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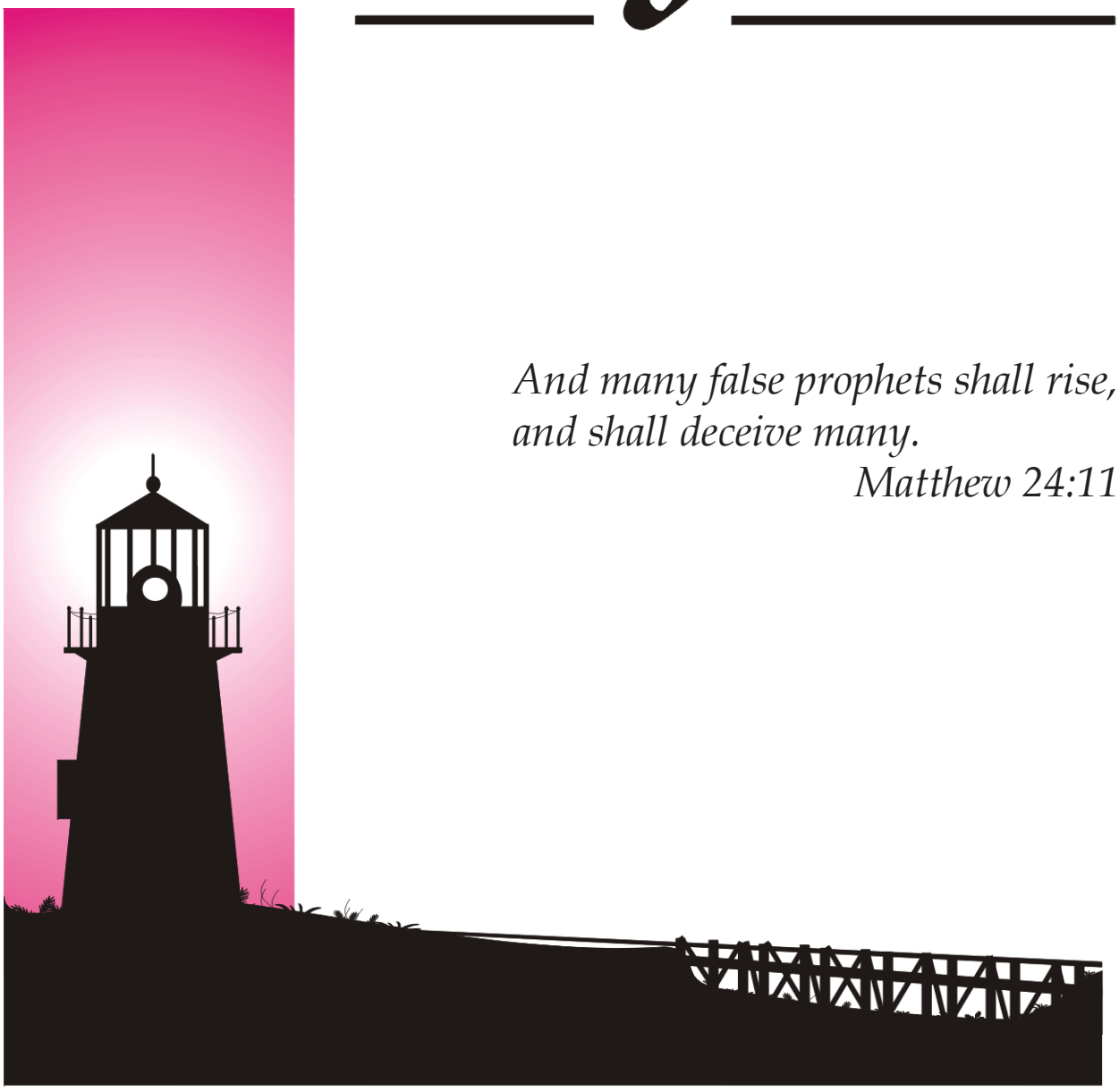

And many false prophets shall rise,
and shall deceive many.
Matthew 24:11

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Fighting for Truth in a Postmodern Age (2) The Emergent Church Movement

by Ryan Barnhill

In the past article, we examined the timely and important subject of postmodernism. Many in our postmodern age are teaching that truth is not really knowable. Last time, we considered how many professors in colleges and universities have been swept up by the postmodern tide and how this is so dangerous, especially for students not firmly grounded in the faith.

This time we consider the Emergent Church Movement. If the last article was directed toward the young people, this one is perhaps even *more* urgently directed toward the young people. Emergent churches, just like many universities and colleges, have surrendered and given way to the popular and widespread ideas coming from postmodernism. I trust that we are all at least a bit familiar with Emergent churches. Emergent churches tend to attract thousands of people because of their ramped-up worship style and watered-down truth designed not to offend anyone. These churches are more like big corporations with complex marketing strategies aimed at giving young people and adults a more flexible and casual worship atmosphere. Leaders in this movement strive to alter, shape, and mold the gospel to fit today's needs for today's people.

Why should our young people be concerned about what seems to be such a distant reality? Emergent churches continue to draw in great numbers of people. They beckon young people; young people from *conservative* denominations; young people who are dissatisfied with the old paths and who seek the new, the hip, the revolutionizing. Perhaps you are more familiar with this movement than you even know. This past Spring, Rob Bell, church leader at Mars Hill in Grandville, Michigan, came out with a new book called *Love Wins*. The book, to say the least, sent shockwaves through the church world. Bell twisted the Bible to such a degree that a wide array of church leaders found problems with the book. Bell has been in the news, and his postmodern colors have shown brightly for the whole world to see.

In order to drive to the center of postmodernism in Emergent churches, I want to give you an excerpt from an interview with Rob Bell and his wife Kristen from *Christianity Today* a few years back:

> The Bells found themselves increasingly uncomfortable with church. "Life in the church had become so small," Kristen says. "It had worked for me for a long time. Then it stopped working." The Bells started questioning their assumptions about the Bible itself—"discovering the Bible as a human product," as Rob puts it, rather than the product of divine fiat. "The Bible is still in the center for us," Rob says, "but it's a different kind of center. We want to embrace mystery, rather than conquer it." "I grew up thinking that we've figured out the Bible," Kristen says, "that we knew what it means. *Now I have no idea what most of it means.* And yet I feel like life is big again—like life used to be black and white, and now it's in color."[1] (emphasis mine, rb)

Postmodern ideas *fill* the Bell's language here. Notice a few things from this brief excerpt, drawing upon what you already know about postmodernism in the last article and its attack on truth. First, notice already in the Bell's first statements how the authority in the Bible is undercut and how human experience is trumped over the Word of God. Secondly, study the tricky language that Rob Bell uses to describe his

1 John MacArthur, *The Truth War: Fighting for Certainty in an Age of Deception*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007, ix, x.

position on the authority of the Bible—it is a different kind of center. Bell does not throw the Bible away, nor does he call it useless; he confusingly says it is a different kind of center. But, lest you become too suspicious of his language here, he positively says that he and his wife want to embrace mystery rather than lay a definite claim on what they think is the truth. This is the language of postmodernists in the church world today. It is intentionally deceiving and thousands are fooled.

