
Beacon

November
2005

Volume LXIV
Number 10

Lights

“...When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? Then ye shall let your children know, ... That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever.

Joshua 4:21b-22a & 24

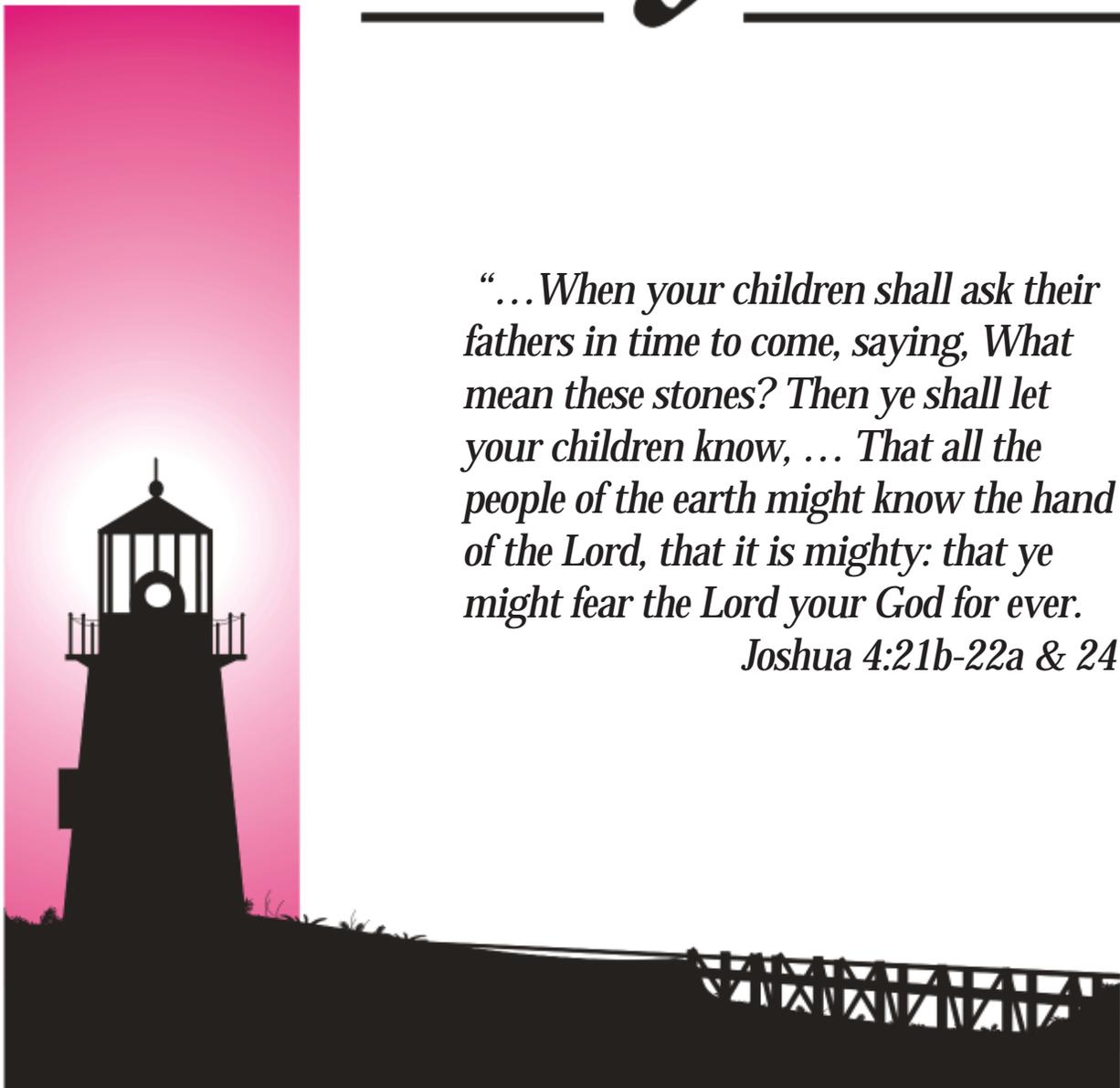


Table of Contents

	EDITORIAL
3	Stones of Remembrance
	LETTER TO THE EDITOR
6	History Relocation
	CONSIDER THE CREATION
7	Be Still MySoul
	CHURCH PROFILE
9	Doon Protestant Reformed Church
	DEVOTIONAL
11	Watching Daily At My Gates
	FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY
18	Holding the Traditions (1)
	MEMOIR OF REV. C. HANKO
20	Chapter 6: World War I
	CHURCH FAMILY
19	What Happens in Zimbabwe?
	CHURCH HISTORY
23	George M. Ophoff (26): Polemicist
	CHURCH NEWS
26	Church News
	LITTLE LIGHTS
27	The Ploughboy (8)

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Beacon Lights is published monthly by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies. Subscription price is \$10.00. Please send all correspondence, address changes, subscriptions, and article submissions to the business office.

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Stones of Remembrance

by Tom Cammenga



It seems that in their life men and women throughout time have felt a strong compulsion to leave their mark on, as well as in the world around them. To leave some type of testimony in his or her wake that will attest to their existence at one point or another in history. Probably we could point to the tower of Babel as one of the first manifestations of this. Genesis 11:4 tells us; “And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.” And that same story has repeated itself throughout history with the Pharaohs of Egypt and their pyramids and great cities, Nebuchadnezzar and his hanging gardens, Alexander the Great and his mighty conquests just to name a few. Today we have libraries, hospitals, museums, and sports arenas prominently bearing the names of famous men and women. All too often these are a vain attempt to establish a name in the earth for today, and especially for tomorrow. In one way or another these are determined to extend their lives and names beyond the grave, leaving behind a permanent mark of their existence. And it seems to succeed. Who today doesn’t know of the Pharaohs or Alexander the Great or who in Michigan at the least doesn’t know the name VanAndel or DeVos? Truly these men and women have done wonderful things and have contributed much to humanity. Of that there is no doubt. But the question can be asked, for what purpose? To what end do they do these things? Certainly we are able to speculate based on their overall lives and values but in reality we must leave this question to God and their own consciences.

We can and must however pose these same questions to ourselves. What memorials will I leave along the pathway of my life? What will my friends, my children and grandchildren see when they look at the life I have lived? What will be the legacy that I leave behind? Assuming those memorials have been left; and they have I assure you, what was the purpose and motivation in doing so? In order to answer these questions however we must understand what these memorials are as well as the proper motivation by which we are driven to erect them.

The memorials that we leave will certainly vary in number and in type, just as each individual varies from others. They will invariably be the result of our triumphs and failures, our victories and defeats. Often the great memorials we leave are made up of smaller memorials that are sometimes easier to miss. I have in mind the married life of a Christian man and woman. The great monument visible to all is the many happy years of marriage this couple has been blessed with and the great goodness the Lord has shown to them over that time. But when examined more closely we see many other things that do not immediately stand out. There are the children the Lord has given or perhaps taken away. There are the years of service to the church through the special offices by the man, the selfless love and devotion shown by the woman in her care of her husband and family, and even the incredible compassion shown in caring for each other when sick or building each other up in times of sorrow or hardship. There is the hour upon hour spent in quiet prayer or mutual study of the Word of God. So are many of the memorials in our lives.

It is important to note here however that memorials are not strictly positive in nature. In other words, not every memorial we leave behind is good, though

When a young person is seen
walking into a theater, they leave
a memorial.

that must be our goal. A memorial by definition is simply something that serves to remind of certain events or persons. That being the case it is very easy for us, in fact I would say much easier, to leave negative rather than positive memorials. When a young person is seen walking into a theater, they leave a memorial. When an individual is heard cursing and swearing, taking the Lord's name in vain, they leave a memorial. A young man or woman, refusing to obey parents and walking in open rebellion to them, leaves a memorial. When a husband or wife verbally or physically abuses their spouse, they leave a memorial. So you see everything we do can be seen as a memorial. Any and all of our actions serve to identify to fellow believers as well as to the world around us, to whom our allegiance belongs and to whom we give glory when we raise our memorials. This is a sobering thought indeed when viewed in the light of scripture. In Psalm 62:12 we read, "Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work." And in Revelation 22:12 an even sharper reminder from Jesus Christ himself; "And, Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." The sharpness in this verse is brought out in the following verses (14 and 15) where distinction is made between those who will enter the gates of the city and those who will not. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosesoever loveth and maketh a lie." Again I would ask; what memorials do we leave in our lives?

What then motivates us to leave memorials? And really the question should be what motivates us to leave good, God glorifying memorials? Is it the motivation of the families of the sons of Noah in the building up of Babel or is our purpose and humble goal that of the Israelites in the setting up of the memorial in Gilgal?

Having just passed through the Jordan on dry ground, emerging on the western shore, one man chosen from each of the twelve tribes placed the stone that he had picked up from the middle of the river there on the shore in Gilgal. The reason the Lord commanded this is found in Joshua 4:6 and 7: "That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever." Notice that the Lord says, "*when* your children *shall* ask..." He doesn't say *if* but *shall*! There is no question that they will ask. They will see this memorial and they will ask why it is there and what it means. Therefore too we must be ready to explain, to give advice, and to give wise counsel when these questions are asked.

It is also critical for us to understand that these memorials cannot be hastily thrown up with a haphazard attitude only to continue on our way through life, at least if they are to be positive, God glorifying memorials. Again I will say that this must be our goal. These must be conscious acts of thankfulness on our part. You can be sure that Joshua did not haphazardly set up or lay out the stones at Gilgal. Certainly he did not take each of the twelve stones so carefully taken from the dry riverbed and throw them on a heap. If we look at verse 20 of Joshua 4 the word *pitch* is used. Even though this word can and does often refer to something being thrown (i.e. a ball) I believe the correct interpretation of it here is the setting of the stones in a firm position or to establish them. Remember, the children of these people that were now gathered around Joshua would ask their parents and elders what these stones meant in the years to come. In order for that to take place this memorial must needs be set up in such a way that it would last for many years, even for ever as seen in verse 7 of Joshua 4.

By no means though were these stones a reminder simply of the experience of the Jordan crossing, though they were indeed that. Imagine if you will for a moment the excitement and conviction with which the story must surely have been told, over and over again. "What do these

stones mean?” How the Lord had brought on the Egyptians the Ten Plagues and thereby occasioned the exodus of the Israelites; the parting of the Red Sea and the cloud of smoke and fire by which God led Israel; the constant supply of manna and quail and the water from the rock by which God sustained Israel; the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. And finally that great deliverance wrought by God as he delivered his chosen people at last into the promised land. What an amazing and incredible memorial! Still more they were and still are today a memorial to the faithfulness of God to his people. Having traversed the difficult and often ravaging path of this life, finally brought to the brink of the promised land the child of God must walk headlong into this memorial. What a comfort to us as we stand on the brink of death to behold those stones on the far shore.

What was the reason then for this memorial at Gilgal and why do we strive as Christians to set up positive memorials? We find the two-fold answer to this question in the last verse of Joshua 4; “That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever.”

First of all it serves as a witness to the world around of the might and greatness of the Lord. Be assured that the people inhabiting this area were well aware of what those stones in Gilgal represented. They were well acquainted with the history of this people and with the awesome power of their God. This is plain from Joshua 5:1 where we read; “And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them anymore, because of the children of Israel.” Not only were they aware of these things but “their heart *melted!*” This was not a melting to repentance of course but was that which God spoke of in Exodus 23:27. We read there; “I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee.” God make it so in our lives as well that the world around us may know of the power and might of our God by the memorials we have set up and that their hardened and cold hearts may be melted, even to repentance if it is His will.

