’s means of opening the kingdom of heaven to us and closing it to those who hear the preaching and do not believe. But, this is only the case when the “promise of the gospel” is preached. What is the “promise of the gospel?” Rev. Hoeksema, after spending several pages defining the “promise” sums it up with this paragraph, a part of which we quote:

In one word it is, according to Scripture, Christ and all His riches of salvation and blessing. It is the promise that God will raise up a Savior out of the seed of David; that this Seed of David shall bear the sins of His people; that God shall raise Him from the dead and give Him glory, exalt Him on the throne of His father David, and give Him the ends of the earth for His possession. Christ is the promised Seed. The promise, therefore, according to Scripture, implies the assurance of righteousness and peace, of forgiveness and sonship, of deliverance and sanctification, of eternal life and glory, of the incorruptible and undefilable inheritance that fadeth not away. It implies for Christ and all that are in Him that they shall be heirs of the world, inherit the new and heavenly kingdom, and dwell in God’s eternal tabernacle forever. And therefore, the promise also implies the gift of the Holy Spirit. That Spirit is given first of all to Christ, and then also to them that are of Him. It is through the Spirit that all the blessings of Christ are realized upon the Church.... It is a mistake to present the matter as if God merely promised the objective blessings of salvation to the seed of Abraham, or even to men in general, so that it depends upon their consent whether or not the promise shall be realized unto them. Very definitely the gift of the Holy Spirit is included in the promise. (pgs. 700, 701, *The Triple Knowledge*, vol. 2)

Now knowing what the “promise of the gospel” is, it is important to emphasize that it must be preached. Remember, when the “promise” is preached the kingdom of heaven is opened to believers. Likewise, when

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the “promise” is preached to unbelievers the kingdom of heaven is shut to them and “they stand exposed to the wrath of God, and eternal condemnation, so long as they are unconverted” (Answer 84 of Catechism).

In this connection, Rev. Hoeksema makes an important point as to the effect of the preaching of the gospel in the church. About the effects of the preaching on the impenitent Hoeksema writes:

It has the effect that it excludes the unbelievers that do not sincerely repent. It excludes the wicked that are without: for it is not probable that with such definite preaching they will ever join the church visible on earth. And it also excludes the carnal seed, the unbelievers and impenitent that are within the church. These usually separate themselves from the church visible that is characterized by such pure and definite preaching of the gospel. They become enemies of the church of Christ and of the people of God. They manifest themselves as those that are of antichrist, according to the words of the apostle John in I John 2:18, 19: “Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” And even though they are hypocrites, and remain in the church visible for a time, as tares among the wheat, they can never escape the power and authority of the pure and definite preaching of the gospel. For God through Christ binds on their conscience that they have no place in the kingdom of heaven (pgs. 711, 712, *The Triple Knowledge*, vol. 2).

It is only through the way of the “pure and definite preaching of the gospel” that we experience the separation from sin and impenitent sinners. First of all, God’s uses the means of “pure and definite” (distinct) preaching to draw us out of this world spiritually. We see that our abiding place is not here on earth, but we have an inheritance in the “new and heavenly kingdom.” And we begin to enter into this “promised land” when we “receive the promise of the gospel by a true faith” (Answer 84, Catechism).

Secondly, through the hearing of distinct preaching we experience the mortification of our old man and the making alive of our new man. We experience being drawn out of our old man of sin. We are assured that our old man no longer has the upper hand and that in principle he has been defeated by the death and resurrection of Christ. We now live out of the principle of the new man. We experience the new life of Christ in us. We live according to the Spirit and not after the flesh.

Thirdly, God uses the means of distinct preaching to drive away from the midst of His holy congregation those who live impenitently, those who hate God, His people, and the truth. The kingdom of heaven is shut to them by the “pure and definite” preaching of the promise. They experience being scattered as we read in Psalm 68:1, 2, “Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.”

Where the pure doctrine of the gospel is faithfully preached and where discipline is faithfully administered, God’s people will be found. It is this “holy congregation” spoken of in the Belgic Confession that we must join ourselves to. Article 28 of this confession speaks of our calling to join ourselves to the true church. An interesting portion of this article makes clear that belonging to the true church involves separation from those who do not belong to this “holy congregation.” We read, “it is the duty of all believers, according to the word of God, to separate themselves from all those who do not belong to the Church, and to join themselves to this congregation, wheresoever God hath established it.” Also implied in this article is the calling of all believers to remain in the true church and not to separate themselves from this “holy congregation” and mix themselves together with those outside the church.

The true church, the body of Christ, is composed of those who have been “drawn out,” those who are holy, consecrated to the service of God.

We end with a few points in review about the effect of distinct doctrinal preaching. God uses the means of distinct preaching to maintain the holiness of His church. First, this is done when the believers hear the promise and are encouraged in a life of holiness. Secondly, when the impenitent hear the promise of the gospel, either they are brought to repentance, or God uses the sharp preaching as a means to drive them from

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His congregation, thereby maintaining the holiness of His church. Thirdly, when those outside the church are made aware of the distinct preaching of the true church, they are either hardened in their unbelief, or God uses this pure preaching as a means to call His elect out of false and departing churches and into His holy congregation.

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When there is watered-down preaching, preaching that does not have the promise at its center, but rather lays upon man a heavy responsibility, God's holy congregation soon fills up with those living unholy lives.

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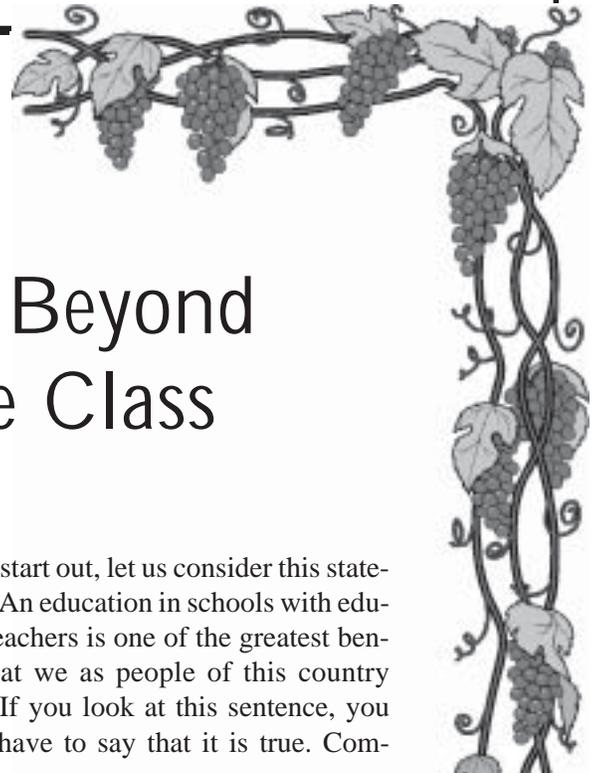
When there is watered-down preaching, preaching that does not have the promise at its center, but rather lays upon man a heavy responsibility, God's holy congregation soon fills up with those living unholy lives. The believers do not walk holily as they should. There is less and less separation from sin and impenitent sinners. The members begin to mix themselves with the world. The congregation becomes increasingly worldly-minded and less spiritually-minded. The members do not live out of the promise as they should because they do not hear it preached. It is not long until a congregation like this is decimated when the winds of false doctrine blow through. Even when this happens, God will preserve to Himself those whom He has called out.

May we, by God's grace, continue to be preserved holy by means of pure preaching. May we, from Sunday to Sunday continue to hear Christ, the Promise, preached.

***Psalter # 70, verses 2, 4***

*Thy mercy and Thy grace I love to contemplate;  
Thy paths of truth my footsteps trace, and wicked men I hate.  
O Lord, Thy house I love, where glory dwells with-in;  
O keep my heart secure above all fellowship with sin. ❖*

Fruitful Branches



# Christian Education Beyond Devotions and Bible Class

by Michael Noorman

The topic I have chosen to discuss is “Christian Education Beyond Devotions and Bible Class.” I found this topic relevant to what I believe is my calling as a teacher in the Protestant Reformed Schools.