The interview also highlights the importance of tolerance in the school of postmodernism. Postmodernism preaches tolerance, and one of the ways it does this is by rejecting any definite claims on truth, and denying the ability of anyone to draw any definite conclusions. Rob Bell wants to embrace the mystery of the Bible rather than conquer it. To leaders in the Emergent churches like Bell, claiming that you have the truth is the peak of arrogance. To claim that you *know* and *understand* what God says in his Word is a most proud statement. How can *you*, they argue, claim to know what God says? You are entitled to your own opinion about the truth, but you better be open to other opinions, they say! Young people, do you see the extreme danger here? Do you see the arguments that church leaders today will make? Dangerously deceitful! Bell and other church leaders take the focus off themselves by making such statements. They paint themselves to be very *humble* men by confessing their inability to come to conclusions about the truth.

If postmodernism's reach into the emergent church is not bad enough, it is also spreading its ideas into many other churches today. While it must be noted that not every problem and error today arises directly from postmodernism, we *can* say that postmodernism makes old errors and problems that have nagged the church for years even worse. I want to give one example. How many ministers today preach Genesis 1 as a literal six-day creation? How many Christian schools today unashamedly teach their students that the literal account is the only way Genesis 1 may be interpreted? Recently, I had the opportunity to talk with those who wanted to make the days in Genesis 1 thousands of years. "My opinion," they would say, "is that we cannot take this account literally, but that is just my feeling about it. Other people may differ from me, and that is OK. And, besides, Genesis 1 is not a salvation issue, and whatever way we take the meaning does not matter. At the end of the day, what is most important is that God created the earth—not how long it took him." Do you see the postmodern elements? Inability to draw conclusions; tolerance for different interpretations on a *very* clear passage; twisting and stretching the language of Genesis 1. Notice, like Bell's view of Scripture, how the lie of theistic evolution is part-way dressed in truth: all that is important is that God created the earth, not how long it took him. How many times do we not read and hear similar language to this? As he has done throughout all of history, the devil uses such language to dress the lie in truth-colored camouflage. Satan loves to see the church world in such a confused state.

Satan knows what he is doing; he does not knock at the front of the house, but rather quietly slips in through the back door. Especially in the West, he is watching gleefully as this postmodern philosophy gently lifts the church world from its moorings. Well-known emergent church leaders, and even some supposedly conservative ministers and professors, are leading churches all across the world down the road of apostasy in the name of tolerance and compromise.

Not convinced yet of the danger? Postmodernism, as pushed especially by Emergent churches, creates a warm, fuzzy, feel-good atmosphere. This is appealing to people. Everyone wants to be approved; everyone wants to be accepted. Such worship, however, is man-centered, not God-centered. When this warm and fuzzy feeling is combined with the deceitful and confusing language, a deadly mix is created. As Rob Bell would put it, the Bible is still the center, just a different kind of center. As a theistic evolutionist would argue, Genesis 1 does not have to be taken in a literal sense; what is most important is that God created the world. If I am not grounded firmly in Scripture, I might think that such statements sound pretty good. And the people who say these things are not going to shove them down my throat or force me to believe them—they are open and tolerant of my thoughts too! A church, therefore, where basically anything goes, yet where shreds of the truth are still present, is a place that attracts many people, especially young people.

In a church world where truth is forsaken and replaced by endless debate about key concepts in Scripture, such as the literal creation account (among many other key concepts in the Bible!), it is we, young

people, who will stand out. Do not be ashamed for your bold stand for truth. Even if you defend it virtually alone, remember that you stand on the inspired, infallible word of God. What a rock! No matter how fierce the pressure, never yield to the opinions and feelings of men about God's word. The Bible is not subject to our feelings or their feelings about it. Scripture is logical, clear, and knowable. We read in John 8: 31b-32, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Do not let others try to persuade you otherwise.

Such talk of postmodernism can easily strike fear and anxiousness in our hearts for the future church. To be sure, the spirit of our age is no surprise to us. In Matthew 24:11, Jesus said, "many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many." II Peter 2:1 states, "…there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them…" Nevertheless, we might be anxious about the future. Grandparents, do you worry about your grandchildren in today's world? Young people, do you as those who love the truth fear your future in a world which hates truth? In the next and final article in this brief series we will look at God's preservation of his church. We have no need to fear; God is with us and for us! This, Lord willing, we will consider next time. ❖

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

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

God is Good ... All the Time (2)

by Karen Daling

My Experience

I can remember as a kid thinking that adults had everything all figured out, knew all the answers. I know now all too well that "old" people really don't have it all down pat. In fact, we still learn every day. As you will see while I talk about my experience with MS, the times when we don't have it figured out and buck against it can become quite selfish and sinful periods in our lives.

Twelve and a half years ago, I developed a numb left arm and the left side of my face was also numb. I had an MRI to rule out a stroke. MS was a passing thought for the doctor, but not anything more than that. At that time, my daughter Leanna was a small baby, so the numbness was attributed to carrying her in the same arm all the time, and the spots they saw in my brain were attributed to the migraines which I had infrequently. Through the years symptoms and explanations came and went—that numb elbow must have been a pinched nerve from diving in volleyball, or from getting hit with a line drive in church league softball, I must have been tired because I was an active mom, my muscles were sore from yard work, I couldn't see well because I needed to change my contacts—there were any number of reasons to explain away weird symptoms. One whole summer I had an electric shock like sensation in my spine each time I looked straight down. Looking back I don't know why I didn't ask about that, except that I was a busy mom and didn't have time to complain. I know now that this symptom is called Lhermitte's Sign and is a signal that a spinal lesion is forming—I didn't know it then. During the summer of 2009, my symptoms became radically worse. My left arm and shoulder became very heavy, felt as though they were filled with pudding instead of blood. I lost much of my arm strength; it became difficult to even hold a capful of detergent while doing laundry. My fingers were numb. I *knew* something was exceedingly wrong, as I am in touch with my arms and fingers because of my privilege of playing for many different choirs and for church. Things were not working correctly. I then began what I can only call a four month battle to be seen and diagnosed. Over a period of several months, I was sent to physical therapy, then to a hand doctor, and then referred to a neurologist. I have come to find out that neurologists are busy people, and are generally not moved by urgent cries for help. In the course of the summer of 2009, I called the neuro office multiple times, had my hand doctor send repeated

referrals, called them *more*, but to no avail. My feeling that something was extremely wrong was validated that summer when one day I shut the Suburban door, then walked away and found I was caught by my fingers in the door, but didn't even realize it because there was no feeling! I was *finally* seen in mid-September at which time the neurologist immediately ordered an MRI to rule out brain tumors/abscesses or disk issues in my spine, but fully suspected that I had MS.