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Secondly, these memorials serve as a source of comfort to the church as well as constant reminders to each of us of God’s goodness to us. Oh how the children of Israel needed this! How often they had witnessed and even had personal experience of God’s greatness and power only to run off after other gods and frolic in the fields of sin. We can often shake our heads in amazement as we consider this but we need only turn our eyes to ourselves to realize that we are no better. So also we are needful of those stones. We are needful of the reminders, even constant reminders of God’s wonder-working in our lives and our total dependence on Him. We need to hear the stories told again and again that we may be brought to our knees in the knowledge of our great need.

It is not possible, however, for us to set up these positive memorials in and of ourselves. Not only does God graciously work in our lives giving occasion for those memorials but also by His grace and mercy He enables us to pick up the stones from the midst of Jordan and to pitch them in Gilgal.

Do you see those stones in your own life and in the lives of others in the church? As you stand on the brink of the raging river, do your weary eyes come to rest on those grace-polished stones pitched on the far shore? If you are a child of God then the answer to this question is yes, only by the grace of God, wholly undeserved and unmerited, completely outside of your own works and ability. Thanks be to God for these stones of grace, polished to a brilliance beyond compare, reflecting the beauty and omnipotence of our great God and Father in heaven. ❖

History Relocation

Dear Editor

I am very much enjoying the reminiscences of the late Rev. Cornelius Hanks in the *Beacon Lights* as edited by his granddaughter, Karen Van Baren.

In Chapter 2, which appeared in the July 2005 *Beacon Lights*, I happened to notice an error on the map on page 8. Eastern Avenue Church (Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church) should have been moved one block north (a little confusing since the map did not take the usual orientation of north being “up”).

That church was, and is, on Eastern Avenue between Logan and Bemis Streets in Grand Rapids, not between Bemis and Baxter.

The old First Protestant Reformed Church appears on the map, but Rev. Hanks is talking about a time before that church was even built. Old First Church is in the right spot on the map and still exists in the real, but who knows for how long? It is in much disrepair. The parsonage for that church, where Rev. Herman Hoeksema lived, is not shown on the map. It is to the left of the church on Franklin, and it can still be seen by anyone who wants to take a trip to Franklin and Fuller.

I went to see the Eastern Avenue CRC one morning in 1997 on the #4 bus because I wanted to get off the bus and really look around and study it for awhile. In hand I had Gertrude Hoeksema’s biography of Rev. Herman Hoeksema, *Therefore Have I Spoken*, showing an old photograph of the church and the old parsonage to the left of it where Rev. Hoeksema’s family once lived.

Imagine my surprise one day when riding the #4 south on Eastern Avenue several years later, I saw that the parsonage was up out of its foundation! I found out it was being moved. Eastern Avenue CRC decided to use the land to the left of their

church to build a spacious new community ministry center with classrooms, space for dinners, etc., and they did build this addition once the old parsonage was moved north on Eastern Avenue about a half-block and on the other side of the street. It is in use today by CRC seminarians who have an interest in ministry to the inner city.

I am surprised that aside from one 75th anniversary tour of First Church, no tours of these areas are ever officially given. Such sites help to make the history of the denomination come alive! I would suggest mornings Monday through Friday when the streets are fairly quiet.

I am enclosing some photos taken this summer of the relocated parsonage as well as the church and its new addition (the addition was completed about the spring of 2001). I’m sure many in the Protestant Reformed Churches have never laid eyes on these places.

Therefore Have I Spoken, which is my favorite RFPA book, is no longer in print. The RFPA sold out of all its copies several years ago. It is, of course, a rare book now. Don’t give a copy away to some yard sale—either your copy or one belonging to your parents or grandparents. This is historically valuable, and if you are planning a trip to see the old locations, this is the thing to have with you. This book is definitely worthwhile reprinting, and perhaps for some Protestant Reformed anniversary, it would be appropriate to do that, if not sooner. Any reprint does need to be indexed, however, and a list of photos and their locations in the book prepared as well.

Besides the account of the difficult childhood from which Hoeksema emerged and the many obstacles he had to overcome before the common grace controversy ever broke out with the CRC, *Therefore Have I Spoken* tells us many fascinating things about Rev. Hoeksema that are found



Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church as it stands today. The original church is seen to the right of the middle sidewalk tree. To the left of that tree is the church’s new, attached community center addition. The attempt to make the addition blend in with the old church architecture was very successful. This was where Rev. Herman Hoeksema was a minister when he was illegally deposed by a CRC Classis.

nowhere else, and the historic photos are a treasure. Don't try to find the church Hoeksema first served as a CRC minister in Holland, Michigan, however. I tried to locate it, based on the picture in the book, at the cost of a lot of shoe leather. It turns out that it was taken down some years ago and a new church built in its place.

Sincerely,
Natalie Jefferson ❖



The old parsonage, formerly next to Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church, now houses CRC seminary students doing inner city ministry. Rev. Herman Hoeksema and his family once lived in this home.

Consider the Creation

Be Still my Soul

by Trisha Haak

“Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?” Psalm 42.11.

When I walk through the forest on a warm summer morning, I find that it may be a hard thing to catch a glimpse of a songbird. They blend so well with the foliage and they flutter and fly so quickly from branch to branch that it takes a careful patient eye to spot them. It seems to me that their movements are the discontented notes of some mad composer. These little creatures are hardly ever still as they fly up and down the octaves of the forest trees.

I feel at times as though I can relate and that their characteristics are patterned after my own soul. They are as familiar to me as the faces of the ones that I love. The disquieted notes of the songbirds translate into echoes that reverberate through my mind. How often my soul flutters and flies within me, I cannot count and the restlessness of my soul is more science than fiction.

As I continue to walk through the forest I stop along a still pool that reflects the trees and the sky in all different shades of metallic silver and brown. I look at the dark glass surface of the water, hoping to see the reflection of the birds as they fly overhead among the branches. Yet when I look down, I see no reflection of birds and trees but only my face staring back at me. And somehow, I am not surprised.

Our souls are such hard creatures to keep still within us. By the nature that is ours through birth, our minds

are not natural hosts that culture content thoughts that rest in the design of God. The reaction that too frequently flows from our hearts causes us to buck against the will of God and struggle against the current of His divine plan.

For some, true contentment in the will of Christ is at best isolated moments that visit them at irregular intervals in their lives. For others, contentment is a bridge that merely takes them from one struggle in their life to another. And for a few people, honest contentment of the biblical nature is a foundation that upholds them through their entire life and on which their beliefs, ideas, hopes, and desires are built.

It is easy for us to be content when we have what we want. We live at ease when all our cupboards are full, when there is more than enough money in our savings account, and when no untidy situations are linked to our name or the names of those that we love. But that contentment belongs to the world and is really nothing more than an illusion. We may think at those moments that we are content but in truth we are frightened; frightened that these things will be taken away from us, that we will be stripped naked of all that we have. And it is hard to stand before God when our sins have revealed to us how naked we really are.

How content would we be if we did not live the affluent lifestyles that we do? If we only had one can of food in our cupboard for the week instead of multiples, how well would we sleep at night? What if we had to

live without the little amenities that soften the harsh conditions of this life? Well, no matter, for God has, in His wisdom, chosen us to live in the age that we do—in rich capitalist America, where gain is religion and success is creed. We live in a society where the state of contentment is a goal that we reach later in life after we have earned our millions and established our name. This is the age of wandering eyes, of always wanting what we don't have and structuring our lives so that we may pursue what we actually don't need. And the challenge of living in such an age is as great as any that those before us have had to endure. Can our slovenly minds, which are dulled by the wealth of this world, find peace in the will of God and live every day in the knowledge of the sufficiency of His grace? Or will we rather adapt to the philosophy of man and every day desire more than we need?

Our minds so often assault us with lies that the devil whispered to Eve in the Garden of Eden. We believe them to be true and able to make us gods unto ourselves. We believe these lies regardless of what shape they come in and no matter how many times they are proven false. It seems as though it is too hard of a lesson for us to learn. Advertisements show us what we lack and what we need to possess. Our minds are so ready and so willing to believe them.

So every day we are beset by enemies in front of us and behind us and everywhere we go. So many strong bulls of Bashan are ready to charge at us from every angle. And yet none are as strong as the ones inside our heads.

* * * * *

“For thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.” Psalm 9:10.

A Christian without contentment is an improbable sum, an equation that just won't add up or reach a conclusion. We cannot foresee our needs nor arrange solutions that will work towards the good of our salvation. We are too limited, too lacking in knowledge, and in all honesty, too biased to choose those things that will bring us closer to Christ. If given the opportunity, we would choose circumstances and possessions based on the desires of our human hearts and not on what is spiritual and eternal. And in the end those things that we would choose would endanger the exercise of our personal devotions and cause a rift in our prayer life that would leave us feeling empty and void. It is too risky for us to try to place our lives in our own hands. There is too much to lose that we can't afford to live without.

Contentment outside of the knowledge of Christ is more than improbable. It is impossible. No man can look at himself with honest eyes and like what he sees. Even if he is self-centered and narcissist that is all the more proof that he is unhappy with who he is. He only loves himself so much for the fear that no one else will. The world says to be happy with who you are, but outside of Christ who can be? I can only measure myself by my failures, my inability to consistently think of others, and my shortcomings in godly living that leave me frustrated and angry at myself. I cannot be happy with who I am because I can't even find myself under the filth of my own sins.

The only happiness that I have known is when I am seeking the face of God. All other forms of happiness are facades and peculiar types that erode with the hours of the day. But when I seek the face of God, there is a happiness that grasps my soul in a comfort that I can recognize as being eternal.

* * * * *

“And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.” Mark 4:39.

I have searched so many places for contentment. It was given to me to desire the peace that passes all understanding because I knew it was the key to living godly in Christ Jesus.

And this is where I finally found it: in my darkest hour. When the sky was a palpable black and the only light that visited the earth was that of the lightening shooting out of the storm clouds. My life, I thought. Prevailed against me. My sin, I believed, would consume me. Satan, I cried, would surely overwhelm me. And the winds swept higher and higher and the storms clouds gathered faster and faster until the warmth of the sun was only a distant memory for me.

It was too hard to stand because the storm of my sins had beaten me down into the face of the earth so far. I had not even the strength to reach out my hand. I was so low because I knew that it was my own design that had brought me here.

And yet the mercies of God were able, more than able, to penetrate the deep darkness of my sins until finally I felt the warmth of the light of His Son against my skin. God taught my heart to pray, Save me, again, and again, and again. And I know that I shall never stop saying these words till the day that I die.

My thankful heart knows salvation and at times this knowledge is too much for me. I was given peace when

I was the most undeserving. I found contentment when I should have been banished from the sight of God forever. I found it in the eye of the hurricane.

* * * * *

“When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.” Isaiah 41:1, 18

When the sun came out again I saw the truth of His word so brightly before my eyes. I don’t know how I didn’t see it before but it was there. And this is that truth: we have been given large reservoirs of healing waters in the gift of Christ and His sacrifice. Each drop of water is His word. Each cupful that we drink from these pools is the knowledge of God’s love for us through the death of His Son. What we thought were mirages that our fingers could never touch are really tangible truths that we will grasp for all eternity. And we are fools if we do not take advantage of such.

Soon the storm clouds dispersed and left the sky as quickly as they had come. A whole myriad of dark gray clouds that gathered, then ten, then five, then two, then none. And I watched the song birds shake the rain off their feathers in two rebellious quivers, beat the winds in three measures and lift themselves on the edge of the wind flying into the light of the brightness of the sun. They did not hesitate or falter. They did not doubt the hand of God as he directed the pull of gravity, the strength of the wind, or the craftsmanship of their wings. They flew because they were born for such and it was given to them to fly and they did. He lifts the songbirds on high and the beauty of His hand guiding them amazes me.