To start out, let us consider this statement. “An education in schools with educated teachers is one of the greatest benefits that we as people of this country have.” If you look at this sentence, you would have to say that it is true. Com-

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pared to other places in the world, we certainly enjoy the privilege of sending our children to schools where they might learn and prepare themselves for going out into the “real world” of business or starting a family. That is how people who send their children to public schools look at education. They would certainly respond to the beginning statement in that way.

Now, let’s change the statement to fit our situation. “A Protestant Reformed education in Protestant Reformed schools with educated God fearing teachers is one of the greatest benefits that we as Christians in this country have.” This statement is far more valuable to us than the first statement. It says that we not only have schools, but that we have schools whose main goal is to train up covenant children to spiritual maturity; to do what Isaiah 54:13 commands. “And all thy children shall be taught in the fear of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children.” And if we teach them the fear of the Lord, then they will receive knowledge, as Proverbs 1:7 tells us when it says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.”

II Timothy 3:14-17 speaks about Christian education by explaining the development of a child into a man of God, and the fact that this can only occur through scripture. Paul says, “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”

Christ-centered education is not only an essential part of training up our children for the knowledge and service of God, but it is required of us by God. Both scripture and the Reformed Confessions show this when they speak to us of the covenant. Deuteronomy 6:1-9 and Ephesians 6:4 tell us that instruction of these children is one of the outstanding covenant responsibilities of the parents. The Christian school is the tool by which the parents are to carry out this calling of God. Psalm 78:5 and 6 says, “For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children.” In Article 21 of the

Church Order “good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant” are required.

The most fundamental factor for us in education is the presence of Scripture; without it, education cannot be Christian (Prof. David Engelsma). Scripture is what guides us in every area of Christian education. It tells us what we are to teach and how we are to teach it. Everything we teach must begin and end with God’s revelation to us through the Scriptures. Herman Hoeksema wrote the following in a *Standard Bearer* article: “Religion must not be something added to our life, but it must be the heart of our life. Religion must not be something added to our education, but it must be the heart of our education” (*Standard Bearer*, Vol. 3, p. 536).

Using what was just said, let us look at Christian education more specifically, considering the individual subjects that are taught in our schools. With religion being “the heart of our education,” the most prominent subject that stands out is Bible. Daily devotions at different times during the school day are also very important. To some, Bible class and devotions may be the idea of Christian education. But the Bible and its teachings about God and His creation are to be worked into every subject. They are what unify all of the subjects. Take history, for example. History class is an ongoing look at many of the Biblical doctrines set forth in scripture such as creation and the fall. History also is an awesome example of the providence of God throughout time. By using history we can see that the coming of the Kingdom of Christ will happen very soon.

With regards to reading, writing, and grammar, the source of these subjects lies in communication. Communication implies fellowship through words and is truly a gift of God. God has given us the ability to communicate in an orderly way. It is through this communication that we can fulfill our ultimate goal on this earth, which is to glorify God. We are able to do this by speaking and by praising His name through singing. Being in a Christian environment rather than a non-Christian environment, helps develop Christian communication, and words that glorify God’s name rather than dishonor Him.

Science is a subject which shows perfectly every one of God’s attributes. It teaches the orderliness of every atom, the power to make all of creation work together, and the classic example of His beauty shown in the rainbow, which was given to us as a token of His covenant. As we look at the physical and the spiritual side of a rainbow we see a wonderful picture. Physi-

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cally, God sends a storm with dark clouds pouring rain. The sun shines down on the rain which is used as a prism to bend the light which is sent through the drop, emitting the colors of the rainbow. If we look at it spiritually, the cloud represents the whole human race, the sun is the saving power of Christ, and the bow is God's elect, chosen out of the whole human race. This shows that it is not until Christ has shown His saving power and grace to the whole human race that we are changed from our wicked human nature to a new body.

In every subject taught, in everything that the school does, in every decision made, God's revelation to us must be seen. This is the tremendous responsibility and calling of each of our teachers of every subject. Their goal for our Protestant Reformed schools must be to educate

covenant children in the knowledge of God so that they may be servants of God through His grace, appreciating God in every area of life.

The knowledge that I have gained through Protestant Reformed education *has* helped me to grow in the knowledge of God and directed me in His ways. I would like to be able to share this knowledge with young children, to help them build a foundation on which they can grow in appreciation for all that God has revealed to us through His Word. ❖

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*Michael graduated from Covenant Christian and is pursuing teacher certification at Calvin College. He wrote this paper for the Protestant Reformed Scholarship Essay.*

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Story Time

# Heavenly Treasures Above Earthly Things

by Melanie Bos

**M**ark Harrison was sitting at home one afternoon with his family. It was summer vacation and he could not find anything to do. He did not have any brothers to play with; only two sisters who were both younger than he. They only liked to do girly stuff like play dolls or tea party which, according to Mark, was dumb girl stuff. Mark was 13 years old and going into the 8th grade and had no interest in that kind of stuff. He liked stuff like bike jumping and playing Play Station. Mark decided to go to his friend Jack's who lived a couple houses down from him.

Jack did not go to a Christian school like Mark did, nor did he go to church. He was a pretty decent boy though. He did not curse or swear or anything like that, so Mark's mom and dad decided it was okay for Mark to hang around him as long as he did not get any bad ideas from him.

Mark told his mom that he was going to Jack's house for awhile. His mom said that was fine as long as he was home by 5:00 p.m., which was supper time. Mark went

into the garage and got his bike. He would ride his bike over to Jack's house in case Jack wanted to ride bikes somewhere or jump their bikes on the jump Jack made in front of his house.

Within a minute Mark was at Jack's house. Jack was sitting on the front step of his house. He looked bored, too. Jack only had a baby brother who, in his opinion, was no fun to play with so Jack was bored a lot, too. When he saw Mark coming his eyes lit up. He and Mark had a lot of fun together.

"So what do you want to do Jack? There was nothing to do at my house so I decided to come over here and see if you had any good ideas of what to do." Mark said.

"Hmm, I know! We could ride our bikes down to the field with all the dirt jumps and jump our bikes." Jack decided.

"Okay, I guess." Mark said reluctantly.

Mark's bike used to be his dad's and he sometimes got teased about his big, junky, old bike. He could not

jump his bike very well because it was big and heavy and would not go very high. Jack on the other hand had a very nice new bike that was the best you could get for jumping and that sort of thing. Mark often asked for a new bike but his parents said that there was not enough money for a new bike and the bike he had right now worked just fine.

Mark and Jack grabbed their bikes and set off for the field. They stopped at Mark's house so Mark could tell his mom where they were going. Mark hopped off his bike and ran inside.

"Mom, I'm going with Jack to the field where we can jump our bikes. Okay?" Mark said

"Okay, but don't be gone long." His mom answered.

"Okay, Mom! Bye!"

Mark ran back out to his bike and Jack who was still waiting for him. He hopped on his bike and they were off.

Mark and Jack were at the field jumping their bikes. There was no one else there when they first got there but soon they saw some more boys coming. Mark and Jack just ignored them and went on jumping their bikes. Now the other boys noticed Mark's bike. They right away started making fun of his bike. Jack saw this and went over to help Mark out. The boys started teasing Jack, too, when he stood up for Mark. Jack did not care.

"Come on, Mark! Let's go home. There's no way we can have fun with these boys around." Jack said to Mark. "We can go back and find something more fun to do."

They got on their bikes and went home.

That night at the supper table Mark's dad asked him how his day was.