There are times in the life of every person that are just simply etched on the brain. Exact weather, clothes you or others around you were wearing, smells, impressions…September 24, 2009, is one such day for me. If I allow myself to really reflect on this day, my usual reaction is to get a lump in my throat. D-day—my diagnosis day—the day my world shook. God works things in his own perfect way—looking back, I see this work even on D-day. I was at work at Heritage Christian School that Thursday morning. The call from the neurologist office came in at 10:38 AM. "You must come in this afternoon, and you must bring someone with you to the appointment." My initial reaction was fear. I was scared. However, being a bit of a matter of fact person, I knew that the next moment in my work day was playing for choir, beginning at 10:45. Heading that way down the hall and into the choir room I was in a bit of a daze still and remained somewhat scattered—until I heard the name of the song we were going to practice—"It is Well With My Soul." What amazing grace God shows to us in such seemingly insignificant ways. The words of that song soothed me to some degree that morning as I waited for the unknown, as did the noon time devotions when choir was finished. Jim and I drove to the doctor that afternoon; she is a short little Asian lady. At that time yet there was a bit of a language barrier, but we clearly understood the words "multiple sclerosis." There was no missing that! Unexplainable and also memorable at that moment was the fact that I was almost relieved to *finally* have a diagnosis of what was wrong with me, but yet the fear of the unknown remained.

In a split second, I went from living the seemingly trivial life of a busy wife and mom to being a person that was in a lifelong battle against an incurable disease that I knew nothing about. Medical procedures and appointments were thrown at me, and I went along with them—spinal tap, 5 days of IV steroids, tubes and tubes of blood drawn for blood work, vitamin supplements and injections, and the vision test. Suddenly I had to pick a medication—I had to give myself *shots*—this was an overwhelming thing. The day before I had been "healthy," now I had to decide what shot to give to myself for the rest of my life?? I had four choices—all with different side effects. The DMD I chose is called Copaxone—I love it now; didn't then! Copaxone is referred to as a "rodeo clown"; when I give myself the daily shot, it zips around my central nervous system and distracts the T-cells from attacking my myelin, inviting them to attack the Copaxone instead! It is a wondrous thing! As is health insurance! I am most thankful still for our health insurance premiums, which I used to grumble about—they now pay over $75 for each shot I give myself! So many little inconveniences in life turn out to be such blessings. I see that now. I didn't all the time at diagnosis time. I still have MRIs once each year to monitor how my DMD is working. Spots that show up as bright white on an MRI are damaged or dying tissue. I have CDs of my MRIs, and I have white areas—in fact there are some big ones. But as of right now, I am not developing new lesions. In fact, I am told, much to my family's amazement and delight, that my brain is stable! As for my left hand, the damage is permanent it seems. All the fingertips are numb, as is the entire thumb and index finger. But again, God has in his grace sent ways for me to compensate for that loss. I am still able to play the organ and piano proficiently most of the time. I am most thankful for this.

Now it is easier to see the blessings that MS has brought to me and even to deal humorously with it at times. At first it wasn't so easy. Now I can identify the various emotional phases I went through. Then I had no idea. My doctor told me that it would be a good idea to keep a journal to track any triggers for flares and to keep my life on an even keel. I do this still today. Looking back at the initial entries, I labeled this stage of my life my SMLAD stage: a confusing and frightening combination of sad, mad, and glad. First, I was *sad*, mostly about the effect on my kids. Astoundingly heartbreaking to me was my youngest son's recurring question in those first few months, looking at me with his huge eyes and asking quietly and fearfully over and over and over again—"Are you going to die *today*?" or "Is *today* the day, mom?" At first I didn't understand exactly what he was getting at, in fact it took a week or two for me to realize that to him the word *incurable* meant *fatal*, and he thought he would lose me at any time. How do you explain the unexplainable to a little child? We shared countless hugs and tears. To my daughter came nearly instant acceptance and faith that Mom would be fine—she had to mature much too soon in that respect and became almost resigned in a way, yet she always believed in "good old mom." To the other two

sons—life did a flip. They morphed into protect-mom mode; in fact, they still bristle when I am too busy. It was backwards—sons worrying about Mom—not the normal order of things. My husband also promised to be right there with me, but he didn't fully understand what we faced yet either. Throughout this early time, I remained somewhat trustful of God, but the battle with fear and doubt also loomed large at times.

Today, I am not proud of the sad stage; I don't like to remember this "weak" time in my life. The next stage is even more horrible. I exited the *sad* stage and moved on to *mad*. The wait was too long. Much too long. In fact my doctor one day asked me why I waited so long to call her, said that had I called sooner I wouldn't have as much permanent damage! That was akin to a physical blow. I vividly remember the utter shock, hurt, and anger in my mind upon hearing that question. Even now, but especially then, the reminder was always there—an arm that didn't work right, a hand that no longer played the piano like it used to. I knew nothing, didn't understand my doctor's accent, was having tests and getting steroids, and I didn't really even know why at that time. There was an astonishing lack of knowledge. Compounding the doubts and fears and anger was the fact that after diagnosis there was no sunshine for nine days…I know…I counted. I was *smad*—sad and mad. Here is a journal entry from that awful time: The thing about being sick with an incurable disease is the thoughts that go along with it. And they have been demon thoughts in me at times. I struggle to accept God's will. It's not there right now. It seems so unfair. Incurable. Unknown. Flare up. Steroids. Multiple sclerosis. Words I hate. So I drag myself out of bed, walk to the bathroom, get dressed, look outside. It's dark, dreary, and gray again. I go down stairs to do devotions. First phrase I see: "The peace of God which passeth all understanding…"—it's not there today. It's hard to pray this morning… God's plan is random it seems. Why did I have to wait four months to see a doctor and so lose some of the use of my hand? Why did he pick me, my family—why not someone stronger? This is *not* a time in my life that I look back on and nod, thinking I did pretty well. I didn't. Sure, there were moments in the *smad* time that I was strong, was trusting; however the sad and mad won much of the time.