Even more beautiful still is the truth that His hand guides me and directs me in ways of love that fortify my salvation in the blood of His son. And they are the ways of peace, of a contentment that will not doubt or falter. God gives unto His children peace now, and tomorrow, and forever in eternity.

Be still my soul. ❖

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

Church Profile

Doon Protestant Reformed Church

by Mrs. A. H. Klein and Mrs. Vi De Boer

Doon PRC’s history began in the year 1926 with a meeting on March 17. Rev. Danhof, minister of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hull, presided over the meeting to organize the Protestant Reformed Church of Doon. The membership was comprised of seven families and four individuals for a total of fifty-two souls. “For who hath despised the day of small things?” (Zech. 4:10). our Lord admonishes us! At this same meeting, a consistory of two elders and two deacons was elected. Later that year, the congregation officially adopted the name Doon Protestant Reformed Church.

Three years of vacancy finally ended when Rev. J. De Jong accepted the call to come Doon in October of 1929. It was at this time the local Baptist church on Main Street became available for sale and the Doon PRC made the purchase of the cold, drafty place of worship. Re-

modeling was done and the same building served as the sanctuary, catechism room, and society meeting place until 1975. Old leather padded theatre seats made for comfortable, (although somewhat sticky in the summer), individual seating. No crowding extra bodies into any rows! Weary and often discouraged in a struggling congregation, the men labored faithfully and God gave the grace for the group to continue.

After only three years, Rev. De Jong left the young congregation. Vacancy again was their lot for two years. Rev. Lubbers arrived in 1934 and stayed until 1937. This was the time of the Great Depression and often the minister’s “salary” was meat or garden produce from the local farm families. Wood was cut from local pastures to fuel the wood furnace since coal was scarce.

Rev. J. Vander Breggen, Rev. J. Blankespoor, and Rev. H. C. Hoeksema were the next ministers for the

congregation. Rev. Hoeksema arrived in 1949. The year of 1953 marked a painful but needed split in the Protestant Reformed Churches. By the grace of God, Doon did not experience the decimation of members as some congregations did. This may be attributed to God's giving them dedicated elders and a

zealous pastor at this crucial time. Rev. Hoeksema received the call to serve as professor in the Protestant Reformed Seminary and left Doon in 1955. Rev. Gise Van Baren came to Iowa hoping to experience "a good ole Iowa snowstorm." He certainly did! The year of 1963 would go into the record books as one of the snowiest ever. Roads literally became snow tunnels. The young pastor and his wife took pictures of it all as "proof" for the family and friends. Not surprisingly Rev. Van Baren took a call and left Doon the following year!

Rev. Herman Hanko came to Doon from Hope PRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He only served two years as pastor before being called to the seminary. During this time God stirred the hearts of the parents to begin the planning of our own Protestant Reformed grade school. This work was blessed by God so that the school could open its doors in 1967. The new pastor, Rev. Robert Decker, had arrived in 1965 fresh out of seminary and spoke at the dedication. The school is still in operation today with an average enrollment of 40 students each year. Rev. Decker took a call to South Holland PRC in 1969.

Two years of vacancy ended when Rev. Richard Moore accepted the call to come to Doon. He was the pastor for four years during which time the new church edifice was built in the northeast corner of Doon on the old Roman Catholic Church grounds. It was dedicated in May of 1975. It is still the building of worship today. Rev. Marvin Kamps came to Doon in the fall of 1975 and served the congregation until 1986. During this time the new parsonage was built next to the present church and still serves as parsonage today. Doon served as calling church for the mission field in Singapore. Rev. Arie Den Hartog labored faithfully there from 1979-1987. God blessed those labors with the establishment of sister churches in Singapore.



Candidate Russell Dykstra came to Doon in the summer of 1986. He was called and ordained as Doon's next pastor in the fall of the year. He was minister of the Word until leaving in 1995 for Hope PRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Rev. Richard Smit's first charge would be in Doon from 1996-2004. While he was pastor the Saturday catechism classes times were changed to Wednesday afternoon, and night services were adopted for part of each year. Doon was appointed as calling church to the Philippines. She called Rev. Audred Spriensma to serve as missionary. He, along with his wife and daughter, are currently laboring faithfully for the cause of the Truth in that distant land.

Presently, Rev. David Overway is pastor at Doon having arrived in early 2005 with his wife and two children. This is Rev. Overway's second congregation. The endless cornfields of Iowa are a definite change from the city scene of New Jersey. Rev. Overway is pastor of 60 families, totaling 217 souls. Doon remains in the heart of agricultural country, but today less than five families rely on farming as their primary source of income. The members are busy in their God-given stations at the factory, offices, schools, shops, and medical facilities of the area. Church services are held each Sunday AM at 9:30 and PM at 2:00 during Central Standard Time and at 6:00 during Daylight Savings Time. Five societies meet regularly to study God's Word. Five catechism classes instruct the youth from first grade until confession of faith.

The Reformed Witness Committee is made up of members in Doon, Hull, and Edgerton PRC's and organizes local witness in the way of lectures, pamphlets, Bible studies, etc. The Reformed Witness Hour can be heard on two radio stations in the area each Sunday.

In the eyes of the church world Doon PRC is small—very small. By the grace of God she has stood strong in "the faith once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). May she and the entire PRC denomination ever so remain! ❖

Mrs. A. H. Klein is the only living charter member of the Doon Protestant Reformed Church.

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Richard Moore

November 1 Read Psalm 119:1-8

As we take up the meditations for the present, we shall turn to our Lord's direction to us in Psalm 119. I am not sure if this has been done in the recent past, but I would believe that the perspective will be somewhat different in any case. We shall therefore turn together to this blessed Psalm.

Our calling as covenant youth and as confessing believers is to keep our way pure and undefiled at all times. We are called to serve God in every path that we travel. At the outset we understand that this seems impossible, and we further know that often we have failed to walk in this way in which we are directed. In the first place then we must understand two things. First there is no excuse for our failure to walk in this path directed by God, and secondly in Christ it is possible to so walk in the ways directed by God. This is our calling, this we must do. This is the command of Jehovah. Let us not make excuses for anything less than what we are called upon to do. Our text in the first verse points out that this means we walk in the way of Jehovah. We will look at this calling in the following meditations.

Sing Psalter 1:1-3.

November 2 Read Psalm 1:1-8

We take note that the Psalmist begins this Psalm telling us of the blessedness of walking in the way of God and in the keeping of his testimonies. This is true no matter where you find yourself. Whether it is at school, in your labor or in your fellowship, in your dating or in any other activity, it is a blessing to walk according to the testimonies of God. Believe this!

The way is the active conscious path that we take in this pilgrim's life. There really are only two ways: one that is narrow and often filled with many pitfalls but that leads to the eternal and everlasting fellowship with God, and a way that often is much broader and smoother but one that leads one into the clutches of Satan and to hell. There is no way of compromise. There is no compromise between the way of light and that of darkness, the way of Christ and that of Belial (II Cor. 6).

The way which must be undefiled is a way that is guarded by the law of Jehovah, and is kept so safe by a living in His testimonies. Beloved in the Lord we of needs know and prayerfully live as led by God's word alone. Our own natural understanding will not prevail, but God gives us a perfect Word in the Scripture as proclaimed in the faithful church from Lord's Day to Lord's Day.

Sing Psalter 41:1-3.

November 3 Read Psalm 119:1-8; Psalm 1:1-3

The Psalmist points out in verse three that when we walk in the ways of God according to His testimonies, we walk in no iniquity. This again reminds us that there is no in-between. Either we walk in the ways of God or we walk in iniquity. Think a moment of your own sins. When you sin you know it is because you have departed from the ways of God and from His blessed law. The law is blessed for within its bounds we have true freedom, but apart from His testimonies we become bound in the slavery of sin.

Therefore the Psalmist who also experienced the slavery of sin acknowledges that God has commanded us to keep His precepts diligently. Understand that our God perfectly knows what we need in order to experience peace and His blessed favor. It is Jehovah the covenant God who loves us from eternity and commands us to walk in the way that is blessed. We dare not fail to listen to this command. God points out to us that this must be a diligent labor of love. We must give our all to this blessed service of God. May God grant this to you, covenant youth, and to all of us.

Sing Psalter 41:4-7.

November 4 Read Psalm 119:1-8; Psalm 1:4-6

Now the Psalmist in this passage does what you and I must do. He prays that his ways are directed to keep Jehovah's statutes. This is an exclamation, expressing how necessary it is that we cry to God in light of this high calling to walk in the law of Jehovah. The reason is plain and that is that neither you nor I can stand for a moment in our own strength and upon our own works. Only if God directs our way, only if by the Spirit of Christ He renews our hearts and creates in us clean hearts, and leads us into the way of truth shall we serve God and know His precious fellowship.

When our God through our Lord Jesus Christ by His Spirit leads us then indeed we shall not be ashamed as we have respect unto all Jehovah's commandments. We shall be kept from iniquity and condemnation as we walk according to His testimonies. Notice it is necessary that we have respect unto all of God's commandments. If we fail in one we do indeed transgress all and shall be found walking in iniquity and be comfortless.

Sing Psalter 321:1-2.

November 5 Read Psalm 119:1-8; Psalm 51:10-19

The Psalmist tells us that he and we with him may have confidence as Christ works in our hearts by the power of His

Word that he shall not be ashamed and that he will keep God's statutes. This is his confidence and may be ours because God loves us in Christ from eternity as Paul expresses it in Ephesians 1 where we are told that he has loved us in Christ from before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame.

Again he leads us to pray, "O forsake me not utterly." If God would forsake us utterly as we haltingly walk through this life all would be empty and loss. We must pray for grace that saves us from ourselves, from our own ways.

David and we indeed shall praise God with uprightness of heart, when we have learned the righteous judgments of Jehovah. Sometimes the way of the Lord with us seems so hard, so very difficult. Usually it is as a direct consequence of our own sin and weakness. David knew this path and so have you and I, my readers. But Jehovah will maintain His holiness and He will bring judgments upon His beloved when they walk in sin. But He does this in love and teaches us the righteousness of His judgments that we are turned from the pathway that would bring us into condemnation. Indeed, oh Jehovah, forsake us not utterly!

Sing Psalter 321:3-4.

November 6 Read Psalm 119:9-16

How shall we as young people cleanse our way. The Psalmist speaks of the youth here not because the youth are worse sinners than the aged. In fact when the older members of the church sin it is even more terrible and this because we should have learned the testimonies of the Word much more fully that when we were youth. But it is exactly because as youth we are still growing in understanding of the law of God, and because Satan recognizes that the youth are more susceptible to his temptation and have less strength of experience that the Psalmist speaks of the young man. He knew his own weaknesses and lusts as a young man, he knew of the many trials our youth face in the pilgrim's walk and so he raises this important question. How shall a young man cleanse his way? It is a question when answered is also the answer for any member regardless of age.

The holy writer in this passage is adding another aspect to that which we have been taught in the first section of this psalm and that is that the seeking of God according to His law is the same for all God's children no matter the age. The strength of a young person's body, the flexibility and ability of the youth to think clearly and to reason, the exuberance of youth—all of these—cannot prevail in the battle of faith except it be kept in the true liberty of the law. As covenant youth we also can cleanse our ways and turn from sin and darkness only if we take heed to our whole way according to the precious life giving word that God has given us in the Scripture and which He proclaims unto us in church and teaches us in catechism, etc.

The true children of God in youth also look to God's testimonies for their strength and wisdom!

Sing Psalter 322:1-2.