## Three Little Hearts

(Canons of Dordrecht version)

by Connie Meyer

*Knock knock. Knock knock. "Oh please let me in!  
I'll save you from your guilt of your sin.  
Just open up your heart unto me  
So I can come and set your soul free!"*

*"What shall we do?" said one of the two  
With hearts of straw that swaggered and swooned,  
"One mere, small work will let in this lamb.  
Then they as one said, "Come, yours I am!"*

*The wolf swooped in with fleece on his face  
And bound them in their works without grace.  
But pray, what is the most awful part?  
They love the noose of works 'round their hearts!*

*The wolf went on to knock at one more,  
Where bricks of Truth engraven the door.  
"Oh please, oh please, oh please let me in!"  
But here he only heard from within:*

*"Oh thief, beware! The Lamb is declared:  
Predestined mercy, grace unimpaired!  
For here He lives by His own decree;  
From sin He freed me eternally!"*

"It was okay but some boy teased me about my bike again." Mark told him.

"Again?! Well, don't let it get to you. It does not really matter what they say anyway.

They are just trying to make you mad. Right?" His dad encouraged him.

"I guess you're right. But why can't I get a new bike. I know we don't have enough money right now. But I could mow lawns for people and stuff like that. I could use the money to buy a new bike." Mark suggested.

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“We’ve gone over this before, Mark. We want you to save your money for more important things like a car and your college education.” His dad explained.

“Well, how come Jack has enough money for a new bike and I don’t? After all I’m a child of God so why does God give more to the wicked than to his own people whom he loves.” Mark questioned his dad.

“In Psalm 73 Asaph asked God the same question.” His father told him. “Asaph tells that he went into God’s sanctuary and then he understood. God sets the wicked in slippery places by giving them lots of money or in this case a nicer bike. That means that God gives them those things to aid in their destruction. Do you understand now?”

Mark nodded.

“And it also says in the Bible that is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. It is easier for a poor man to go to heaven because he does not have many earthly goods to trust in rather than God. He does not have much money to buy everything he needs. A rich man has lots of money which he often trusts in more than God.” His father explained further. “Would you rather go to heaven or have earthly goods?”

“I would rather go to heaven,” declared Mark.

“So would I,” said his parents. ❖

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*\*Melanie is a short story contest winner from Loveland Protestant Reformed Church in Loveland, Colorado. She is 14 years old.*

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## Creation Through the Spectacles of Scripture

# The Lowly Worm

By John Huizenga

Rain drops splatter down upon the sidewalk as you hurry to school. A few steps ahead a long skinny creature makes its way across the sidewalk. It stretches out long and thin, its pointed tip probing here and there.

Then it begins constricting and the wave travels down its body making the tail end pull up toward the front. Again the front end reaches out and the rhythmic stretching and constricting soon brings the little creature to the wet grass and mud on the other side.

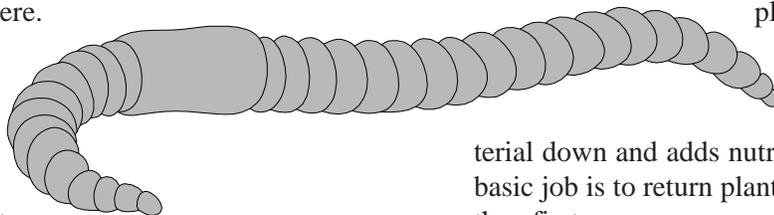
The worms we see crawling about during and after a heavy rain are commonly called “earth worms.” Unlike worms that live in the oceans, ponds, rivers or other places, earthworms live in the soil. As anyone who works with the soil, growing plants, will tell you, earthworms are very good for the soil. Their basic task is to renew

the soil. Plants remove nutrients as they grow and then the plants eventually die and turn back into soil. The earthworm speeds this process up. As it burrows through the soil, it loosens the soil and takes in dirt and dead

plant material into its digestive system. When the worm removes what it needs to live, it also breaks the

material down and adds nutrients necessary for plants. Its basic job is to return plants back to the soil from where they first came.

There are many different types of worms. Earthworms belong to the group called “Annelidia” which means “little rings.” Looking at this group of worms, you would find that they look like they are made out of a bunch of rings joined together. There are about 15,000 different kinds of annelid worms living in the water and on land and ranging in size from 1 mm to the giant Australian earthworm that can reach 3 meters. Another group is called “flatworms.” They have no digestive system



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and absorb their food through their flat thin bodies. About 20,000 different types of flatworms inhabit the water and wet soils. A third type of worm is the “proboscis worm” or “ribbon worm.” The 900 different kinds of ribbon worms live mostly in the ocean. The fourth type of worm is called the “round worm” or “nematoda.” They are long and thin like earthworms, but their bodies are not ringed. They live in water, wet soil, and even in plant and animal tissue. About 80,000 different types of roundworms inhabit the earth.

Most of us rarely see more than a few different species of worm. Most of us probably are not very interested in seeing worms at all. The fact that so many of them eat and live in decaying plant and animal material may be why we find them quite loathsome. We also commonly find them living within living creatures as parasites. To a large extent, worms are creatures that work to return once-living creatures to the dust.

Much more could be said about worms as we study them scientifically. We would gain more and more understanding of their lives and see more and more of their amazing diversity. The Bible is a bit more broad in its use of the term “worm” because it includes the larval stages of certain insects (grubs, maggots, etc.) These are not worms in a scientific technical sense, but for our purposes and the purpose of God, this does not matter. When we look through the spectacles of Scripture at the worm, we see two things: a destructive creature and we see ourselves. When we look at the worm through the spectacles of Scripture we look into a mirror.

First there are a number of passages in Scripture where God uses the worm to show to us the corruption and decay that comes due to sin. When the Israelites disobeyed God, then their manna bred worms. In Deuteronomy 28:39 the people of Israel are warned “Thou shalt plant vineyards, and dress them, but shalt neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them.” This too would come as a result of sin. When Jonah displayed more joy for a gourd than the fruitful effects of his preaching, God sent a worm to destroy the gourd. Job, as he lays covered with sores slowly dying, says that his flesh is clothed with worms (7:5). He describes the horror of death as “worms shall destroy this body” (19:26), “they shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them” (21:26), and “the worm shall feed sweetly upon him” (24:20). When king Herod made an oration before the people and “the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.” Then, “immediately the angel of the Lord

smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.” (Acts 12:22-23). The destruction of man and punishment for sin is made complete in hell where God describes the destruction and death as the place “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44, 46, 48 Cf. Isa 66:24). All these passages bring out the truth found in Genesis 3:19 “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” The worm turns us back into dust.

A number of other passages show us something quite shocking and humbling. In certain passages we look at man through the spectacles of Scripture and we see worms! We are worms. God says clearly in Job 25:6 “How much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man, which is a worm?” David says of himself “But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people” (Psalm 22:6). Again in Job 17:14 we read “I have said to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister.” God shows us what we are by nature: disgusting, lowly, creatures of corruption and we need to see ourselves as we are.

Godly saints, having examined themselves in the light of God’s Word have seen that they are but worms. They did not over exaggerate. They described themselves accurately. God himself calls to his own people and says “Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel” (Isaiah 41:14). These words are humbling but also bring hope and joy to our hearts. God sees our loathsome condition and in sovereign grace through the work of Christ turns us into his children. This work begins with our regeneration and is made complete in eternal glory. Such a transformation is pictured in the metamorphosis of a worm to a butterfly.

When we see a worm crawling across the sidewalk, we do well to meditate upon our own sinful nature. “That’s me there, crawling across the wet sidewalk.” We may not stop there, however. We must look to God’s Word and hear in the preaching the good news, the gospel of salvation: we are saved from this loathsome condition by the sovereign and gracious power of God in Christ. ❖

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# The Song of Zion

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

by Skip Hunter

### March 1 Read Psalm 119:145-152

**Psalm 119:151-152** What a blessed truth we read in the verse 151! To know God is near is utmost comfort for the child of God. No matter what may come upon us we have the blessed assurance that our God is near us at all times. If we lie on a bed of affliction, we may be confident that our God is near us to help us. If we suffer the loss of a beloved family member or friend we may be sure that God will be near to fill the vacancy in our lives. If we have difficulties because of the sinful world in which we live, we need not fear the world because Christ has overcome the world. As we look to the return of our Lord Jesus Christ with all the anxieties that this may bring for us, we know that God is near. What a blessed truth! Let us love that truth and let us live out of that truth. God is near. Sing Psalter 339:4.