But, God is good. And I moved from *smad* to *glad*. Everything makes perfect sense to him. It took almost two weeks after diagnosis for me to fully, consciously, firmly remember that. I have a quote on my refrigerator. It kind of jumped out at me often in those weeks. It's a good one: "God is not a deceiver, that he should offer to support us, and then, when we lean upon him, should slip away from us" (Augustine). And providentially, Rev. Lanning was up to the sermon on the providence of God in the Catechism, Lord's Day 10. I wasn't in church the night he preached the sermon, due to a painful side effect from the spinal tap, but it was given to me to listen to—and it was an amazing sermon from my heavenly Father, right to me. And I listened. And let it whack me across the head, pulling me out of my selfish pity party. Here is a journal entry from a few nights after I heard that sermon: Music is an amazing thing. "It is Well" is on right now. Again, I have tears. More songs, all right to me, and all brought tears tonight. I feel like a basket case. But overall, my mind frame is so much better now. God knows what he is doing. He has me, my family, all those I love in the palm of his hand. And the "*incurable*" that looms so menacingly over me is also being researched continuously. Advances are being made. God gives grace. I will be sometimes weepy and sometimes fine for a while yet I think, but more fine than weepy. No matter what plans he has made, I will rejoice in his goodness and grace. I am in the perfect place that he planned for me and so I vow to serve him in all my life whatever happens. Little did I know what his plans were. Really, do we ever know, even begin to be able to imagine? God is good.

What blessings we have as Christians. What an amazing God we can lean on. You see the struggles I went through, the sins of worry and lack of faith? Yet there were specific verses that did and still do mean the world to me—Psalm 46:10: "Be still and know that I am God…" In my sad and mad section of *smlad*, I wasn't still at all. I was frantically looking every which way but up most of the time, until I consciously sat quietly and rested in him and his care. And in the glad portion of *smlad*, I see that "He hath made everything beautiful in his time…" (Eccl. 3:11). Who would have *ever* thought that I would think my MS was beautiful? Not me. But God knows. And he gives grace. God is good—all the time. Do I still have pity party moments? Sure I do. Am I happy about that? No, I'm not. Do I want to be a stronger Christian, lean more on him, trust in him more fully? Yes. Am I learning and will I keep learning until the day I die to look UP, not sideways? I am and I will. Thank God for that.

What You Can Do

So now, we talk about what you can do. There are things you can do physically in the future, but also things emotionally that you as young people are able and must

be willing to do. First, we talk about the physical. If you are a student who loves the scientific studies, who is interested in the human body and its workings, you should consider becoming a doctor or a nurse. Look at how long I had to wait to even *see* a neurologist! Medical professionals are needed. If the musings of your mind move you to want to know *how* the body works, how God created things so marvelously and then gave man the ability to find cures for various diseases, then I urge you to go to school to become a researcher. Advances are being made even now, obtained because of the studies of researchers. We need more of them!

There is another way that you can help those around you. This expands to all who are in the family of God. Kids around you even here at Heritage struggle with hard things—family trouble, a parent with cancer or another serious illness, losing a loved one—troubles are all around. You can help, can step outside of your comfort zone and extend support. At all times, we think we may know how to help, and we do the best we can most of the time. But, looking back at my lovely journal, I do have a few pointers from observations I made.

Given my penchant for naming things, I, for some reason in the weeks after diagnosis, named the different types of people who approached me in their own ways. There were four main groups of people, although not everyone fit neatly into one of the following categories. The first were the *avoiders*. The avoiders pretended that I didn't exist; they were uncomfortable and didn't know what to say. If by chance our eyes met, theirs would quickly avert down to the floor. That way they didn't have to talk to me, because they really had no idea what to say. I have been an avoider at times in the past. I am going to try hard never to do that again. The *encouragers* were a lively group of people! The encouragers reassured me that life was great. I was the *best* possible person this disease could have happened to and life was just *wonderful*, according to them. While this was somewhat comforting, it was fairly disconcerting as well. I didn't always think that MS was the best thing that could happen to me. There is a time to be an encourager, just not all the time. The third group of supporters was the *mourners*. The mourners looked appropriately sad, spoke in a low tone of voice, and often cried while expressing their sympathy that such an "awful" thing had happened to me. The mourners were most often comforted by me, in fact. This was not always a bad thing. Again, knowing that there are people empathizing is at times a very comforting knowledge. But my favorite group of supporters, and the group I want to be in the most often, was the *listeners*. The listeners asked how I was doing, and then actually waited for the answer instead of continuing on their way. They *wanted* to hear the answer, wanted to give the opportunity to talk things out. There were times when I didn't want to talk—at those times I would say I was doing well and then move on to a different subject. But you see, the opportunity to support was openly offered, and this was often a huge comfort. There is opportunity for you to be a supporter all the time. And there are other "groups" that I didn't get around to naming. But the most important word here is "support." You can be a support to the classmate with troubles, in fact you *must* be. You are at an age yet where you are learning how to react, yet you are becoming discerning young adults, and you will grow in grace as you extend your Christian love to each other.

But that is not all there is. It is so easy, especially in this busy time of your life, to overlook the most powerful support that God gives to us. This gift is the blessing of prayer. We are all called to pray for one another, for our loved ones, for our classmates and their families, for God's will to be done, for peace, for calm. The things we must pray for are endless; the blessings we receive from knowing that God answers our prayers in his own perfect way are abundant. It may feel a bit odd at your age, make you feel a bit vulnerable even, to tell another person that you are praying for them. But the knowledge of the prayers of others to a person who is struggling is a great comfort. By giving your support to one another, you grow as children of God—this is priceless. The gift of perception and empathy that you develop is vital as each of you grows and matures. You will be able to better serve one another here at Heritage Christian School when you support each other in these loving ways. As a result, you will live your life as he has called you to—by serving Christ's children here on earth, you in turn serve him as his children. ❖

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Karen is a member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan.

A Downs Syndrome Perspective

by Stephanie Buteyn

"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well" (Psalm 139:14).

As we look at this verse, we see that God has done wonderful things for us by putting us upon this earth. God created us, both young and old, disabled and not disabled. We all have a place on this earth. Especially those who have special needs who need special care. God has a place for these people on this earth. We are to care for them, to treat them with respect, and to make them feel accepted. That is what I would like to explore in detail.

Look around you and count how many special needs adults and children you see. Have you even thought about how they feel at times? These people want to be included and we just sit back and ignore them. People of God, we are Christians and we are commanded by God to be kind, polite and to be respectful to them. That is what we are to do. We must respect them, and it is sad that we do not do these things to these special people.

Psalm 133: 1 tells us, "Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity!"

Unity, right there, plain and simple, before our eyes. We know that there ought to be unity among us, all Christians alike. We are united by God, and that includes the covenant, our children and adults. Our disabled people cannot just stand in the corner, alone. They too are a part of that covenant and they too are a part of that unity.