November 7 Read Psalm 119:9-16; II Corinthians 5

As kept by the Word of Christ and as we are in Christ we may say already as covenant youth as well as aged saints, "with my whole heart have I sought thee." In principle even small children may utter this prayer. The reason is that God has loved us and He has sent His Son to walk in obedience to His law on our behalf. He has covered our iniquity by His loving obedient sacrifice on the cross, and He has been raised to God's right hand now to rule in our hearts by His Spirit and Word. We are made new creatures. As the apostle states in II Corinthians 5:15ff. and in principle we begin now to serve God according to all of His commandments. Further he may say that God's precious Word has been hidden in his heart that he might not sin against the covenant God.

This of course is our only defense in the battle against sin and Satan. We must hide the Word of God in our hearts. That is, it must rule our lives as all our actions flow from our hearts. When directed by the new man in us, we shall not sin against God but love and serve him as faithful children. The Scripture must bind our lives in all that we do. However, the Psalmist also knows your weakness and mine as well as his own, and he prays and we must with him constantly pray, O let me not wander from thy commandments. For by nature all we would do is wander from the ways of God, and it is only as we are kept by Him that we shall walk rightly as His people.

Sing Psalter 322 3-4.

November 8 Read Psalm 119:9-16 Ephesians 2:1-10

As the Psalmist led us in the word we considered yesterday, the fact that we may pray should and does give us cause to sing the praises of our God. Indeed we declare, "Blessed art Thou O Jehovah." We give our praise to God when we are kept in the paths of righteousness, for there is nothing within ourselves in which to boast. After all it is alone by grace we are saved through faith and that not of ourselves, lest we boast as the apostle declares in Ephesians 2. Rather we find whether we are the youth or the older members in the congregation that all that we are we owe to God.

Therefore we with the prophet will with our lips declare the judgments of God's mouth. We will be ready to testify of the truth and to be witnesses of that truth to others around us. We must do this within the fellowship of the church and without, for we are so full of the blessedness of our God that keeps us in His way to save us that we must declare His glory and the glory of His grace.

So we shall rejoice in the way of His testimonies, we will not complain of them which the world is so prone to do, nor will we try to escape their testimony, but we will find His Word more precious than any riches this world has to offer. To meditate upon God's precepts is precious for us, to study them is our delight, and to have respect unto them in our way is comfort and peace. May that be true for us so that we forget not His Word.

Sing Psalter 383.

November 9 Read Psalm 119:17-24

We enter another new section of this Psalm and the writer adds a new element once again to this Psalm which calls us to the faithful keeping of God's commandments. But first he does what we must forever do. He considers his own weakness and inability to serve God according to this Word of himself. We are taught the need for true humility as we would serve God and enjoy His fellowship. The writer prays, as we must, to deal bountifully with him as the servant of God. We must remember that that is all we are and it is our privilege to be Jehovah's servants. We have the calling to serve God in all of this life. When we forget this and think that all things in this life must serve us and our fancies, then we will not serve God as our Lord. It is necessary for us to see ourselves as servants in all that we do, and in all of our relationships with others as well. We are the servants of God by His grace and according to His counsel .

Only if the Lord deals bountifully with us shall we serve Him as we ought. We need His grace in full measure for if there is anything left to us we shall fail to serve Him and know His blessings. So it is a prayer for a full measure of grace in Christ that we may live, for there is life only by His grace in Christ. Now only as we receive that grace shall we keep His word. We continue our prayer with open eyes, which by nature are closed in sin, so that we may behold the wondrous things of God's word and testimonies, and law. May God so grant this.

Sing Psalter 324 1-2.

November 10 Read Psalm 119:17-24; I Peter 2

Now we consider some of the new elements that are added in this section. First the writer speaks of the fact that as God's people we are strangers in the earth. This is the experience of David in his life. Not only were the worldly people the enemies of David and he was a stranger in this earth, but even within Israel and within his own family he was a stranger to some. The child of God finds that as the life of Christ abides in him he indeed becomes a stranger to this world and a stranger in this world. This is a point that Peter makes in his writings. We see this in I Peter 1:1 already when he address the church as strangers, and in I Peter 2:11 calling us pilgrims and strangers on the earth. Our abiding place is not here but we are citizens of another country, an heavenly country, that we shall enter by grace. But for this to happen we must see, know and learn the commandments of God and thus the prayer, "hide them not from us." It is God alone by His Spirit and Word that can reveal them unto us.

This weighs heavily upon David's soul and also upon our souls. We are nearly crushed by the weight of our longing for the judgments of God's word. Especially is this true for us as we seek to walk according to that word as servants of God, and in the light of the three-fold enemy that opposes this life of the child of God. This heaviness is caused, as we have implied, also by the enemies of God. The Psalmist mentions the reproach and contempt that is heaped upon him by those

about because of his faithfulness to the Word. He mentions even the princes of the land that did not sit and speak with him but against him as he served God according to His word. We, too, shall find this when we walk according to the commandments of God. So again we pray to God to remove that from us in the measure that is pleasing to Him. Our delight must be and is in Jehovah's precious word.

Sing Psalter 324:3-4.

November 11 Read Psalm 119:25-32; Psalm 73

The writer now reflects more thoroughly on his personal life as a child of God. He expresses what we all experience from time to time. We almost become depressed with our life as we strive to serve God as His servants. Asaph also expressed a similar experience when he looked at his life as God's child and the way of the wicked. He contrasted all that the wicked seemingly had and his own portion as he served God, and said that his feet had well nigh slipped (Psalm 73). We too can get the feeling that every thing and every body is against us. Even when we do the right things it still seems that all we obtain is grief. Sometimes we may even come to the point of despondence that Elijah experienced and feel as though this life has no place for us. But that would be sin, terrible sin as the Psalmist continues to point out to us. He calls upon God in his lowliness, his soul cleaveth to the dust, to be quickened according to Jehovah's word. We turn to God and seek His quickening grace. This alone shall sustain us in this pilgrims pathway.

David knows that God hears this prayer. He expresses it when he says, "I have declared my ways." He has brought his needs before God, and he states with confidence of faith that God hears him. This is his life-giving word of truth. Further he prays that he shall be made to understand the way of those precepts or truths. Oh how we need to pray this and we shall also then talk of the wondrous works of our God that saves us in Christ.

Sing Psalter 325:1-2.

November 12 Read Psalm 119:25-32

It is not only that the enemies of God outside ourselves cause us to be heavy hearted, but the Psalmist realizes that much of our heaviness is caused by our own sin. "My soul melteth for heaviness," says the Psalmist and then calls upon His God to remove from him the way of lying. Only when we are delivered from the lie and from our own lying shall we be able to be lifted up in our spirit. Young people, you also know this, that when you try to cover your sin by lying how miserable you are. This is our personal experience. We sin and either deny it to ourselves or to others and we cannot have peace. Further it destroys our fellowship with God and with our fellow saints, whether that be parent, teacher, minister, wife or husband. Lying would destroy our souls. The Psalmist prays, and we must pray, "Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously."

It is only in the grace of God that we shall seek the truth and walk in it. We are not deserving of being delivered from the

lie, darkness and destruction, but in grace we have hope even of eternal life. As we receive that grace we too may say we have chosen the way of truth. We find our delight in the law of God. The judgments of God are precious to us. We have cleaved to the testimonies of our Jehovah, Who loves us for Christ's sake even from eternity.

Thus we have joy even as we pass through this life and know that we shall not be put to shame. But we will run through the paths of this life in the way of God's commandments as He enlarges our heart and makes us clean.

May you be so comforted and assured, delivered from your heaviness, in the precious way of God's forgiveness in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sing Psalter 325:3-4.

November 13 Read Psalm 119:33-40; Psalm 1

The holy writer now turns our attention to the only basis for our requests and our obedience to God's Word. As David we must turn to God alone for the grace to serve Him according to His Word.

It is rather amazing in this day in which almost all churches are willing to throw away the sovereignty of God in salvation, in stark and absolute contradiction to the Scriptures. The writer makes in clear that it is only if God works in us that we shall ever seek Him and our salvation in His Word. The truth that you believe, covenant youth, is soundly the Scripture's teaching. Be not ashamed of it.

The Psalmist says that when God teaches, when He gives understanding and when He makes us go in the path of His commandments, then we shall observe His law and observe it with our all heart. In this path we shall find delight. Understand that, apart from this path, outside of God's law there is no delight but only misery, the misery of sin and death. May God work in our hearts by His Word and Spirit that we may have delight in all our ways.

Sing Psalter 326:1, 2.

November 14 Read Psalm 119:33-40

We hear David continue to implore God as we must, "incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness." David knows our weakness and our natural inclination. First we are naturally dead in sin and trespass. Only if we are delivered from this state shall we ever have life. We pray for God's gracious salvation and look to Him alone for it in Christ. Only the new heart of the new man in Christ can enable us to observe his ways and be blessed in the delight of God's fellowship.

Secondly, not only must our hearts be made new by the Spirit of Christ on the basis of His righteousness, but also our life must be quickened, that conscious activity that arises from that renewed heart. Thus the writer prays for the quickening work of God in us in our way. It is the prayer for the life of faith. Oh, how necessary is this prayer, for apart from it there is only hopelessness and despair.

We also are led to pray to be delivered from that which would keep us from being comforted and strengthened by God.

Deliver us from covetousness, which would always cause us to be selfish and desire the things which would give us worldly comfort and joy. When we become concerned only for this worldly life and its things we will not serve God nor taste His delights. We pray, "turn our eyes from beholding vanity." Vanity is emptiness. Think of that when you are primping to meet your friends, or are putting on a false front. Such a way is empty and leads to destruction. Seek rather to be rich in Christ and pray for quickening and cleansing.

Sing Psalter 326:3, 4.

November 15 Read Psalm 119:33-40; Rom. 8:28-30

We and the psalmist walk in a godly fear and would not do anything that would be displeasing to God. This is the principle of new life working in our hearts that leads us so to pray. Further we understand that God's judgments are good. It is stated in Romans 8:28 somewhat differently yet with the same understanding. We say, "all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to His purpose."

There are no exceptions to these statements of truth. And as children of God we must confess this, and live in the consciousness of this truth. We therefore long for the precepts, the truths of the Scripture which lead us in the life of thanksgiving and in the way of salvation. This must guide us as young or old. It is the way of true peace and comfort throughout our lives. There is then pressed from our lips at the conclusion of this section of the Psalm the cry, "quicken me in thy righteousness." This is a righteousness that has its source in God and is ours in Christ and becomes our precious possession by the power of the Spirit. Blessed God of our salvation!

Sing Psalter 327:1, 2.

November 16 Read Psalm 119:41-56; John 8:12-27

The child of God often finds when he walks by grace in the way of God's law that he is the object of the reproach of God's enemies. David experienced this as does the faithful child of God in our day. The wicked hate God and hate His people, even as our Lord Jesus Christ experienced. Christ could as well pray this prayer and did. He also taught us that if the world hates him it shall also surely hate us as we would walk in the truth as His disciples (John 8). Thus it is necessary that we call upon God for strength and grace to bear and to be delivered from this reproach.

Of ourselves we are not worthy to be delivered from the reproach of man. That is why David, and we with him, must call upon God to have mercy upon us. We ask that God save us. David addresses our God by His covenant name in our text, "O Jehovah." He pleads for Father's mercy, that He remember His covenant with him as the ever faithful covenant God. He rests in the promises of Jehovah as we must. Then we must understand that we rest in God's faithfulness and not in our own. Then we may have assurance that he will also deliver us from those that reproach us as we trust in our Lord.