### March 2 Read Psalm 119:153-160

**Psalm 119:153-154** The psalmist here asks God to deliver him from his afflictions. From the second verse we understand that these afflictions are because of the world. Obviously he must have been tormented by wicked men. It probably was for one reason. He loved God. People of God, do you love God? Are you afflicted because you confess your faith before men? Are you afflicted because the world knows that you belong to your faithful Savior? The psalmist dared to ask God for deliverance because he kept the law of God. He could base his request on the promise of God to love those that keep His commandments. This is not works righteousness, of course. This is following the demands of the covenant that God has established with and for us. The psalmist also knew that in the Word which he read God promised to save him from all manner of evil. People of God, do you know these things? If you do, rest assured that your God will deliver you when you pray to him. Sing Psalter 340:1.

### March 3 Read Luke Lamentations 3:21-32

**Psalm 119:155-156** Our reading for today is a favorite with many of God's people. In times of distress, we love to hear and say the words, "Great is Thy faithfulness." This is the thought of today's verses as well. Even in the darkest of times, the saints are able to confess that Jehovah's mercies are great. They knew that these mercies are boundless. We can rest assured that in His mercy He will hear us and quicken us. Sometimes we must have patience to see how those mercies will be revealed to us. We must wait upon God. But we can know that those mercies will be made known to us and will save us from all manner of distress. Let us confess these words with our mouths and know that

Jehovah's mercies are great and tender toward His people. Sing Psalter 340:2.

### March 4 Read Galatians 2:1-6

**Psalm 119:157-158** Saints in both the old and new dispensations experienced persecutions from those who hated God and His Word and works. Sometimes the persecutors were within the church. Think of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Think of the Judaizers of Paul's day. Moses, Aaron, and Paul suffered much from these people who said they knew God but in reality hated Him. The psalmist was grieved because some within the congregation did evil against God and His Word. What about us? Are we grieved at sin in the church? Do we do our best to show the sinner the error of his way by means of the method given to us by Christ in Matthew 18? God's Word should be so precious to us that we protect it from all manner of harm. Don't we do this with the word of our earthly fathers? We should be much more jealous about the Word of our heavenly Father. Persecution we must expect, but let us be zealous toward the Word of Jehovah. Sing Psalter 340:3.

### March 5 Read Psalm 119:153-160

**Psalm 119:159-160** People of God, do we confess that God's Word is true from the beginning? If we do, than we will not be drawn in to such theories as evolution, free willism, or any other such things that are trumpeted in the world today. Because if we believe that God's Word is true from the beginning, than we will confess the sovereignty of God over all things. In doing this we will not give credence to any theory that is not wholly given over to God's glory and honor. The second part of verse 160 will provide us much comfort in this matter. To know that God's judgments endure forever will never leave us in doubt in any situation. God is God and there is none else. Sing Psalter 340:4.

### March 6 Read Psalm 119:161-168

**Psalm 119:161-162** Do our hearts stand in awe of God's Word? Can we blot out all that is happening around us and stand in awe at the Word of God? Can we put away our earthly thoughts and actions and concentrate on God's Word? The psalmist could. Even though enemies were all around him, he could see the truth of God for what it really was and was filled with awe. Yesterday we heard God's Word being proclaimed to us. What is our reaction today? Do we remember what we heard? Do we even know the texts? As we begin our work today, let us remember to keep God's Word in mind. Let us be filled with awe in what He has

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done more than what we can accomplish. Let us “Stand in awe and sin not.” Sing Psalter 341:1.

### March 7 Read Psalm I John 2:1-12

**Psalm 119:163-164** Do we hate lying? Do we put it out of our lives by speaking only the truth? Children, are you determined not to lie today or tomorrow at school? Young people, are you conditioned to lie or to speak the truth? Parents, do you expect the truth from your children and show that to them by your speech? When we speak the truth, we praise God. When we lie, we praise Satan. What is your choice? Whom will you serve? Let us put away lying and love God and His law. Sing Psalter 341:2.

### March 8 Read Proverbs 3:1-10

**Psalm 119:165-166** Do we want peace in our lives? The answer we would all give is, “Of course.” We would like peace in our spiritual life, in our home life, in our life at work or school, or in our daily life as we interact with the world. Peace is a much sought after commodity by the world and the church. The world cannot find peace as evidence by their struggle to have it. The people of God, however, can. We, by obeying and doing the whole law of God, can find peace through Christ. The psalmist knew that the only way he could find peace was through Jehovah’s law. This must be our confession as well. While this may not be a difficult thing to say, it sometimes gets lost as we live in this world. Scripture does not lie. God does not lie. The way to peace and happiness is through obedience to God as given to us through Christ. Seek true peace, people of God. See it in the Word which is peace-Christ. Sing Psalter 341:3.

### March 9 Read Psalm 119:161-168

**Psalm 119:167-168** Do we confess that God sees all that we do? I mean, do we confess this by our actions? We might know that God knows all with our minds, but do we believe it in our hearts? As we go to work, school, or even stay at home; do we confess by our actions that we truly believe that God knows all that we do? Sometimes we fall into sin by thinking that God does not know. When we do this, we must immediately think of David’s actions concerning Bathsheba. We will quickly be forced to acknowledge that God knows all that we do. All our ways are before Him! These are sobering words. They should sober us in all that we do no matter what our age. Our God sees us. Does He like what He sees? Sing Psalter 341:4.

### March 10 Read Psalm 119:169-176

**Psalm 119:169-170** Prayer. What a precious activity that God has given to us. Through prayer we may pray unto God and know that it comes before the throne of grace. Through prayer we can bring our needs to God who knows our needs better than we do ourselves. Prayer is not something to just make custom or habit. Each prayer needs the proper consideration that it deserves. We need to remember that we are approaching the sovereign king when we pray. Even as we would be respectful before some earthly sovereign, we must be respectful before our heavenly King. Let us pray and let us pray often. Let us do this as God has commanded us in His Word. Sing Psalter 342:1.

### March 11 Read Romans 10:8-17

**Psalm 119:171-173** Young people, are you looking forward until the day that you make public confession of your faith if

you have not done so already? Are you looking forward until the day until you can be more than an observer on Communion Sunday? To confess our faith before men is a privilege and a blessing. It is something that we must wish to do. It is a joy for parents to see their children take their places among the church. Parents, encourage your teenagers in this. They need this encouragement because this act may be difficult for them for some reason or another. When we confess our faith, we will confess that God’s laws are good, and that we wish to walk in them. Let us seek to walk in this activity and receive the blessing of God. Sing Psalter 342:2.

### March 12 Read Psalm 19:7-11

**Psalm 119:174-175** As we enter into God’s presence today, let us ponder on this. Is God’s law a delight for us? Do we really wish to have Christ speak to us today? Do we want to hear about our sins and the way of deliverance from those sins? Are we willing to live lives of gratitude for this deliverance? As we come to the end of this Psalm, we must be struck with the number of times God’s Word or some synonym for God’s Word is used. And we must see that the Psalmist loved that Word and delighted in it. What about us? Do we love the Word of God? Is it our delight for the whole week not just Sunday? Is it our delight all of Sunday and not just when we are in Church? If it is our delight, than we can be assured of the promise that God’s judgments will help us. Sing Psalter 342:3.

### March 13 Read Psalm 119:169-176

**Psalm 119:176** After his long journey through the wonder of God’s Word, the psalmist makes this confession. He is a sinner and has no means of escape other than through Christ. He knows that even by keeping the commandments he cannot save himself from his sin. He needs more than that. He needs God to seek for him like a shepherd after a lost sheep. Is this our experience? Is this our confession? Do we confess our worthlessness and inability to do anything good? Let us daily pray to be sought by the seeking shepherd. Let us not forget his Word of grace to us. Let us not forget His commandments. We need to pray and pray often for the grace to do this. Let us use this Psalm often to help us delight in God’s law and to meditate in it day and night. Sing Psalter 342:4.