I put forth to you a challenge. A challenge that we can all do to help out these people. Why don't you go to them and invite them over to your house for dinner a couple of times during the week? Take them to a ball game or go bowling with them. They would really like that. Take some time off and get to know these special people. And when you do something like this, you know they will be happy and they will love you for it. Don't just let them stand there, include them, that is what God tells us to do.

Look at the parable of the wedding feast. The servants went out to gather the bad and the good, and that also includes the ones who are maimed, blind and other problems they might have. There will be people in heaven who did have disabilities, but not anymore. In heaven there is no disability, no wrinkles, no blemishes that cover our spiritual bodies.

We are so privileged to have such people in our Protestant Reformed churches. We are thankful for them. They are a special part of our church and we must honor that. We are not to be ashamed of them, they are a part of the church. We are to constantly pray for them, and when the collection for the Protestant Reformed Special Education comes around, put a little bit more in that collection plate.

Take up that challenge, do something for them, let us do the right thing for once. God loves these special people and we must always love them. Go to the Special Needs Program, there you will see that they can do something. They sing, they read, they can play music and they are happy in spite of their disability. God loves them in each special way. These people are happy, they are happy because God is with them every step of the way. They are ready to die, because in heaven, there is no disability, they are perfect and they know that God will be there to protect them.

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8). ❖

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Our Children's Education: A Covenant Necessity (4)

by Aaron Lim

3. The Public School Environment

Scripture leaves no doubt that God's people are to live in spiritual distinction from the world.

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

When covenant parents place their children in the public schools, they subject their children to rampant ungodliness and worldliness. They force their children to live in spiritual harmony with their ungodly peers. They force their children to speak the language of Ashdod (Neh. 13:24). Jehovah's children are forced to agree with Belial.

We are all too well aware of the principle of peer pressure. Young children and teenagers are especially susceptible to the influences of their peers. When their schoolmates live a life of thorough wickedness, our children are tempted in extremities to live like them because sin always appears attractive. Sin is always attractive to the sinful flesh which our children are bound to. In such an environment, we allow the wicked iron of ungodly children to sharpen the countenance of our covenant seed (Prov. 27:17).

The moment we place our children in the public schools, we destroy the spiritual distinction that must always be maintained between them and the children of this world. Covenant children are to be separate from unbelieving children. Describing the antithesis between covenant children and unbelievers, Prof. Engelsma writes:

> First, the life of the believer is subject to the Word of God, whereas the unbeliever's life is independent of the Word and in rebellion against it. Second, the goal of life is different. The believer directs his life towards God. His life is God-centered. The unbeliever leaves God out. His life is man-centered (pg 57, *Reformed Education*).

Prof. Engelsma is precisely correct when we place our children in the public schools:

> The antithesis is abolished, and the culture of the ungodly swallows up the children of God (pg 14, *Reformed Education*).

If they wisely refuse to integrate with their worldly school mates, our covenant children are bound to face persecution. They will be tormented in great measure because the world will hate those that do not belong to it (Jn. 15:19). The wicked shall revile, persecute and say all manner of evil against them falsely because they belong to Christ (Matt. 5:11). Instead of a place of learning, the school will be a cold and cruel environment to our covenant children. They will be left alone to fend for themselves in a spiritually hostile environment. How we allow our covenant children to be tormented like this is simply unimaginable.

We must understand that our children need friends as much as we do. Our responsibility as covenant parents is to choose the right kind of friends for them and the right environment for them to foster those friendships. The psalmist declares with great joy that it is good and pleasant for brethren—brothers and sisters who have and love the same God—to dwell together in unity (Ps. 133:1). Friendship cannot exist between God's children and the devil's. The seed of the woman is always at war with the seed of the serpent.

On the subject of friendship I have not found a sharper definition than one provided by Prof. Engelsma in another book:

> Friendship with the unbeliever is both impossible and forbidden. Friendship demands oneness in Jesus Christ. My friend and I must have God as our God together. Whoever is an enemy of God is my enemy (pg 70, *Common Grace Revisited*, RFPA, 2003).

At a young and tender age, covenant children do not possess the spiritual maturity or developed faculties necessary to understand this distinction. They are young and easily impressionable. Naturally they make friends with those who are around them.

The evil environment to which our covenant children are daily exposed has tremendous repercussions on

their spiritual development. Covenant parents may not be surprised when their children turn to the ways of this world and forsake their faith. The temptation to conform to this world is almost unbearable in such an environment. I have never felt more alone, more frightened and intimidated than during the years of my public schooling where my Christian upbringing and principles were tested and shaken to their very foundations. The evilness of the wicked environment is radically opposed to all that the Christian faith stands for. And in such an environment covenant seed lose their covenant identity.

4. The Goal of Public Education

A discerning parent would realize that the government is only interested in educating our children to meet its own needs. A government like Singapore that places economic progress as its chief priority will necessarily train its children to be economically-minded. All other aspects of their upbringing are subservient to this cause. One who is educated by the government must necessarily become a product of the government.

Inherent in the thinking of the public education is its message to its students: study hard, establish a good career, contribute actively to society as responsible and productive citizens. There is, of course, nothing wrong or sinful with such a message. God's people are called to render their debts to the government of their land (Matt. 22:21), to obey those whom God has placed in authority over them (Rom. 13:1-2). What is wrong about the public education is the ultimate or higher purpose it strives for.

From a spiritual perspective, the goal of public education is to raise up men and women for this world. Scripture calls it earthly-mindedness. Because the government only has its progress in mind, its citizens are naturally trained in the education system to be part of this earthly pursuit. Its aim is to train our children to construct an earthly kingdom for themselves, for the good of society and the country. An earthly pursuit like this causes our children to set their affections on this earth (Col. 3:2), laying up treasures where moth and rust corrupt (Matt. 6:19). It produces covetous, materialistic, greedy children who, like the rich fool, live to eat, drink and be merry (Luk. 12:19).

When earthly pursuits find strong roots in the lives of covenant seed, they will sacrifice their spiritual growth and find little delight in spiritual things. A weak attendance in church meetings is proof of this amongst other things. Why should studies take priority over spiritual activities? Why should spiritual activities be confined only to Sunday worship? Should not the child of God yearn for the fellowship and edification of his saints rather than burying himself in textbooks?

What is so dangerous about the education in the public schools is that it forces our covenant children to view this world like a playground, where they can fellowship and cooperate with unbelievers for a common cause. Scripture repudiates this idea when it instructs God's people to live as strangers and pilgrims on the earth (Heb. 11:13). God's people are aliens in this mad world of unbelievers and sin. They are called to hold loosely to earthly things, for no man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier (2 Tim. 2:4).