We must not and do not have to deny God's word to have a place in this world. God will give us that which we need to

answer those that reproach us. The answer principally is that God is our Savior in Whom we trust, and we need not be afraid. Our hope shall forever be in God's judgments. May we also say in confidence that we shall keep His law continually, in all of our ways and life, even for ever.

Sing Psalter 327:3, 4.

November 17 Read Psalm 119:45-48

Receiving the mercies of the faithful covenant God whereby we are given an answer to those who reproach us, the child of God has the assurance that all is well. We are at liberty walking according to the Word. This is true liberty. Within the boundary of the law we are free, like a fish within the safe confines of his fish bowl. If the fish jumps out it is in jeopardy of losing its life. But within the bowl it has liberty to eat, drink, move and live. So it is for us within the blessed confines of God's word, outside of which there is no hope or life.

But also then we are bold in the Lord. We will speak of God's testimonies and of His Word even before the powers that be in the midst of this world. We will be faithful witnesses of that truth in the midst of the world. How could it be otherwise when we have the joy of living in the blessed liberty of the Word, in the blessed riches of God's grace. We will give thanks unto our God, especially by meditating in the statutes of our God. How precious it is to study the Scripture. It gives us strength and peace for each day as it testifies of God's faithfulness to us in Christ.

Sing Psalter 147.

November 18 Read Psalm 119:49-56; I Peter 2:1-10

Do we do what the Psalmist does in this section? He rehearses the comfort and blessing of resting in the Word of the Lord, and in the great gift that he has received of grace only in receiving that Word from God. Do we rejoice in the instruction God gives us in catechism? We have learned more of the truth as covenant youth than many aged saints in this present world. We have not deserved this rich heritage that God has kept alive in our midst, but by grace we have had instruction that is more precious than any man has received from kings or professors. Are we thankful for the precious gospel that is preached unto us every Sunday by faithful ministers of the Word? We receive from Sabbath to Sabbath a richness of the truth of Scripture that hardly anyone else receives.

That Word causes us to hope and trust in all our ways in the blessedness of our God. For it reveals to us that in Christ our sin is covered and we are made heirs of his righteousness. In affliction we have peace with God, being quickened by the Word. Shall we then decline from the law of God? We cannot. It is life unto us.

Sing Psalter 74.

November 19 Read Psalm 119:49-56

Now even when the proud has the child of God in derision, and makes mockery of his faith he does not depart from the ways of God. Remember that when your friends make fun of your faith. Even when horror has taken hold upon us because

of the strength of the enemy, especially by those that have known the truth but are turned against us, we shall not be afraid. We have the statutes of God for our songs as we pass through this life.

How true this is throughout history in the literal sense of the word. The martyrs of the past could go to the stake singing the songs of Zion. Already Paul did this in prison in the midst of the night. The martyrs that died at the hands of the Roman emperors did this also. So it was throughout the history of the church.

Further these same songs we sing in this house of our pilgrimage remind us of the faithfulness of our God to His covenant promise. We remember the judgments of old and Jehovah's faithfulness to deliver His people. This strengthens us as we remember we are but pilgrims in this life, with an heavenly goal.

How precious it is to learn and to sing the blessed Psalms of Zion.

Sing Psalter 221.

November 20 Read Psalm 119:57-64; Rom. 8:29ff.

The Psalmist knows that Jehovah is his portion and so do we by the grace of God. That Jehovah is our portion means that He governs and determines all things that take place in our lives. We are His people, and are loved in Christ. We must say with the apostle Paul, in Romans 8:31-33, that if God be for us who can be against us. He has given His Son to die on the cross to save us, surely He shall provide us all things necessary for life and death.

The writer again rehearses the goodness of God's grace and the fruit of that grace in his life, namely that he would keep God's word, and turn his feet to God's testimonies, and forget not God's law. We must follow in these same paths, and will have the ability, by grace.

Further we are reminded by the writer that we are not alone, although at times it may seem that way. Even Elijah thought he was the only one left that believed in God, when there were yet seven thousand who had not bowed their knee to Baal. By the gracious care of God and in His mercy we are companions of all that fear the Lord. The mercies of God are plentiful in this earth towards us for Christ's sake.

Sing Psalter 328.

November 21 Read Psalm 119:65-72

David now gives account of his need to grow in knowledge and judgment. We never grow too old to have this need. Nor do we ever learn so much that we no longer need to grow in knowledge. The writer understands that it is only Jehovah Who can teach him what he needs to know.

He has been taught this by God in very clear and sometimes harsh ways. We are really hard-headed people. Further, we are by nature sinners, have sinned and do too often sin. When we sin, we do not use good judgment nor do we walk with the wise but with the foolish.

And most of us must say with David before we were afflicted we went astray. But God is gracious and He chastens,

brings to repentance and leads us to keep and believe in His Word. Then may we daily pray that God, for Christ sake, may teach us His statutes.

Sing Psalter 329:1, 2.

November 22 Read Psalm 119:65-72; Psalm 73:1-17

As God tries us and gives us grace to bear the trials, and leads us to keep His commandments, we too will find that the wicked hate us as stated before. The writer tells us that they forge lies against him. This we find in our lives quite often, that those who stand against God and do hate His people will craftily make lies about the righteous in Christ. They often have the pretense of being so pure, yet their attack is vicious in the attempt of Satan to destroy one of God's elect.

Yet we are prepared by God, prepared by the afflictions that He has sent us, so that we may say that it was good to be afflicted. Through this life of affliction we learn God's law and His Word as it shall provide for us a defense against the enemies of God.

And although the wicked's heart stands out in fatness and he has more than heart could desire, yet we understand that the law of God is a law of true liberty and is better than thousands in gold and silver. Our trials serve our everlasting life in glory through Jesus Christ.

Sing Psalter 329:3, 4.

November 23 Read Psalm 119:73-80; Eph. 1:1-8

In this section once again we see the Psalmist giving reasons unto God for His care over him. This may seem strange until we notice that he calls upon God to care for him on the basis of God's faithfulness and His work. David says that it is God Who has made and fashioned him. This acknowledges that all that we are we owe to God. From eternity God has called us in Christ that we might be holy and without blame as the apostle states in Ephesians 1. And as God has called us surely He that hath begun a good work in us shall perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

It is no wonder that as the Word of God lives in our hearts that other children of God, who fear Him will be glad when they see us. God's children have delight in the fellowship of the body of Christ. Indeed, we are glad to see other children of God who walk in the fear of Jehovah.

The proud who see themselves as much, let them indeed be ashamed, brought down from their evil ways, and those that fear the Lord may they turn unto us. Our hope together and our comfort is to be found in the ways of God. Jesus was always comforted as He served God and so shall we who are covered by His obedience.

Sing Psalter 330.

November 24 Read Psalm 119:81-88

There are times in the life of God's people when we become weary of the battle of faith. There are times when we become almost despondent and think that God has left us, times when it seems as though there is no end to suffering and times when it almost seems that God does not hear when we call upon His name.

The holy writer expresses this in the present section of the Psalm, his soul fainteth for God's salvation, and his eyes fail for God's Word to come to fruition. It seems as though we are like a bottle in the smoke that is completely clouded over with the soot. It seems as though there is no way left to traverse in the midst of this earthly path.

We know that there is salvation. We know the Word of God and yet it seems as though there is nothing but darkness around us. We may cry out, Have we not endured enough? How many are the days, O Lord? The Psalmist expresses that he was so pressed upon. The wicked persecute him wrongfully (often the portion of God's elect). It seems as though they almost consume us upon this earth.

By grace David and we may say that, nevertheless, we still keep God's ways and forsake not God's precepts. Our prayer must be: Quicken us after Thy lovingkindness so that we may continue this walk as His children.

Sing Psalter 331.

November 25 Read Psalm 119:89-96; Psalm 33:9-12

Our assurance is in the consideration of our God Who is our Father in Christ Jesus our Lord. This is the emphasis of the words of this section. The Psalmist recounts according to the Word the truth of Who God is and Who He is with respect to us.

In the first place God is sovereign over all things. He is God and God alone. He has made the heavens and the earth. His word is settled in heaven; it cannot be changed. He has established the earth by His Word, "For he spake, and it was [done]; he commanded, and it stood fast," Psalm 33:9. His counsel stands forever. It is His God that has established the earth according to His purpose. That purpose is to glorify Himself in the saving of a church in Christ. Thus the apostle may say with confidence, even though all things may point otherwise, that God's faithfulness is unto all generations. We know this even in a greater way for we have seen God's Son come in our flesh to die upon the cross to satisfy God's judgments that we may become children of adoption and be saved.

God's ordinances still govern all things. His Word and testimony plainly teach this. He is our Father for Christ's sake.

Sing Psalter 86.

November 26 Read Psalm 119:89-96

We take a few moments in this section to consider the words of the writer when he says that God has established the earth and it abideth, and then says, "they continue this day according to thine ordinances." The word "they" really refers not only to the earth, but all that it contains. This is not what the world believed in David's day or believes in our day. The world of man believes in evolution, not in perfect direction according to a perfect purpose of a living God. But clearly the Psalmist finds much comfort in the truth that all things, even the enemies of God, are governed by the ordinances of Jehovah.

They are all God's servants whether this refers to the stars and moons of heaven, the angels of darkness, the wicked kings

of this earth, or the enemies of the truth in the church. It is true that the true servants of God in the midst of this earth are also directed according to the perfect purpose of God to save His church in Christ unto His glory.

So the writer is comforted and strengthened to know that it is because all things are the servants of God and that this testimony is David's delight he does not perish, but is strengthened to continue in the paths of God, forgetting not His precepts and understanding that he is God's. The Father cares for us even when the wicked wait to destroy us. The end is perfection of God's ways—salvation for His children.

Sing Psalter 332.

November 27 Read Psalm 119:97-104; Ephesians 6

It may seem as though some of these sections of Psalm 119 seem to repeat, however there is always something new and we also have this in the present section. The Psalmist very personally speaks now of the preciousness of the law to his personal life. He has stated the wonder of the law. Now he especially emphasizes its necessity for his life as God's child. He also explains how precious and how important it is to his very being as God's child.

We also must see this. Do we cry out, "O how love I thy law?" It is indeed necessary to have this love for God's law as His child. It is the Word of life to us. It strengthens us in the battle of faith and it directs us in that battle. It equips us as the apostle also states in Ephesians six. It is our armament in the battle.

Remember this, young people, especially when your catechism lessons require you to learn portions of God's word. Look at it as a privilege to study the word and to look up all the references for a particular lesson. Then when you are an aged saint in this pilgrims pathway you will be equipped to carry on in the walk of faith.

Sing Psalter 333:1, 2.

November 28 Read Psalm 119:97-104

No wonder the Word is our meditation day and night. It leads us in the safe way in all situations. The psalmist mentions his enemies that are ever with him. They were of the nations about Israel, they were also of his own family, and of course we always carry the enemy of our flesh with us.

However, that word that lives in our hearts by God's grace, makes us wiser than any enemy. For it is the word of our God Who knows exactly what we have need of in this pilgrims journey. Even our Lord Jesus Christ relied upon that word when confronted with the temptations of Satan, saying in answer to the temptations, "it is written." The law-word is the sword whereby He also fought the battle of faith on our behalf. Surely if Christ relied upon that law in His battle, we who are weak and sinners can only stand upon its basis and strength.

The truth of the Scriptures makes us wiser than any earthly teacher and it is a word that is without error as it would direct

us in our paths. Indeed how sweet are God's words unto our taste.

Sing Psalter 333:3, 4.