### March 14 Read Psalm 120

**Psalm 120:1-4** The next several Psalms are called, according to their titles, songs of degrees. According to commentators they were used as worshipers went up Mt. Zion to worship in the temple. In this Psalm we see a worshiper crying unto God for deliverance from lying enemies. He does this because they afflict his soul and affect his worship of God. Are we this jealous about our worship of Jehovah? Do we try to rid ourselves of anyone or anything that may affect our worship? It is early in the week but not too early to think about the next Sabbath day. Let us daily pray to God to deliver us from whomever would obstruct our worship. Sing Psalter 343:1-2.

### March 15 Read II Samuel 3:21-30

**Psalm 120:5-7** As David began to take over leadership of Israel, he was obstructed by his chief captain Joab. David saw in Israel the church, the body of Christ. He was tired of the civil war that he and Saul had participated in. He wished it over not

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only for his sake but especially for the sake of God's people. While we have little evidence that David wrote this Psalm, it seems that he might have had this incident in mind if he did. We should have the same care for God's church as David did. We need to do all that we can to protect the unity with which God has provided us. Our children must do this in our schools, our young people must do this in their dealings with each other, and we adults must do this in whatever activity God has placed us. Be for peace, people of God, especially as it concerns the church. Sing Psalter 343:3-4.

### March 16 Read Psalm 121

**Psalm 121:1-2** This song of degrees has been a comfort for God's people throughout the ages. Where do you find your help? As the psalmist experienced, it was not from the mountains that surrounded Jerusalem. Even though these mountains provided excellent defense from Israel's enemies, he knew that it was by God's grace that they were not overrun. What about us? Do we have mountains that we rely on for defense? If we do, we must know that they will fail. Our help comes from Jehovah who made heaven and earth. You see how evil evolution is? Through its devilish theory the church loses its hope. Our help is from the covenant God who cares for us throughout any trial and tribulation. It is fitting that we begin our worship with these words, and it is good that we remember them daily. Sing Psalters 344:1, 345:1, and 347:1.

### March 17 Read I Kings 18:21-29

**Psalm 121:3-4** On Mount Carmel Elijah mocked the prophets and priest of Baal for trusting in a god who slept when they needed him most. Theirs was a religion of false hope. It is the same as many religions today. I am not just talking about those who worship idols such as Buddha. I am talking about all those whose god depends on the strength of man. If you do not put your trust in Jehovah God, then you must put your trust in man. Man must sleep and so must his creations. Our God never sleeps. Our God watches out for our every need day by day and hour by hour. What a blessed truth that we can teach even our littlest children! What a blessed truth that we adults can use to sustain us even in the darkest hours. Our God never sleeps. Let us praise our unslumbering God. Sing Psalters 344:2, 346:1, and 347:2.

### March 18 Read Isaiah 49:7-12

**Psalm 121:5-6** We are constantly under attack by Satan and his evil forces. These forces are present wherever we are. They are in our homes, schools, churches. They meet us as we go to work, school, or play. They have the ultimate in offensive weapons to bring us to destruction. But we need not fear. Our God who never sleeps is our keeper. He watches over us daily. He not only watches; He protects us from Satan's deadliest blows even as a tree will protect us from the sun's hottest rays. We need not fear Satan, for God is watching over us day and night. Let us not fear, but let us rejoice and bless Him who made the heaven and the earth. Sing Psalters 344:3, 345:2, and 347:3.

### March 19 Read Psalm 121

**Psalm 121:7-8** These two verses continue the thoughts of the meditation of yesterday. It almost seems as yesterday's verses concentrated upon physical attacks upon the child of God. Satan will do that. Though he can not do it without the will of God

as demonstrated in the book of Job. Today's verses seem to concentrate upon the spiritual. This should be of great concern and comfort for us. It should concern us because we sometimes forget about our spiritual lives. It is easy to think of the spiritual today seeing it is Sunday but what about tomorrow as we take up our lives in the world? Are we concerned about our spiritual lives and that of our children? It is comforting to know that Jehovah is watching over us every day and every hour of each day. Of this we can be certain. He will never fail us. Let us be thankful now and forever. Sing Psalters 344:4, 346:2, and 347:2.

### March 20 Read Psalm 122

**Psalm 122:1** People of God of all ages, are the words of today's verse found in your mouths? Do you say this, children? Young people, are you glad when it is Sunday? Adults, are you willing to spend the whole day in worship as we are commanded by the fourth commandment? David knew what it meant to not have the opportunity to frequent God's house. There were times in his life when he was prevented from going before the ark. And so when he was given the opportunity he was glad. We, too, should be glad to go to church, for in it we can find the peace that we desire. There we are fed with the spiritual food needed for our spiritual lives. Let us be glad and look forward until the Sabbath. And while we are waiting let us search the Scriptures daily. Sing Psalters 348:1 and 349:1.

### March 21 Read Ephesians 2:13-22

**Psalm 122:2-3** The old dispensation was a time of types and shadows. One of those shadows was the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was and is a picture of the church of all ages. From the physical geography of the city we see how God has provided for His church. The people of God felt safe and comfortable while they were there with fellow Israelites. Do we feel safe and comfortable while we are with fellow believers? This should be our experience, and if it is not we should find out why not. God has established a body of believers for its benefits. Let us make use of those benefits daily. Let us seek out God's people and fellowship with them. Sing Psalters 348:2 and 350:1-2.

### March 22 Read Deuteronomy 16:13-22

**Psalm 122:4-5** The spiritual life of Israel was guided by many laws and ordinances. While we do not have the same kinds of ordinances today (they are not needed because Christ has fulfilled them), we still can follow the principals of such ordinances. We must come together in God's house to thank Him for all His wonders and especially the wonder of salvation. We give thanks unto the name of God because it is a name that is above every name on this earth. In the church we find means of judgment of our spiritual affairs. Our church government has its basis in Christ and in God's Word. There is much to be thankful for as we frequent the house of God. We have opportunities far beyond any other time in history. Are we making use of it? Are we doing it willingly? Are we glad to go to God's house? Sing Psalters 348:3, 349:2, and 350:3.

### March 23 Read Isaiah 62:1-7

**Psalm 122:6** Do you pray for the peace of Christ's church? Do you pray this prayer often? Do you desire that God will answer this prayer positively? Notice the second part of this verse. Praying for peace is equated with loving the church. So maybe

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we need to ask, "Do you love the church?" These are weighty matters. To love the church is to make sure that no harm comes her way. This means we love the members of that church and pray for them. When there is love between the members, there will be peace within the church. There is a promise with this command to pray for peace and love the church. That promise is prosperity. No, this is not the material prosperity after which the world craves. This is the spiritual prosperity which we should desire and which we need. Praying for the peace of Zion will be blessed by God as we grow under that peace. Sing Psalms 348:4 and 350:4.

### March 24 Read Daniel 9:16-20

**Psalm 122:7** Daniel saw that peace in God's church would only be in the way of confession of sin and repentance from that sin. He prayed often for Israel's repentance as he was in captivity. He knew this as the only way of deliverance from that captivity. Do we pray for confession and repentance in the church and among the members of our congregations? We need to do this personally and corporately. Remaining in the way of sin will never bring peace to the church nor spiritual prosperity to its members. Let us follow Daniel's example, and pray for repentance from sin often. Sing Psalms 348:4 and 349:3.

### March 25 Read Psalm 122

**Psalm 122:8-9** We come to the end of this beautiful Psalm. We saw that attending church with the members of the congregation is a good thing. It will make us glad. We also saw that being within the members of that church will bring spiritual prosperity for God's people. Now we see that we are not alone as we worship. We worship with those around about us. The communion of saints must and will be evident in God's church. We do this because we love the church and our fellow members. We will seek their good. This may be in the way of encouragement. This may have to be in the way of admonishment. Doing these things is our calling for God who has blessed us by putting us within His people. Let us seek peace in our congregations and seek the good of the individual members. Sing Psalms 348:6, 349:4, and 350:5.