Covenant parents are training their children to be heavenly-minded. They are training their children to seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God (Col. 3:1). Their hearts are not settled on earthly mansions, but mansions which Christ has prepared for them in glory (John 14:2). Why train our children to fight the corporate battles of the business empires when Christ calls them to fight the battles of faith? Why seek the crown of earthly success when Christ has promised us a crown of glory that fadeth not away (1 Pet. 5:4)?

IV. Assessing the Damages

That public education has done severe spiritual damage to our covenant children ought to be clear for all to see. We must assess these damages from a biblical viewpoint to understand them better and in order to find a spiritual solution to these problems.

Covenant children brought up by the public education system are bound to be confused, if not frustrated. Religion placed alongside a secular education often creates great conflicts. Where the Bible teaches the world made in 6 days, the public schools teach evolution in millions of years. Where Scripture insists that sin is the cause of all the evils present in this world, society calls them social evils that can be solved through social education. Where the church teaches a day of final judgment where all things shall be brought to an end, the world promotes a perpetual earthly paradise. How, may I ask, will our children not be a confused lot when schooled in such a wicked education system?

Because of the high demands of an education system like Singapore, our covenant children inevitably cave in to its pressures. Studies come first; God and his church come later. That they cave in to such sinful temptations must not be surprising. They are, after all, untrained and inexperienced soldiers forced to fight a fierce spiritual

battle. Shaped by an ungodly education and piled with pressure, their young and easily impressionable minds cave in.

Spiritual ignorance is an immediate consequence of public education. Because such a system rejects the true knowledge of God, our covenant children who go through it are destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6). Where the only form of spiritual instruction our children receive comes from family devotions and the weekly hour-long catechism classes, their spiritual knowledge will be shallow at best. The evident lack of a spiritual vision in the public education causes our covenant young to perish (Prov. 29:18).

Doctrinal ignorance is another product of such an education. Where academics hold the high ground, knowledge of Reformed doctrine is lost. Covenant children grow up without a strong grasp of Reformed doctrine, without a good understanding of the Reformed faith. I speak the same for myself. Instead of learning the doctrine which is according to godliness (1 Tim. 6:3), public education teaches a doctrine of vanities (Jer. 10:8).

The controversy that destroyed the ERCS revealed beyond a shadow of doubt that doctrine was loosely regarded in our midst; so loosely that the peace and unity of the church were not established upon doctrine. In the minds of many, doctrines are cold, abstract ideas which do not apply to the life of the church.

Where the only lessons on history are secular, the history of the church is unheard of. Our covenant children know not the old paths that their spiritual fathers walked in. They know not the sweat and blood these spiritual warriors sacrificed to deliver the Reformed faith to us. They know not that the greatest battles in history were fought by faith and not by sword. They know not of the great debt they owe to the church of ages past for the blessed Reformed heritage they now possess.

When church friends hardly see one another during the week, their spiritual bonds of friendship will be very weak. I often questioned during the years of my schooling why covenant young people had little else to talk about other than studies, school life and the trivia of this world. Why were spiritual discussions amongst covenant youths so rare? Why were doctrinal discussions only present during the weekly hour of catechism? Rarely do friendships like that of David and Jonathan exist in the church.

In an education system like Singapore where students are forced to devote excessive amounts of time to their studies and school activities, covenant homes suffer. Family worship caves in to the high demands of the children's school timetable. Time for family bonding has to make way for academic pursuits. No wonder covenant homes are spiritually weak.

It must also be evident that public education is the channel by which the floods of worldliness rush into the church. An ungodly education drains the spiritual life out of our covenant young and moulds them to become servants of mammon. The ungodly education breeds covetousness in their hearts. It formulates materialism in our covenant young, teaching them to seek the treasures of this earth rather those of heaven.

Heavily under the influence of ungodly peers, our covenant young follow after their ungodly ways. When we allow the wicked iron of ungodly peers to sharpen the countenance of our covenant young, we must not be surprised when our children learn from them. We must not be surprised when our young people begin to speak, dress and behave like them. God is not mocked when He warns His people to be separate from the ungodly.

Boys trained to be great leaders for the world will be weak leaders in the home and church. Covenant girls are lured into the evil trap forsaking their homes to enter the workforce.

The long-term effects of such an education are not difficult to foresee. Covenant boys raised under this system are bound to be ambitious, career-minded men whose priorities to do not lie with the church and their families. Boys trained to be great leaders for the world will be weak leaders in the home and church. Covenant girls are lured into the evil trap forsaking their homes to enter the workforce. It is alarming that the newspapers often heap praises upon women who are able to balance work and family life. Scripture knows nothing of this nonsense when it commands covenant mothers to be keepers at home (Tit. 2:5).

In the final analysis, an ungodly education produces spiritually impotent, doctrinally indifferent and ecclesiastically unconcerned children. This accounts for so much of the spiritual weakness present in the church today. How poignant and true are Rev. Ronald Hanko's words,

> Children who are taught in the unbelieving world and by the unbelieving world will seldom be a blessing to the church of Jesus Christ. Even if in

> time to come they do turn to the Lord, they will be beginners in the faith, having learned little or nothing of Christian doctrine and of the Christian life. And how few of them do turn from the way of the world! (Christian Education, http://www.cprf.co.uk/pamphlets/christianeducation.htm).

I have much sympathy for our covenant children who are needlessly placed in such a system where they suffer daily torments from its wickedness. They suffer needlessly. We as covenant parents can do much to remove this needless suffering. We can and must give them an education that is radically different—one that is based on Scripture alone and experiences the joy of knowing God in every subject. ❖

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Your Thoughts

Is Life Worthless?

by Brent De Jong

> *Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.*
>
> *I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.*
>
> *I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit.*

Solomon goes on, declaring all of life to be vanity. Work is vanity; wisdom is vanity; pleasure is vanity; life is vanity. The word "vanity" occurs 37 times in Ecclesiastes, and the phrase "vexation of spirit" 9 times. These are found together 7 times, the last of which is in Ecclesiastes 6. The first 25 occurrences of the word vanity are in those first six chapters. The first half of this book is easily the most depressing part of the Bible, and the second half isn't greatly uplifting.

Is life truly worthless? If we look at it from a purely practical, secular, soul-less point of view, we must say yes. Life is worthless. You will be forgotten here on this earth. You could be the wisest person alive, but the one who inherits what you've done, who takes your post, could be a fool. Your work could be ruined, for all you know. Farmers grow a crop just to harvest it and plant another crop the next year, or perhaps not even to harvest it. Although many of the problems with crop-killing insects and viruses have been taken care of by modern technology, it is not uncommon for crops to be flooded and killed. Scientists do experiment after experiment and never learn a thing. Osama bin Laden was killed, but he will be replaced by another terrorist for another generation of US spies to take out. Teachers teach children who grow up and die, perhaps having made a small discovery that will make life easier, which in turn will make the next generation of children less motivated. We face an endless cycle of failure if we keep our eyes in the here, regardless of the now.