November 29 Read Psalm 119:105-112; John 1:1-14

The word is sweet unto our taste because it is a lamp unto our feet and a light upon this pathway we tread. It is significant that we read of the Word as a light. It implies the necessity for a light for a lamp. The reason is that you and I are surrounded by darkness, and apart from Christ, the Word of God, there is only darkness. This world with all of its inhabitants was plunged into darkness by the sin of our natural head Adam, so that all is darkness in this world of man. We are totally depraved as a result of the fall and unless light dispels that darkness we can only know destruction.

Besides this all we can do of ourselves is add to the darkness. That is all natural man can accomplish. Sin begets sin begets more sin. It is necessary that we have light to dispel this darkness. It is a light that cannot then arise from fallen man, yet the living God came in our flesh to dispel the darkness for us. In Him was light. His life is the light of men. That is the one Who is the Word and light unto the church (John 1:1-4).

The Word that became flesh gives us the Scripture from beginning to end and it leads us in the midst of darkness to stand and not stumble.

Sing Psalter 334:1, 2.

November 30 Read Psalm 119:105-112; I Pet. 2:1-10

The light of the Word is like the light in a completely dark room. If that room is filled with chairs and tables placed in all new places and we try to walk through it or find a pathway that is safe to pass, it is impossible and we will stumble and fall. But if we have a powerful flashlight we can easily find the path and safely gain the other side. So the Word reveals the dangers of this life unto us, and keeps us from stumbling into the paths of sin. What a blessed testimony that God gives to us. He leads us by the light of the Son from darkness into His marvelous light, the light of His eternal fellowship.

The testimony of the blessed care of the Word given the writer, is given in the light of the fact that he must pass and has passed a difficult way. He knows that it is alone the grace of God extended unto him and manifest in the Word that enables him to safely pass through this life. He repeatedly therefore, calls upon His God to teach him God's judgments and to keep him faithful to remember the law. Now because it is of grace alone that the psalmist shall walk in the law, he is led to render all praise unto Him. He beseeches God to accept the free-will offerings of thanksgiving that he brings by grace before God, and says that the testimonies of God are the rejoicing of his heart. May we find it so.

Sing Psalter 334:3, 4.



Holding the Traditions (1)

by Rev. Angus Stewart

Scripture (God's hammer) is the more sure word that shall never pass away, for it is God-breathed and unbreakable. Though the Bible is an incomparable book, this does not mean that Christians should not also read other books.

Our various callings usually require other reading. Education (both of children and adults) and most forms of employment necessitate reading. Even reading of newspapers enables us to keep informed of the world in which we live.

The Bible actually refers to non-inspired books, such as "the book of Jasher" (Josh. 10:13) and the books of Samuel, Nathan and Gad (I Chron. 29:29). As well as citing the God-breathed OT, Paul quotes (without naming) some pagan authors, such as, Aratus (Acts 17:28), Epimenides (Titus 1:12) and Menander (I Cor. 15:33).

But what about "tradition?" "Doesn't the Roman church vaunt her tradition? Surely all tradition is bad." What then do you make of II Thessalonians 2:15 (a text oft quoted by apologists of Romanism and Eastern Orthodoxy): "brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions?" Not only is there a positive reference to "traditions" in this verse, but the text also urges Christians to "stand fast" and "hold" them.

But what does Rome means by tradition? Rome believes that God's Word consists of two parts, Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. Both have God as their source and they are to be received with equal respect and veneration. Either (or both) can be used to establish or prove a doctrine. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (quoting Vatican II) declares that Rome "does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honoured with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence" (82).

Rome's tradition includes transubstantiation, the worship of the host, the mass as a sacrifice for the living and the dead; the immaculate conception, bodily assump-

tion and heavenly mediation of Mary; the universal dominion and infallibility of the pope; the seven sacraments, involving auricular confession and penance; purgatory, indulgences, prayers for the dead, prayers to the saints; the rosary and the worship of idols.

Rome teaches that there is an oral transmission of God's truth from the apostles and their successors over the centuries within the (Roman) church. Some of this tradition is now written in the decisions of the ecumenical and Roman councils, the papal pronouncements, and the writings of the church fathers and the doctors of the church. Unwritten tradition will be disclosed in future Roman dogmas. The magisterium (the Roman church's teaching office) determines what is Sacred Tradition and what is not. But is all this what II Thessalonians 2:15 has in mind by "traditions?"

The Greek word translated "traditions" carries the idea of handing something down or passing it on. The ones who handed these things down to the Thessalonians were the apostle Paul and his helpers, Timothy and Silas (1:1). They passed these things on by "word, or ... epistle." "Word" includes preaching (and other forms of oral teaching). Thus Paul writes, "Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told ye these things?" (2:5). "Our epistle" (singular) is I Thessalonians. Thus the tradition of II Thessalonians 2:15 is apostolic testimony handed down either by inspired Scripture (I Thessalonians) or preaching. Remember that the preaching of Paul (and his associates)—faithful explanation and application of God's Word—was in full accordance with the Scriptures.

What is the content of the "traditions" of II Thessalonians 2:15? Obviously, the heart of it is the gospel of Jesus Christ crucified and risen for the salvation of His church to the glory of God. I and II Thessalonians speak especially of Christ's return for judgment and salvation. II Thessalonians 2 elaborates on this. Preceding Christ's return and the "gathering" of the saints unto Him (1) is

the “falling away” and the revelation of the “man of sin” (3). The man of sin will set himself up “above all that is called God” (4) and will work miracles in the service of the lie (9). Christ “shall consume [him] with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy [him] with the brightness of his coming” (8). God will use the deception of the man of sin (9-10) in executing His decree of reprobation (11-12). However, those “chosen” “to salvation” “from the beginning” shall be effectually “called” to “belief of the truth,” “sanctification of the Spirit” and “obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (13-14). Moreover, included in the “traditions” are the “eschatological ethics” which flow from the biblical doctrine of the last times. These are found especially in I Thessalonians 5:6-28 but also throughout I and II Thessalonians.

Thus the “traditions” which we must hold fast are biblical doctrines contained in God-breathed Scripture and church teaching that is consonant with the written Word of God. This teaching does not add to or contradict the Scriptures. It merely explains and applies the Word of God.

What then of the church of Rome and her tradition? And what is the calling of the believer regarding tradition? We shall consider this next time (DV). ❖

Rev. Stewart is a missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches to the Covenant Protestant Reformed Fellowship of Northern Ireland. This series is being reprinted with permission from the Covenant Protestant Reformed Fellowship website, <http://www.cprf.co.uk/> Volume IX, Issue 24 and Volume X, Issue 1..

Church Family

What Happens In Zimbabwe?

by J.P. DeKlerk

President Robert Mugabe’s regime in Zimbabwe is guilty of national suicide, says Dr. Peter Hammond, missionary from Cape Town (South Africa) in his monthly publication “Christian Action” (For Reformation and Revival). Everybody should know about this, he says, reminding us of what is written in Proverbs about those who cannot speak for themselves. The Communist police treat them like slaves.

In the capital city, Harare, 400 Christian women gathered for an all-night prayer meeting for peace. They were assaulted by the police, so that 38 of them were severely injured and hospitalized.

After the elections of March 31, more than 18,000 people were arrested who were against President Mugabe. Thousands were made homeless, as their houses and businesses were razed to the ground by the police. Armored troop carriers patrolled the suburbs of Harare.

The police were under orders to use live ammunition against civilians attempting to resist.

Sithenbiso Nyoni, a friend of president Mugabe, ordered the removal of an electricity transformer from a suburb of the city of Bulawayo because only 3,777 residents had voted for her. So the suburb was plunged into darkness.

Supreme court justices who opposed Mugabe’s campaign of lawlessness were forced to resign upon public threat of death. Pastors have been warned “to be careful” with their prayers. Some

have been arrested. Central Intelligence Organization agents have even instructed pastors to write down their prayers for them to scrutinize beforehand.

When Mugabe came to power in 1980, he proclaimed publicly “Farmers are enemies of the state. We have degrees in violence. What Hitler did to the Jews, I will do to the Whites ten-



fold. I will be a black Hitler tenfold. The Revolution is yet to be concluded. We have set the rules. Those who resist will die!”

The Rhodesia Christian Group in England reports that although Zimbabwe previously exported food, now approximately 7 million Zimbabweans are dependent on external food aid. 75% of Zimbabwe’s population are now living below the poverty line. Out of originally 5500 productive commercial farms, today less than 500 farms are in any way operational. The economy in Zimbabwe is one of the fastest shrinking in the world. Unemployment is officially over 70%. Inflation is running at 440%. People in Zimbabwe have been bluntly told, that they will not get any food aid unless they stand behind the political party of Robert Mugabe, known as the ZANU/PF. Life expectancy in Zimbabwe has plummeted to 34 years for men and 33 years for women. It has been recorded that 89% of aid money from the European Union has been embezzled by Robert Mugabe and his cronies. Amnesty International has documented over 1,000 cases of torture by the Zimbabwe government. Nearly half of the members of Parliament belonging to the opposition Movement for Democratic Change have been assaulted by the police. Many members have been arrested, and several of them have been murdered. Their lawyers were assaulted. For example Mr. Gabriel Shuma, was seized by the police, hooded, stripped, bound, thrown down flights of stairs, and subjected to torture and abuse. He has since fled the country, like 4 million other Zimbabweans. Some 1.1 million live now in the United King-

dom, 1.2 million in South Africa, 100,000 in Australia. The others are scattered around the world, including Botswana, Zambia, and Mozambique. The Education Minister of Zimbabwe has recently declared all the private schools (many are Christian) racist and had them closed, including the famous Peter House, the most successfully integrated school of the country. The principal was imprisoned.

Roy Bennett, a member of Parliament, who speaks the Shona language fluently, has been imprisoned, crammed into a small and filthy disease ridden cell, forced to sleep on a concrete floor with 17 others, and subjected to degrading abuse.

Mugabe is seeking to accommodate his patrons in Red China. He has publicly declared that he has turned away from the West, where the sun sets, and has turned to the East, where the sun rises.

Red China has provided him with arms and jet fighters. In return, Zimbabwe is giving Red China land.

The government in Peking has gone to build Mugabe, a new mansion on the outskirts of the capital, Harare. Chinese immigrants are flooding the country with cheap shoes and clothes to sell. The crackdown on informal traders, the vast majority being supporters of the Opposition, helps to eliminate the competition for these new Communist traders in Zimbabwe. ❖

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

Memoir of Rev. C. Hanko

Rev. C. Hanko

Chapter 6

World War I

edited by Karen Van Baren

Editor’s Note: World War I (1914-1918) was sparked by the assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo. It seemed all the nations of the world were divided into two camps. The Allied powers were led by Britain and France and the Central powers were led by Germany. After a few months of hard fighting

across Western Europe, the battle line remained stationary for almost three years until America entered the war on the side of Britain and France. America entered the war in answer to Germany’s policy of unrestricted submarine warfare. Rev. Hanko recounts his experiences in wartime Grand Rapids.

In 1914 there were rumblings of war in Europe. Soon England, France and Germany were engaged in an all-out war.

There was that long spell when the two armies in the trenches had reached a stalemate. Neither side made significant progress. Possibly it was like the time before Christ returns when the whole world is engaged in the final battle of Armageddon, but neither side dares unleash its lethal weapons.

People in our community hoped that America would stay out of the war. That was especially true in our home since my father was definitely pro-German, as could be expected when one considers his background. But then came the sinking of the Lusitania,¹ and we were as involved as all the rest.

Strong propaganda encouraged patriotism, much more so than in World War II. The Germans were described as beasts, far less than human. Even the churches allowed themselves to become involved by stressing that God was on the side of the Allies. Dr. Beets² would tell how the Germans sent poison gas into the trenches of the Allies and God turned the wind about so that the gas came right back at them. On Election Day he gave a radio speech on Genesis 3:9, "And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Adam, where art thou?" He raised the question in the sermon, "Adam, where art thou on Election Day?" Children especially were aroused to patriotism with all kinds of ditties, sayings and songs.