### March 26 Read Psalm 123

**Psalm 123:1-2** As we go to worship our God, we must have the proper attitude. We come to be fed by our maker and ruler. We are His servants. We are nothing without Him. This has great implications for our preparation for worship, our coming to worship, and the worshipping itself. What were we doing last night, people of God? How did we dress this morning? Did we enter God's house and conduct ourselves with reverence throughout the whole service? Were we ready to sit at our master's feet and hear what He had to say to us? Did we reverently bend the knee during prayer, singing, and the preaching? I do not mean a literal bending of the knee, but rather the figurative bending of the knee in worship to our sovereign God. Let us wait for the sure mercies of our God as we worship today. Sing Psalm 351:1.

### March 27 Read Luke 1:67-79

**Psalm 123:3-4** The old priest Zacharias knew what scorn meant. He and his wife had borne the reproach of being childless. He was a godly man in an age filled with ungodliness. It seemed if there was no hope for Israel. But he had hope. He was

waiting for the Messiah. And when his hope of a son was fulfilled, he knew that this was a sign of the Christ. Do we face scorn for living godly in a godless age? Do we long for the mercies of God even to the extent that those mercies will give to us our heavenly home either through death or the coming of Christ? God does not leave His people in scorn. He delivers them and sets them up on high. Let us like Zacharias wait with patience for the coming of our Christ. Sing Psalm 351:2.

### March 28 Read Psalm 124

**Psalm 124:1-3** Can we say with confidence that the Lord is on our side? Do we experience this daily as we walk through the afflictions of this life? Do we confess it before men? Think of Israel at the Red Sea. If the Lord had not been on their side, they would have been like Pharaoh's host. Think of David fleeing from Saul. He knew what it was to confess that God was on His side. God is on our side. Of that we may be confident. Let us live lives that show that we believe it. Let us pray for God to manifest Himself for us in the face of danger. God is on our side. What a blessed truth! Sing Psalms 352:1 and 353:1.

### March 29 Read Psalm Exodus 14:26-31

**Psalm 124:4-6** We considered Israel at the Red Sea yesterday. Think of their situation. Sometimes we might wonder how they could be so faithless. They had just been delivered from the heathen oppressors in a majestic way through the ten plagues. What was their reaction to Pharaoh's armies coming upon them? They thought that it looked hopeless. Are we any different? When health problems seem to overwhelm us, what is our reaction? When financial concerns mount up, do we throw up our hands in despair? When the wicked seem to have it all and we have nothing, what do we say? We must say, "Blessed be God who does not give us over unto our sins." We must do this daily and in each and every prayer. Do not despair, people of God, He is on our side! Sing Psalms 352:2 and 353:2.

### March 30 Read II Timothy 2:19-26

**Psalm 124:7** Satan is constantly trying to trap us. This has been the experience of every elect person from Adam to Abraham to Joseph to David to Job to Paul and many in between. Rest assured, young people, he is trying to trap you too. As you sit in your car, that radio can be a big trap. As you seek entertainment, that can trap you as well. Parents, you must stay out of the traps too. You must also help your children and young people escape Satan's clutches. Fear not, people of God. God is on our side. He will deliver us from Satan's hand. Our souls will be delivered unto the throne of grace with God's church of all ages. Sing Psalm 352:3.

### March 31 Read Philippians 2:5-11

**Psalm 124:8** What comforting words to end this Psalm! When we know that things may not look good in our eyes, we just have to remember that Our help is in God the creator of all things. These are also the closing words of a series of Psalms beginning with Psalm 121. It would be good for us to read through this series of four Psalms to get the whole message from God. It is a message of grace, of course. The fact that God is our help is only for the elect. It is a message of peace for them as well. Let us call upon His name daily both in our public and private prayers. He, who made us, is our help! Sing Psalm 352:4 and 353:3.

# Psalter 268—Thanksgiving and Praise

by Beth DeVries

**M**ake a Joyful noise unto the Lord! Psalm 100 begins this way and this is the Psalter versification which we consider this month. Although Psalm 100 is quite short with only 5 verses, there are many truths to be found in this passage. The theme is praise to God, but included is the truth of God's sovereign election and of His everlasting mercy.

All people on the earth are called to praise God. John Calvin in his commentary on this Psalm speaks of this as a prophecy referring to when the church is gathered from all nations. This implies that only those that are God's children can truly praise Him. In the first stanza of this Psalter versification it also speaks of serving God with mirth and telling His praise. This is something that can be done only by a heart that loves God. Those who do not love God will not spend their time or energy praising Him. We, as God's chosen people, come before Him and rejoice.

The Lord is God. We know this of a surety, the second stanza tells us. God did make us. That means each and every one of us. We often think that we came from our earthly parents but God gave us to our earthly parents as a gift. God did not need our help in the creation of Adam and Eve; therefore, He certainly does not need our help today either. It is very humbling to admit that we had no part in our birth and that each and every breath we take comes from God. God did not need us but, oh, how we need Him.

God gathers us as His sheep into His flock. God chose His elect before time as we read in Ephesians 1:4

“According as he hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” God then sent His only begotten Son to earn our salvation for us. Christ was doing the work of His Father in fulfilling God's decree. Jesus spoke frequently of the elect as His sheep and He as their shepherd. John 10 speaks of this in verses 14-18 and again in verses 25-30. John 10 also speaks of the fact that Jesus and the Father are one and that Jesus is doing the work of the Father. We know that no man can

pluck us from the protection and care of our God. It is beautiful to see how the idea of the sheep and their shepherd carries over from the Old Testament to the New Testament. We know that we shall always be cared for by our faithful shepherd.

The third stanza of Psalter 268 calls us to enter the gates with joy and proclaim praise in the courts of God. This would be a call to enter the sanctuary of God.

We are to go to God's house with praise and happiness in our hearts. When we think about the many wondrous things that God has done for us, especially His electing us, then how can we help but be joyful when we enter His house. God's praises should flow freely from our lips and fill us with joy. The joy that we find comes from the Psalms. The Psalms of God which we sing are filled with the comfort and encouragement that we need. God has truly provided the most adequate song book in the Psalms. Through the use of the Psalms we bless and magnify His name.

268 Thanksgiving and Praise

PSALM 100 L. M. OLD HUNDRETH Geneva Psalter

1. All peo - ple that on earth do dwell, Sing to the Lord with cheer - ful voice;  
 2. Know that the Lord is God in - deed; With - out our aid He did us make;  
 3. O - en - ter then His gates with joy. With - in His courts His praise pro - claim;  
 4. Be - cause the Lord our God is good, His mer - cy is for - ev - er sure;

Him serve with mirth, His praise forth tell. Come ye be - fore Him and re - joice.  
 We are His flock, He doth us feed, And for His sheep He doth us take.  
 Let thank - ful songs your tongues employ, O bless and mag - ni - fy His Name.  
 His truth at all times firm - ly stood, And shall from age to age en - dure.

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We are reminded in the closing stanza of this Psalter number that God is good to us. We have reflected on this briefly already, but I fear that we often forget how good God is to us. We seem to think that for some reason we deserve these good things from God. We soon forget that we are nothing without God and His love for us. It is good that God is merciful to us and full of compassion. This last stanza speaks of the mercy of God as forever sure or everlasting as the Psalm says. This is also a comfort to us because it means that God's mercy will not run out. God's truth has stood for many ages. God was faithful to His covenant people through all gen-

erations. We know that God will continue to be faithful to us as we often attempt to depart from Him.

We have much to be thankful for in this life. God continues to be good to us. God has chosen us as His sheep and will protect us till He takes us to heaven to be with Him. This truth will lead us to praise His most Holy Name. May we ever sing with thanksgiving and praise. ❖

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

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Where We Stand

## Unfruitful Branches

by Prof. Herman Hanko

*Reprinted from the Loveland PRC Newsletter Vol. 3, No. 14.*

*Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. (John 15:2)*

The comment and question which accompanied a request to have this verse discussed are most interesting and important. The comment is: "Arminians will quote [this text] as proof that people can lose their salvation." The question is: "How can a branch in Him not bear fruit?"