If we look at it from a purely practical, secular, soulless point of view, we must say yes. Life is worthless.

But when we look beyond this world, when we look to Christ, we find the value of life. And the book does point to that, in some respects. The last seven verses of the book bring this out.

> Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, all is vanity. And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, and he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The preacher sought to find acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth. The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given by one shepherd. And further, by these, my son be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.
>
> Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

Although life may seem vain, we must not despair, for God will record what we do, taking always into ac-

count that blessed cross. Everything we as Christians do is run through a filter of Christ's blood and entered into God's ledger in anticipation of that blessed day when we enter into the Final Judgment. We do our work out of a love for God, which reveals itself in a positive attitude towards that work and the co-workers with whom we do it. ❖

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

The Parables of Our Lord

by Mandy Tolsma

The Young Adults Society in Loveland, Colorado is studying the parables of our Lord and using as a guide the book by Prof. Hanko, *The Mysteries of the Kingdom*. We have been studying it for one season and have made it through chapter 12 of the book. It has created much variety in our discussions. Our first few meetings we discussed why Jesus used parables and if they still apply to our lives today. Then we began the work of going through each parable and applying them to our lives among our brethren in the church and our relationships to those in the world around us.

We began with the parable of the sower and seed sown in his field in different types of soil (Matthew 13:3-9 and 18-23). We discussed how different groups of people reacted to the preaching of the word. Jesus is the sower, the field is the world, and the seed is the Word. Only those whose hearts are prepared by the Spirit will hear the word and bring forth fruit. In connection with this parable we also studied the parable in Matthew 13:24-30 about the enemy sowing tares in the field along with the good seed. We discussed whether or not the tares represented the people of the world or whether the tares were those enemies of Christ brought up in the church. This created some good questions on how we treat those in the church who are not bringing forth visible fruit in their lives. We know it is the will of God to bring up those who are "not of Israel" together with those who are his chosen elect. In doing so, he strengthens the faith of those in the church. We must be careful as Christians to make friends of those who not only claim to be Christ followers but who also live their lives in accordance with God's will.

We continued studying more parables that Prof. Hanko had put in this particular group all dealing with a warning to the elect to be aware of false doctrine and the enemies of the church, which can often be found in the church itself. In the final judgment God's perfect plan will be revealed to us and we will see the gathering of the elect to life eternal and the casting of the "tares" and the enemies of God's church into the lake of fire.

We then moved on to studying the parables that talk about how we are to treat our brothers and sisters in Christ and also how the love of Christ in our hearts should be reflected to those in the world around us who are not God's elect. We started with the parable in Matthew 18:23-35 that speaks of forgiving our brother. When we see our debt that was forgiven by Christ how much more do our brethren in the church deserve our forgiveness, which is often for sins that we ourselves have committed. One interesting topic that created a lot of discussion was "who is our neighbor" and what is our obligation to that person. In connection with this we discussed our obligations to help the "homeless" person on the side of the street. After much disagreement on the subject it was decided that the most important part of helping the neighbor is bringing them the Word of Christ. All the financial help in the world will not help a person if he does not turn his heart to following Christ.

Studying the Parables of our Lord has proved very beneficial in the spiritual growth of our Young Adults Society. We have grown in our understanding of how we are to treat each other despite our sins that we commit daily against one another and have learned how the love and forgiveness that Christ has shown us must be reflected in our lives not only to our brethren but also shining forth to the world around us. ❖

Mandy is a member of Loveland Protestant Reformed Church in Loveland, Colorado.

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter

July 6 Read Psalm 119:105-112

There are two verses to which I wish to call to your attention in this section. First of all there is verse 105. We live in a world of darkness. This darkness descended upon it at the fall. The only means by which the child of God can make his way in that darkness is with the light of God's word-Christ himself. This is also the testimony of John 1. Secondly look at verse 111. When we think of heritages, we often think of possessions. The law is one of those possessions that has been given to us from our covenant God and handed down through the line of continued generations. Do we treat it as a treasure? If we do, it will be the joy of our heart. Sing Psalter 334.

July 7 Read Psalm 119:113-120

Do we always hate vain or empty thoughts? There are many of them around us. Some of them are offered up in the guise of fun. Others are out and out sin. We need to pray often to God that he holds us up. Those vain thoughts will weigh us down and cause us not to walk in his law. Those fears mentioned in verse 120 are the fears that keep us from sin. God's law shows us that we must stay away from sin, or we will become like the wicked. As Solomon says, "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." Let us do this each and every day. Sing Psalter 335.

July 8 Read Psalm 119:121-128

As the Psalmist has been led through the way of affliction, he has learned that it is not what he must do for himself but rather what God must do for him. His only escape through every kind of trial is the law and mercy of God. These two ideas are inseparable because both are perfect. We cannot keep that law and it is only because of God's boundless mercy that we are not consumed by our sins. Do we hate every false way? Do we make this our prayer every day? When we confess that we love God's commandments above all else, then and only then can we have hope to hate the false way. Sing Psalter 336.

July 9 Read Psalm 119:129-136

As the Psalmist lived with those who were the church, he was distressed when he saw them breaking God's law. Through many experiences he had learned of the value of that Word, and how it was the way that God's people should live. Now he saw that law broken and trampled underfoot by those who had been saved by that law. What about us: are we moved to tears by the disregard of God's law by those around us? Are we zealous that God's law is handled even as valuable possessions are handled? Let us take comfort that God will use his law for our good and for the good of his church. Let us pray daily that God's face shine upon us and give to us peace. Sing Psalter 337.

July 10 Read Psalm 119:137-144

One comfort, which the child of God always has, is that no matter what the situation may be, God's commandments are delightful. As it is stated in the New Testament, God's law is not grievous. That law, which leads us to Christ, leads us upon a path that has a glorious end. That end is not found in this valley of the shadow of death. That end is in heaven where God will be praised every day. Trouble and anguish may be our lot now, but something far more glorious will be theirs who keep God's law. Let us pray daily for understanding that we may obtain that eternal life wrought for us by Christ. Sing Psalter 338.

July 11 Read Psalm 119:145-152

In verses 147 and 148 we have the word prevent. In this context it means to anticipate or begin before. The Psalmist here is anticipating a regular time of day, and in anticipating it, he begins his daily devotions before the usual time. We must pray and worship God privately. We do this by reading God's Word, for in that Word are the wonders of salvation. In that word is the light that will lead us upon the path of this life. Our anticipation of this time of worship shows not only our eagerness for that Word but also our dependence on that Word as our guide. In our leaning upon that Word, we confess that Jehovah is ever near us and will help us in all our needs. His Word is sure and everlasting; of that there is no doubt. Let us worship daily and come before his throne of grace in prayer. Sing Psalter 339.