On one occasion, Rev. Hoeksema was asked to make a speech encouraging the buying of Liberty bonds. The common consensus was that he would refuse, or if he did speak he would oppose the whole idea. When he spoke, some took tomatoes and eggs with them to throw at him. He made a strong defense of submission and obedience to those who are in authority, thus silencing his critics.

This over zealous patriotism was what brought another form of trouble to Rev. Hoeksema, minister in Fourteenth St. CRC in Holland, Michigan, when he refused to have the American flag in the church. His argument was that the church of Jesus Christ was not at war with the Germans, particularly not with the believers in Germany. The people threatened to tar and feather him, and later he was assured that this would have happened if he had not warned them that he was protecting himself with a gun. This gun was still lying loaded in the drawer next to his bed when he went to Pine Rest almost fifty years later.

A minister in Sully, Iowa was sought for something unpatriotic that he had said from the pulpit. He had to flee into the cornfields, and meanwhile his church was set afire.

In Iowa, no minister was allowed to preach in Dutch, unless this sermon was repeated word for word in English. An interpreter sat by to see whether this was done accurately.

In that kind of atmosphere the young men hastened to enlist for the service, or else waited eagerly for the draft. Anyone not in the service was considered a slacker or a "no good". My brother Fred was rejected because of poor eyesight, but he would have done anything to get into the army. The girls wanted a "soldier boy," and looked with scorn upon any one not in the service.

My mother lived in fear that at some time or another my father would explode against all this fanaticism and find himself in jail. She must have done a lot of praying for him, for he had a very hot temper.

Almost every home had a flag in the window with a blue star for each son in the service. If the young man was killed in action, the blue star was replaced with a gold star. In those days the immediate family was not the first to be notified. But every daily paper carried a list of the casualties that had been reported. Two of my sisters were engaged to boys in the service. As soon as they came home from work they took up the paper to check the list. Whenever a letter came they were ecstatic, but soon realized that it had taken a week or more for this letter to reach them. Much could have happened since the writing of the letter.

For a number of weeks in the winter of 1917, schools and churches were closed because of a coal shortage. The authorities maintained that so much coal was being shipped across the sea there was not sufficient for public gathering places.

Because of this closing of churches and schools, a few of the neighbors would come into our kitchen for "church" on Sunday mornings. My dad would conduct the service and read a sermon. Thereupon we would all enjoy a cup of coffee and a piece of cake.

We were all put on ration. Sugar was so scarce that we kids would go around the neighborhood stores in the hope of picking up a pound or two. We could purchase flour only if a like amount of a substitute was also purchased. We bought flour by the hundred pound sack, because my father used flour for paste in hanging wall-paper. So a hundred pound sack of flour brought along with it a hundred pounds of corn meal, oatmeal, or the

like. We had corn meal for breakfast and corn meal for lunch. We ate corn meal mush, corn meal muffins, and corn meal bread. We were so tired of eating corn meal that we thought we would never want to see it again.

And then, to make matters worse, the influenza epidemic hit in the winter of 1918-1919.³ Once more schools and churches were closed for six weeks. Almost no one went to work. Nearly every home had one or more sick with the flu. Doctors could not keep up with the calls that came in. They worked day and night. But the worst of all was that they knew no cure. They tried the usual medicines, and they tried the most caustic medicines, all to no avail. Hundreds died. Funeral services were held outside. Very few went to the cemetery.

A little girl in our neighborhood died also. Her coffin was placed by the front window for the neighbors to see. The minister preached the funeral sermon out on the street.

A gloom hung over all. Everyone wondered, "Will it strike us next?" There were some homes where the whole family was stricken, and one home where there were five deaths. My future mother-in-law, Mrs. Griffioen, gave birth to a child in a room shut off by sheets while others in the family had the flu.

Ministers were in a quandary as to what to do. Rev. Groen was so afraid of catching the flu that he refused to visit any one. Rev. Jonker of Dennis Avenue CRC was out almost day and night visiting the sick. He would place a ladder next to an upstairs window, in order to visit someone upstairs. He wore himself out to a point where he could hardly preach. The consistory allowed him to preach old sermons for awhile.

Our family was spared. We sat at home, trying to seek a bit of entertainment amongst ourselves. But sitting home day after day can grow very wearisome. I remember walking along Wealthy Street, just to get out, but the streets were void of pedestrians. It was "like a painted ship upon a painted ocean." It hardly seemed real. The break came on Sunday when we had our home service in the morning. To prevent further spreading of the sickness, no more than seven people were allowed to meet together; but we did invite in a few neighbors. These were times when prayer was no longer a mere formality, but a cry of the anxious soul pleading for the sick and bereaved.

As the nation struggled to deal with this public health disaster, it also had to contend with sick and crippled men returning from the front. One political cartoon showed two large millstones with people being poured

in at the top and mangled corpses dropping out of the sides. Over it stood the caption: "Will war never cease, will peace never come?"

But actually the war was grinding to a close. On November 6 we received a false report of the armistice. The country went wild, absolutely berserk. Young and old sought to give expression to the release of their tensions. Schools closed, shops closed. An unofficial holiday was called. Since there was no radio or television to turn to, everyone awaited eagerly the next special edition of the paper, for us *The Grand Rapids Press*. It seemed as if the whole city poured down town to get the latest news as it came out.

We boys went to the *Press* office, bought ten or twenty papers and sold them on the streets. Although the price was three cents, almost no one bothered to ask for change. People were ready to give a nickel or a dime just to obtain the very latest news. An unorganized parade ran along Monroe Avenue. Some trucks carried effigies of Kaiser Bill⁴ being hanged. Others gave expression to their joy in other ways. But there were no thanks given to the Almighty except in the churches.

Three days later, on November 11, 1918, when the true report of the armistice came through, people had little energy left to celebrate again.

When the boys came home there was a grand parade down town. They came in full uniform, metal hats and all. The churches had special welcomes. In Eastern Avenue CRC, we had a program with a band, saw various drills with guns and bayonets, heard bugle calls, and finished off with ice cream and cake.

There were many of our young men who did not return. Even for those who did, life was not easy. These boy soldiers had undergone anxious hours and terrifying experiences. Some had fallen for the French lassies.

My sister Sena noticed that her boy friend was cold and aloof. On Memorial Day they sat together on the lawn. He had no desire to go anywhere. In their letters they had addressed each other as "Hubby" and "Wifey," but there was no more of that. In fact, after a few weeks he told her that he was not interested in her any more. I saw her dropping his letters one by one into the stove to be burned. Later he married a French girl.

My sister Henrietta was also planning to get married to her boy friend from Byron Center. One Sunday afternoon she was visiting at the home of his parents. Henrietta and her fiance were not getting along. His father called him outside and said, "It is better to separate in peace than to live together in trouble."

These girls had waited at least three years for their wedding day. They had used their spare time to fill their hope chests. And now all their dreams were shattered.

Sena soon met and married Charles Van Dyken. But for Henrietta the situation looked very precarious. She was 28 years old by this time. Her hopes of getting married were almost nil. She knew a fellow on our street who was nothing more than a bum. She started going with him, much to the chagrin of my parents. My mother was very insistent saying, "If you marry him you need not step into this house again." She did give him up, but she said to our mother, "If I'm an old maid it will be your fault;" to which my mother responded, "I would rather have that on my conscience than see you marry that bum."

Not very long after, Henrietta's girlhood sweetheart, Rich Helder, appeared on the scene. He also had been in the war. In fact, he had stood in line while one after another was called to go out to meet the enemy. He would have been the next, but no more were needed. Those men never returned. One night, he sat in a barn which was struck by a bomb. He and his buddies wondered how they had escaped alive.

It was not long after their reunion that the two of them were married. I am sure that my sister's strong attachment to Mother was due to the fact that Mother had kept her from a foolish marriage.

These war years were hard ones for the family, but a much more difficult battle was coming. This one would be fought in the church. ❖

Footnotes

¹ The Lusitania was a British liner that was carrying many American passengers. It was sunk by a German submarine in May of 1915. Over a thousand lives were lost. This incident was the immediate cause for America entering the war on the side of the Allies.

² Dr. Beets was a Christian Reformed minister and secretary of missions.

³ The flu epidemic referred to here was actually a pandemic of the Spanish influenza which killed more people than the fighting of World War I.

⁴ Kaiser Bill refers to the Germany's ruler at the time of World War I.

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

Church History

George M. Ophoff (26)

Polemicist

by Prof. Herman Hanko

In our last article, we gave to our readers a quote from one of Rev. Ophoff's *Standard Bearer* articles in which he began his attack upon the conditional theology which was being taught in our circles and which led to the schism of 1953.

It is not our purpose to enter into the entire controversy which brought our churches to such grief in the early part of the Fifties. Our purpose is rather to demonstrate the role which Rev. Ophoff played in the entire

controversy. And even in this, we do not want to go into all the details, but merely to show that his role was a major one.

There were several areas in which Rev. Ophoff was active. In the first place, during part of the time in which First Church was embroiled in the controversy, especially in the heretical statements which were made by Rev. De Wolf from the pulpit of First Church, Rev. Ophoff was a member of the consistory. He had served on the

consistory from time to time while he was professor in the Seminary and a member of First Church. And God providentially put him in the consistory also during some of these critical years. While in the consistory, during the time protests were pending against the teachings of Rev. De Wolf (Rev. Ophoff himself was one of the first to protest these teachings), he fought long and hard for a consistorial condemnation of these views. His work in the consistory is little remembered except by those who served with him; but that work was carried on consistently in his unflinching efforts to rid the church of views which he was convinced were contrary to Scripture and the Confessions.

He was also a prolific writer in the *Standard Bearer*. One need only glance through the pages of the *Standard Bearer* of those years to discover that many of the pages were filled with his writings. There is one interesting story of those years and those writings which is worth telling here.

Prior to the split in 1953, two ministers from our denomination made a trip to the Netherlands. This was the time in which many immigrants from the Liberated Churches (those who had followed Dr. Schilder) were settling in Canada and in the States and were considering whether or not to become a part of our denomination. In fact, there were two Churches of immigrants established in Canada as a part of the Protestant Reformed Churches: the congregations of Hamilton and Chatham. The big question was: Could these Liberated immigrants keep their own covenant views and still be part of our denomination? When the two ministers from our Churches visited in the Netherlands, they had opportunity to talk with leaders from the Liberated Churches. In the course of these talks these ministers told the Liberated leaders that the whole question of the covenant was on open question within our churches, that the covenant conception which was developed by Rev. Hoeksema was not binding upon all our people, and that there was therefore plenty room for the Liberated views, although these views were quite different from the views to which our Churches had given expression. The issues were whether God's everlasting covenant of grace was a conditional covenant (the Liberated view) or an unconditional covenant (the position of the confessions and held in our Protestant Reformed churches).

On the testimony of these two ministers, the leaders in the Netherlands advised the immigrants to join the Protestant Reformed churches on the grounds that these immigrants would not have to be bound in any sense to

the views of the covenant maintained in our circles. And many did this.

On a classical appointment to Canada, Rev. Ophoff was given one of these letters by an immigrant. It immediately became clear to him that the two ministers from our churches had done our churches a very great disservice and had badly misrepresented our churches. The issue was, after all, whether the covenant views of the Liberated were contrary to the Confessions. The views of one man can never be, in themselves, binding upon all the churches. But Rev. Hoeksema's development of the ideas of the covenant was the development of the confessional statements on the covenant, while the views of the covenant developed among the Liberated was contrary to the Confessions.