The question is predicated on the truth that the vine here in John 15 is Christ; and that is correct: "I am the vine," Jesus says, "and my Father is the husbandman." The question is, therefore: "How can anyone who is in Christ not bear fruit, and eventually be cut out of Christ?" It would seem, indeed, as if this text taught an Arminian doctrine of the falling away of saints.

In discussing other passages in Scripture in previous issues, we have had opportunity to discuss with our readers the *organic* idea which pervades all of Scripture. It is, admittedly, somewhat difficult to begin to think in these terms; but it is so essential to a proper understanding of God's Word that we turn to it again.

Let us begin by examining an organism in creation. A tree is an organism. It is one tree although it is composed of many different parts. All the parts, however, function and work together, united by one principle of life.

Yet, in that tree are branches that bear leaves and perhaps some kind of fruit; there are also branches that do not. There are branches that live; there are branches that die. The dead branches, sooner or later, are blown off by the wind. Yet, the dead branches were once a part of the tree.

Scripture uses the same figure to describe the church of Christ both in the old and in the new dispensation. In Psalm 80, e.g., the nation of Israel, the church in the old dispensation (Acts 7:38), is described as a vine which God took out of Egypt and planted in Canaan, but which was torn down. Just as in the nation there were righteous and wicked, so in the vine there are fruit-bearing branches and dead branches. But *the whole nation* suffered under heathen oppressors and was finally taken into captivity.

The same figure appears in Isaiah 5:1-7—which passage our readers are urged to look up.

In the New Testament, in Romans 11, Paul uses the figure of two olive trees, the one a natural tree and the other a wild tree. The natural tree is the nation of Israel; the wild olive tree is the Gentile world. Out of the natu-

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ral tree God cuts branches; out of the wild tree He takes branches to graft in to the natural olive tree.

In John 15 Jesus is talking about the nation of Israel as the branches of the vine. That nation lived for hundreds of years as a nation. But the branches that did not bear fruit, and would not bear fruit are cut off.

How is it that in some sense the whole nation could be said to be “in the vine?”—whether they were wicked or righteous?

That is possible because Christ Himself was in the nation of Israel from the very beginning. As far as His human nature was concerned, Christ was present in that nation. He was, in fact, the root of that nation; the purpose of that nation’s existence; the reason why God cared for that nation. Really, because Christ was in that nation according to His human nature from its very beginning, Christ was always the life of that nation. But always those who are not really a part of Christ were cut off.

I can only comment very briefly on the application of this great truth, but it ought to be pondered again and again by all who love God’s Word.

In a way, the church is always such an organism. When Paul speaks of the Gentiles as wild branches grafted into the olive tree, he makes it very clear that these branches are generations. God does not graft in individuals. He grafts into the church generations. These generations are branches—with their little branches shooting off, which in turn produce little branches.

Believers are always deeply concerned about the salvation of their children—and children’s children in the line of generations. God saves in the line of generations. God establishes His covenant in the line of generations. That is our blessed hope. ❖

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*Prof. Hanko is an emeritus professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.*

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Church History

# Early Church History— Tertullian

by Rev. John A. Heys

*Reprinted from the July, 1946 issue of Beacon Lights.*

One of the great if not the greatest of the Latin Apologists was Tertullian. You will recall that as we pointed out before, the Apologists were men in the New Testament church who defended Christianity against the attacks hurled at it by its enemies in the early years of the New Testament church when Christianity was a relatively new doctrine.

Tertullian was born in Carthage in 150 A.D. and is reported to have died between the years 220 and 240 A.D. Little is known of his early life. This much is plain, that he received an excellent education. His conversion to Christianity was sudden and decisive. In the year 207 he was ordained as a presbyter in the church in Carthage. Later in life he broke away from the established church and joined the sect of the Montanists. In one of our next

installments we will have occasion to speak more of this Montanism which Tertullian championed and Gnosticism which he attacked with all the power that was in him.

Tertullian, without a doubt, was a very talented man. His works, which are still in existence, number thirty-seven and show great ability. There are other books which were written by him, but they have become lost and it cannot be determined exactly how many books he did write. His writing is very powerful and shows him to be a man who is not easily frightened by his enemies. When he wrote, he did not beg for attention. So forceful is his writing that by its power he commands attention.

In his work “Ad Nationem” he defended the Christians overagainst various evil accusations which were heaped upon them in his days. In this work he proved that these accusations were based on unreasoning ha-

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tred only. There was, for example, the accusation that the Christians were the cause of earthquakes. This accusation, by the way, reveals how foolish the carnal mind is, full of superstition and evil intent. In answer to this particular accusation Tertullian pointed out the fact that there were many earthquakes before Christianity ever made its appearance in the history of the world. He also pointed out in regard to another accusation hurled at God's people that there are no witnesses to the crimes of which the Christians were accused.

A few of the fundamental truths that you and I believe and which Tertullian taught may be found in the seventeenth chapter of his book "Apologeticus". He declared that there is one God who is Creator, Invisible and Infinite. He maintained that we have a testimony older than anything the heathen can produce. This testimony is the "Sacred Book", the Bible which is of divine

origin. The fulfillment of prophecy, he maintained, is proof that it is of divine origin. Of Christ he said that He was God, the Word of God and was born of a virgin. One interesting point that he makes is that the epistle to the Hebrews was written by Barnabas. Most commentators ascribe it to the apostle Paul, but who its author is cannot be determined. Tertullian insisted that it was written by Barnabas.

Beginning in our next installment we will consider more closely a few of the heresies that were prevalent in these early years of the New Testament church, together with the defense the church presented against these false doctrines. ❖

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

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# Synodal Reformed Church of Tytsjerk

by J.P. deKlerk

**T**his is an interesting Church building because you find remnants of different styles together: Romanesque, Gothic, and Rococo.

Tytsjerk is a village in the Dutch province of Friesland, which began as a Germanic tribe living along the coast of the North Sea, already before Christ was born. They were governed by the Romans who forced them to give them a big amount of ox hides once a year. In the year 28, they rose against the enforced obedience, but in 47 they were again subjected to the will of Rome. This went on for centuries, until they had their own king Radboud, who was an outspoken enemy of Christianity (he died in 719). Tradesmen from Friesland went with their ships to France and England. In 795 came king Charles the Great with his armies from France and took over; he ordered everybody to become a Christian, but many people in Friesland hated him (in 800 he became emperor over almost the whole of Europe). Many wars followed, until in 1523 the German emperor, Charles V, took over. In 1580 came Prince William of Orange-Nassau and the Reformation.

Somewhere amongst the turmoil came the Church of Tytsjerk into existence. ❖



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



The 75th Anniversary Celebration is less than one year away. The dates are, D.V., June 19-23, 2000. Plans are already being finalized for this historic time in our churches. God has truly given us a heritage for which we are to be thankful.

The Celebration has been organized to include many worthwhile spiritual activities as well as recreational activities. There will also be an international flavor with fellow believers attending, the Lord willing, from Singapore, Australia, and possibly other countries. We encourage you to bring your entire family to stay on campus. If you cannot stay on campus, we would welcome you to come for as many days as possible.

The daily schedule and activities being planned are as follows:

**MONDAY**

- Noon to 4:00PM      Registration, check-in, and free time to enjoy fellowship
- 5:00-6:00PM        Dinner
- 7:30-9:00PM        Evening Program
  - Church History Video Commemorating Our 75 Year History
  - Keynote Address presented by Mr. Cal Kalsbeek
- 9:00-11:00PM      Time for Fellowship

**TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY**

- 7:00AM                Morning Devotions
- 7:30-8:30AM        Breakfast
- 9:30-11:00AM      Children’s Bible School and Adult Sectionals
  - Children ages 3-14 will break out into sectionals to discuss Christian Armor, work on appropriate crafts, sing, and make new friends.
  - Adults will break out into several different sectionals, including topics on Singapore, Pittsburgh, Spokane, Missions Overview, Group Singing, Devotions for Men & Women, Evangelism, Scriptorium (Old Manuscripts), Organist/Pianist Recital (share music and play), and Historical Overview of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

The sectionals are an opportunity to learn, discuss, and share ideas about the above areas. Each sectional would have a moderator that would start with a short overview of the sectional. The moderator would then lead a discussion or a question/answer session on the subject. This is a wonderful opportunity to enjoy fellowship with other members of the same faith. You will meet new individuals and share your thoughts and opinions on the subject of the sectional. The sectionals would be repeated the mornings of Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday which would allow all attendees an opportunity to participate in several of the sectionals throughout the Celebration.