If one wishes to have a complete summary of what the Confessions teach concerning the unconditionality of the covenant, one can consult the *Declaration of Principles*, provisionally adopted by the synod of 1950 and finally adopted by the Synod of 1951.

At any rate, Rev. Ophoff returned from Canada to this country deeply troubled and angry that two of our ministers should have so evilly misrepresented the views of our churches. He resolved to publish this letter in the *Standard Bearer* and expose this evil. But before he did this, he asked the advice of Rev. Hoeksema, who was at this time vacationing at Black Lake. Rev. Hoeksema advised against the publication of the letter; and this same advice was given by others. There were very few if any who thought the letter ought to be published. Nevertheless, Rev. Ophoff, contrary to all this advice, published it anyway. You can imagine the storm which this created within the Churches. It brought into the open the misrepresentation of two of our ministers. It brought into the open the whole discussion of what, after all, was binding in our Churches. And it put the Churches of immigrants in Canada on the spot.

I recall these things vividly because I was working at the time for the Doorn Printing Company which published the *Standard Bearer*. The print shop became a beehive of activity. Many people were running in and out trying to get a preview of new issues of the *Standard Bearer* and trying to find out what each new issue would contain even before it was printed. We even had Christian Reformed ministers coming in who, though they would not themselves subscribe to the *Standard Bearer*, wanted to read it in the print shop.

Looking back on the whole event, it seems to me that the publication of the letter from the Netherlands to

the immigrants was a necessary thing. It is true that Rev. Ophoff ought to have talked with the two ministers before publishing the letter; and he later publicly apologized for failing to do so. But the statements in the letter were never repudiated. The letter showed clearly that there were ministers within our circles who were willing to compromise the truth which we had confessed for the sake of getting immigrants into our denomination. It brought the whole matter of the controversy into the open where it could be discussed on the ecclesiastical assemblies, and where it could be determined what the Confessions had to say on all these matters. It was one of the more important events in the history of the controversy which led to a reaffirmation of the truth which we confessed.

In the sad history of events which preceded 1953, Rev. Ophoff was probably the first to detect that Schilder's views on the covenant were wrong and were a grave threat to the truth of salvation by grace alone. Already when Schilder visited our churches in 1948, Ophoff warned against Schilder's views. At that time few listened.

Rev. Ophoff was also active on the broader ecclesiastical assemblies. He attended the classical meetings and the synodical meetings where the issues were discussed; and his participation in the discussion showed clearly that he had the issues clearly before his mind and would give not an inch in the defense of the faith.

The views of the Liberated and those within our circles who supported them were eventually condemned. Those who supported these views eventually left the denomination and returned to the Christian Reformed Church.

Throughout the controversy Rev. Ophoff showed again the characteristics which he had shown throughout his ministry. And it might be well to make a few concluding remarks about them.

In the first place, Rev. Ophoff, both in his writings and his public statements on the floor of ecclesiastical assemblies showed again that tact was not one of his strong points. Rev. Ophoff would never have succeeded in the circles of international diplomacy. He always said what he thought: boldly, forthrightly, without equivocation, and utterly without tact. He had always been this way, and it was not surprising that he should continue to be this way in his later years. This "tactlessness" often got him into trouble, and his writings and remarks were often an offense to many.

Nevertheless, one ought to put this into proper perspective.

We live in a time when the opposite extreme characterizes ecclesiastical discussions. Tact has become synonymous with evasion, duplicity, camouflage and tolerance of heresy. It is difficult to find men today in the ecclesiastical world who are willing to express clearly and forthrightly what they believe and who are willing to call sin, sin. In efforts to be tactful, and attempts not to hurt others' feelings, the truth is lost and heresy is tolerated. Rev. Ophoff was not made in this mold. Perhaps his tactlessness can be criticized, but one is reminded more of the prophets in Israel when one hears and reads Rev. Ophoff, for there was a certain inability on his part to say anything but what had to be said, clearly and without compromise.

This was the kind of man needed in the Church at that time. Without it, the truth would never have survived, humanly speaking.

In the second place, in all his writings and speeches, Rev. Ophoff never attacked a man's person. He was always interested in ideas, views, doctrines, heresies. He would attack these with vigor and force, but he would never stoop to level a personal attack against a man. This was proper and good. Personalities with him counted nothing. What did count was truth and integrity. And where this was lacking, his attacks were fierce and unrelenting.

In the third place, he showed, also in 1953, his deep love for the truth of the Scriptures and for the cause of the truth in our denomination. This was really all that counted as far as he was concerned. Whatever the cost to him personally and whatever the outcome might be for the churches, he was determined that the truth had to be maintained. He loved the Protestant Reformed Churches with a passionate love because he loved the truth for which they stood. He knew that to pursue his attack against conditional theology would bring distress, suffering, and eventually a split. But the price was not too high to pay. The truth was above all else and had to be defended. And to this he once again committed his life.

Finally, his love for the truth was not only evident in the churches, but also in his own family. He was determined that his wife and children also clearly understood all the issues involved and saw that the whole question of the truth of Scripture was at stake. His sons speak to this day of the fact that he would repeatedly talk to them about the issues, and would insist that they clearly un-

derstood them, saw the wrong of conditional theology, and were prepared to stand with him in the defense of the truth. It was not an intellectual matter only with him, but a deeply spiritual struggle, with him – and with the churches.

And so God gave the victory. And He used Rev. Ophoff (and all the others who fought so valiantly for

this cause) to preserve the truth for themselves and generations yet unborn. ❖

Prof. Hanko is professor emeritus of the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

Church News

Church News

BAPTISMS

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

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:
Ethan James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kent Deemter—Faith, MI
Jackson Paul, son of Mrs. Christy VerStrate—

Georgetown, MI

Joel Dirk, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jon Hop—Hope, MI

Anna Vanae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Postma—Hull, IA

Nicolas Jonathan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brian VanEngen—Hull, IA

Rebekah Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Zylstra—Immanuel, Lacombe, Alberta, CAN

Kylee Renae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. David Brands—Loveland, CO

Tye Herman, son of Mr. & Mrs. Darrell DeVries—Randolph, WI

Collin Jeffrey, son of Mr. & Mrs. Bradley Lenting—South Holland, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

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

Proverbs 22:6

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

Justin Tolsma—Immanuel, Lacombe, Alberta, CAN

Leah Wierenga—Immanuel, Lacombe, Alberta, CAN

Maria Wierenga—Immanuel, Lacombe, Alberta, CAN

Joel Zylstra—Immanuel, Lacombe, Alberta, CAN

Melinda DeJong—Peace, IL

Jennifer Kooy—Peace, IL

Valerie Nelson—Southeast, MI

Katy Westhuis—Southeast, MI

MARRIAGES

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

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Jason Kregel and Miss Jill VanBaren—Grandville, MI

Mr. Matthew Kuiper and Miss Kimberly Terpstra—Holland, MI

Mr. Jordan Dykstra and Miss Rachel Nagelkerke—Hudsonville, MI

Mr. Justin Verburg and Miss Melissa Venema—Peace, IL

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

The Ploughboy (8)

It was May of 1535. William Tyndale was brought to a damp, dark dungeon in an old medieval castle, complete with seven towers and a moat. There was no escaping Vilvorde. His faithful friend, Thomas Poyntz, tried desperately to rescue him by writing letters to the court, but was only finally imprisoned himself. Tyndale knew his time on this earth was in God's hands.

He tried to use every minute wisely. With what little light and supplies he had, he continued to write and translate. He also prepared for his defense. There would be mighty arguments made against him in order to persuade him to recant. The meanest, brightest, most ruthless and educated lawyers and theologians were chosen to conduct his upcoming trial.

In the meantime, many other visitors came to entice the famous prisoner to deny his faith. But Tyndale stood firm. He even wrote a paper called, "Faith Alone Justifies before God." His death was certain, so he would make the reason for it abundantly clear. It was, in the final analysis, justification by faith alone. In this, he could not be shaken.

But he did shake with cold. Winter had set in. He was ill and in desperate need of his warmer leggings, cap, coat, and his Hebrew Bible and dictionary. He wrote a letter to the prison governor to request these necessary things. It is not known if he ever received them.

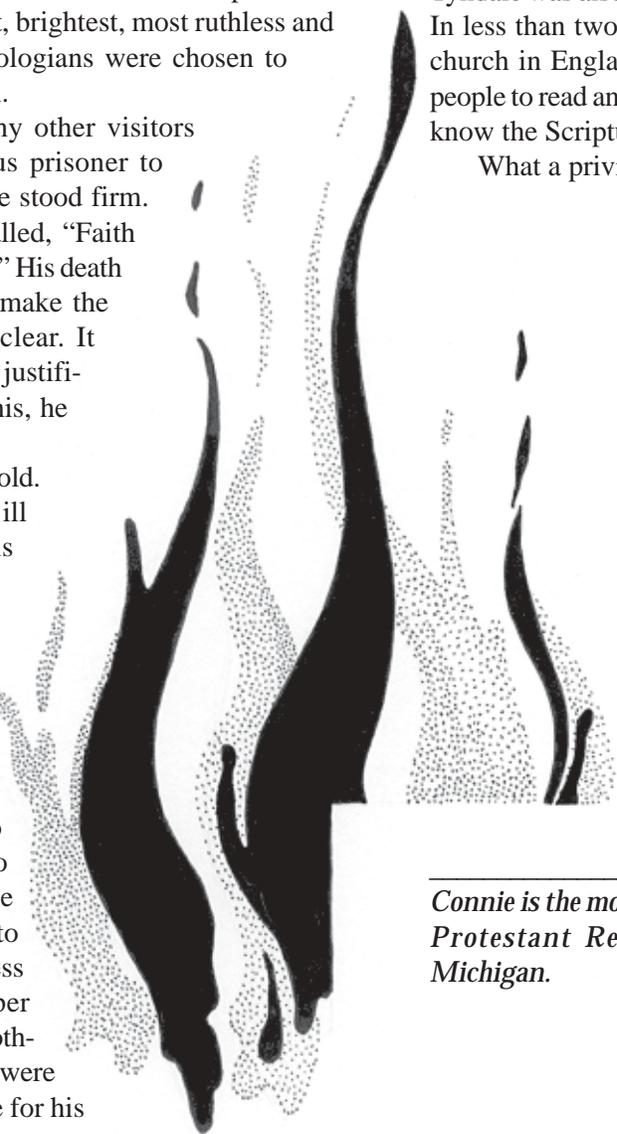
Winter turned into summer, and summer into autumn. The keeper of the dungeon had much time to observe the Christian witness of his prisoner. The keeper was converted, along with others. But Tyndale's accusers were not so convinced. The time for his

trial had finally come. Tyndale must die the heretic's death.

Early one morning in October 1536, William Tyndale was led to the noose and stake. His final prayer was: "Lord, open the King of England's eyes." First strangled, his limp body was then burned.

Not only privileged to suffer for Christ's sake, Tyndale was also privileged to have his prayer answered. In less than two years, King Henry VIII ordered every church in England to provide an English Bible for the people to read and study. Now the ploughboy could freely know the Scriptures, too.

What a privilege! ❖



What does Moses pray to be able to number, what kind of beauty does he request, and what does he pray to be established? Read Psalm 90:12-17 to find out!

Recommended reading:

God's Outlaw: The Story of William Tyndale and the English Bible by Brian H. Edwards, Evangelical Press, 1988.

The Hawk That Dare Not Hunt by Day by Scott O'Dell, Bob Jones University Press, 1975.

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

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~ HEBREWS 12: 1-2 ~

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~ PLUS ~

"IOWA'S ALMOST ANYTHING GOES"
AND "COUNTY FAIR DAY"