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- 11:30AM-12:30PM Lunch
- 1:00-4:30PM Field Day or Leisure Activities
- For the children and adults we have the following planned
    - Competition softball for the children
    - Competition soccer for the children
    - Competition volleyball for the adults
  - Leisure Activities include:
    - Volleyball - unstructured
    - Pool/Gym
    - Church Tour, visit old First Church in Grand Rapids, and Seminary Tour.
    - Horseshoes
    - Boccee Ball
    - Photo/Nature Trail
    - Care Packages for Myanmar. We are looking for volunteers to put together small first aid and health kits to be shipped to Myanmar. We would ask all Celebration attendees to bring a small item for donation. Volunteers would sort, package, and box up small kits for shipping. We are also looking for donations to cover shipping costs.
    - Organ Recitals
    - Auto Harp
    - Animal Kingdom Videos (rainy day activity)
    - Closest to the Pin Contest
    - Off campus, unstructured opportunities include shopping, golf, Fredrick Meijer Gardens, Van Andel Museum, Grand Rapids Children Museum, Gerald R. Ford Museum, and much more.

5:00-6:00PM

Dinner

7:30-8:30PM

Evening Program

- Singing
- Announcements
- Tuesday's Speech: Based on the Celebration theme *Living Out Of Our Heritage* on the topic of *A Beautiful Heritage* by Rev. Jason Kortering
- Wednesday's Speech: Based on the Celebration theme *Living Out Of Our Heritage* on the topic *A Present Necessity* by Professor David Engelsma

9:00-11:00PM

Time for fellowship

## **THURSDAY**

7:00AM

Morning Devotions

7:30AM-12:30PM

Breakfast, Children's Bible School, Adult Sectionals and Lunch are the same as Tuesday and Wednesday.

1:00-4:30PM

Family Fun Day or Leisure Activities

- Moonwalk
- Powerball
- Velcro Wall

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- Kids Caterpillar
  - Bungee Run
  - Rock Climbing Wall
  - Giant Slide
  - Pony Rides
  - Face Painting
  - Caricature Drawings
- 5:00-6:00PM Dinner
- 8:00-9:00PM Evening Program (later time to accommodate Young People's Banquet)
- Singing
  - Announcements
  - Speech: Based on the Celebration theme *Living Out Of Our Heritage* on the topic *A Sure Light For The Future* by Rev. Carl Haak
- 9:30-11:00PM Time for fellowship

**FRIDAY**

- 7:00AM Morning Devotions
- 7:30-8:30AM Breakfast
- 9:00-11:00AM Pack up and say goodbye to old and new friends

The celebration week is full of many spiritual and recreational activities for the whole family to enjoy. That is why we recommend staying on campus. It is a wonderful way to make new relationships with other believers from throughout God's world. In conjunction with the celebration, the Young People's Convention will be held the same time and place, but they will have designated dorms for their lodging and many separate activities. The young people will already be there so make this a family week.

Even though the registration deadline has passed there is still time to reserve your place during this celebration week. We do ask that everyone who plans to attend the celebration fill out a registration form so we can obtain an accurate count of those attending. Registration forms should be available in your church or you may contact us at 1-800-527-8243 and request one.

We believe that this 75th Anniversary Celebration will be something that your family will enjoy reminiscing about for many years. We also pray that God will use this to strengthen each of us in our faith and encourage us for His work in the future.

The 75th Anniversary Committee

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*The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places: yea, I have a goodly heritage. Ps. 16:6.*

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# Church News

## BAPTISMS

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

*Mark 16:16*

### **The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:**

Nathan Paul, son of Mr. & Mrs. Doug Kaiser—Byron Center, MI  
Anna Ruth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. John Marcus—Byron Center, MI  
Lisa Nicole, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mark Oomkes—Byron Center, MI  
Levi Pieter, son of Mr. & Mrs. Pieter Kalkman—Edmonton, Alberta, Canada  
Melinda Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Herman Klaassens—Edmonton, Alberta, Canada  
Alex James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Griess—Loveland, CO  
Lisa Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Travis Maas—Lynden, WA  
Devin Kenneth, son of Mr. & Mrs. Vern Maas Jr.—Lynden, WA  
Hannah Renae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Rick Span—Lynden, WA  
Faith Noelle, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Chris Bauer—Peace, IL  
Caleb John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dave Moore—Peace, IL

## CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

*“...and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”*

*Romans 10:10*

### **Public profession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made by:**

Hilary Wiersma—Doon, IA  
Christiana DeJong—Holland, MI  
Amber Terpstra—Holland, MI  
Jeanine Boeve—Holland, MI  
Jack Kooienga—Loveland, CO  
Joseph Kuiper—Southwest, MI

## MARRIAGES

*“...and they twain shall be one flesh.”*

*Matthew 19:5*

### **United in the bonds of Holy Matrimony were:**

Mr. Joshua Lubbers and Miss Sarah Kuiper—Southwest, MI

## A Time of War Antithesis (1)

The night was warm and the air was still, so that when an eerie shriek came from the backyard, we could hear it in the house very clearly.

"What was *that*?" said my little sister. She was visibly shaken by the horrible sound. So was I, though I wouldn't admit it. But before Father could answer, another terrible whine came to our ears, and then another. It sounded unearthly!

Father seemed unconcerned as he said, "Oh, I imagine the neighbor's cat, Whiskers, is on the prowl. He must have met up with a stray cat."

The sounds escalated into a full-fledged fight. Sally covered her ears. "Poor Whiskers!" she said.

"Don't worry about Whiskers. He's a strong, healthy cat. They won't fight very long," Father assured her. And Father's words proved true. Abruptly the noise stopped.

"Why do animals fight like that?" Sally asked. "That was awful!"

Father smiled. "It's not very different from a brother and sister I know who fight sometimes," he said. I sheepishly looked at Sally, but she didn't seem to comprehend the mild reprimand. "But I think Whiskers was defending his territory tonight," Father continued. "He doesn't like to have strangers around."

Sally and I nodded. That seemed to make sense.

Father thought for awhile. "We have to fight to defend some things, too" he added. "We have to defend the truth of the Gospel. And we have to separate ourselves from the worldliness all around us." He pointed to us and exclaimed, "You need helmets, breastplates, swords, and shields!"

Sally's and my eyes grew wide with the picture Father had put in our minds. Was he teasing? Where would we get these things?

"And then there's the battle we have with our own sin on top of it all," he continued. "It's a war. It's called the 'antithesis'."

Father wasn't teasing. In fact, he was very serious. He looked at us and nodded. "It's good for us to think about these things," he said. "You're not too little for this spiritual fight, you know."

# "LITTLE LIGHTS"

*... let it shine!*

by Connie Meyer

It made me feel brave to hear him talk like that. But I still wasn't sure I understood it all... ❖

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



**Find the following underlined words from James 4:4b, 7 in the puzzle below:**

"...know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

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

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**“Living out of our  
Heritage as young  
people”**

**2000**

**PRC Young Peoples’  
Convention**

This year’s convention (June 19-23) will be held at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, D.V. Many exciting activities are planned including a trip to Michigan’s Adventure theme park, ice-skating, and an outing at beautiful Lake Michigan. The convention speakers will be Prof. Engelsma, Rev. Haak, and Rev. Kortering. Sign up now for a week of fun and fellowship.