July 12 Read Psalm 119:153-160

Each of us has been given some affliction in this life. These afflictions pale when compared to the affliction that God's Son our Savior suffered on our behalf. Our walk in his law leads us to Christ our Redeemer. We can face these afflictions and bear them because Jehovah's tender

mercies are great, and as the prophet Jeremiah said, they are "new every morning." Even in affliction the Psalmist was grieved because sinners walked not in God's ways. Are we so concerned about God's word that we can forget our troubles? We must pray to be quickened by God, for in that way we will find the peace and comfort that we need. Sing Psalter 340.

July 13 Read Psalm 119:161-168

While we might say that the Psalmist is boasting in this part of the Psalm, he is not boasting of himself. He realizes that the only way that he can live is through the law of God. Therefore, what appears to be boasting of his works is admiration for the law of God that guides him in all situations. Notice verse 165. Peace is a much sought after commodity. The world wants peace and cannot find it because daily they disregard the law of God. The child of God will walk without peace when he forgets or refuses to walk in that law. May we seek the peace that is everlasting and perfect. May we do this by daily loving God's law and living our lives out of that law. Sing Psalter 341.

July 14 Read Psalm 119:169-176

As the Psalmist closes this Psalm, he continues to utter forth words of praise and admiration for God's law. That law is invaluable to our lives. We need to read it, study it, learn it, and use it every day. This section is also a prayer. This, too, we must do each day and often each day. We, too, must confess that we need the hand of God to help us along the twists and turns of life's paths. Finally, once more he confesses that, because of sin, he goes astray. Do we realize this about ourselves? Are we ready to confess that we have gone astray? Let us, always, pray that God will seek us, take us from our lost condition, and set us on the right path. This is the way to true peace on this earth, and this is the way that will lead us to the coming glory. May we say every day, "O how love I thy law; it is my meditation all the day." Sing Psalter 342.

July 15 Read Psalm 120

There are many ideas about the next 15 Psalms entitled Songs of "Degrees." Some think these Psalms were composed to be sung as the Israelites made their way to Jerusalem or up to the temple. Others think they are post-exilic, sung by the captives as they came back and rebuilt the temple and the city. Each has its own characteristics and blessed message. Here we have a Psalmist who is in distress from those around him. Let us pray this prayer in our own distresses. We can pray this prayer because we have a heavenly Father who hears and answers prayers. Sing Psalter 343.

July 16 Read Psalm 121

This Psalm is a favorite of many. Verse 1 should really end in a question mark with the answer coming in verse 2. Our help is not in anything in God's wonderful creation. All of those wonders only serve to point us to its Maker, our covenant God. He, who created all things, will preserve us from all that might oppose us. This Psalm is a companion of comfort to the previous one. No matter what might distress us, God will preserve us. He will do it now, tomorrow, and until eternity. May we go to him in prayer every day looking for the preservation which he has graciously afforded us. Sing Psalter 347.

July 17 Read Psalm 122

This Psalm is one that provides saints of all ages immeasurable comfort. We can rejoice to go to God's house. In that house we will find the joy of our salvation; we will also find a comfort for all that distresses us in this life. Once we get into that house, we must pray for the peace of the whole church. We must remember each member in our prayers. When we do this, we will find peace for our own souls. In seeking our neighbor's good we will obey the second table of the law. Let us look with joy to go to church each Sabbath that we exist on this earth. In this way we will find spiritual prosperity to soothe our souls. Sing Psalter 348.

July 18 Read Psalm 123

Are we lifting our eyes up to God in heaven, or do we keep them fixed to this earth? While we might think that we can find help in the earth, its peoples, or even ourselves, we are mistaken. Our help is in God who has created us. The Psalm looks at the servant part of our friend-servant place in his covenant. Just as earthly servants depend on their masters, so we can depend on God. The wicked do not understand that dependency, and they mock us for it. What a blessing it is that we can go to him who is full of true mercy! Sing Psalter 351.

July 19 Read Psalm 124

What a comfort it is to know that the Lord is on our side! This comforts us in any situation. Whether it is the wicked, events in creation, or our own sinfulness, we can know that our God is with us. Israel had a lot of oppression from enemies. They also had sinfulness within the nation and within themselves. This was true both before and after captivity. While most of us may not be facing overt persecution, it is there. Let us continue to bless the Lord who does great things for us. Sing Psalter 353.

July 20 Read Psalm 125

Mountains are symbols for safety the world over. The people of Jerusalem could look out at the mountains of the holy city and know that they afforded them protec-

tion. The people of Switzerland have the same feelings. But yet, Jerusalem found out, and any nation of the world today can discover that God is in control. He is the true mountain of safety for his people. Our help comes from Jehovah who made the heavens and the earth. We must pray that God will do good for us, and we can pray that prayer knowing that he will give to us peace now and for eternity. Sing Psalter 354.

July 21 Read Psalm 126

How many great things has Jehovah done for us? After we consider salvation and all its benefits, there are still many more. As the Psalm indicates, sometimes these things are begun in tears. Hard situations will become good for us by our Lord's providential hand. Take a minute and consider all that God had done for you as an individual, but also what he has done for your family and the manifestation of the body of Christ to which you belong. Let us be glad and thank Jehovah our covenant God. Sing Psalter 357.

July 22 Read Psalm 127

Two main thoughts are found in this Psalm, and they are closely connected. First of all we see that unless all of our work is established by Jehovah God it will go for naught. This is true no matter what the work is. This is true no matter what the importance of the work is. God must bless that work, and he will only bless work that is done in accordance with his law and is pleasing to him. We must see that this is true as we go through a day, a week, a month, or a year. Let us use this principle as a guide in our daily life. Sing Psalter 359.

July 23 Read Psalm 127

The second thought in this Psalm concerns covenant children and who they are. They are his heritage and reward to us. Do we consider this as we raise a covenant family? Do we consider this as we think about raising a covenant family? Children are not planned or their birth controlled by us. Children are God's reward to a faithful marriage established in Christ and continued in his name. Covenant children give to the parents of those children the opportunity to "work out their salvation" in them. Those children will give to the parents many opportunities to grow closer and closer to the covenant God. Jehovah builds our houses, and he alone will bless them. Sing Psalter 359.

July 24 Read Psalm 128

In this Psalm we see a theme that appears in other Psalms and in other places in God's Word. That theme is the blessedness of fearing Jehovah. Remembering that the word blessed could also be translated happy gives to us a meaning that can carry us through any difficulties in this life. This Psalm looks at a particular aspect of the fear of Jehovah. We must fear him in our homes and in our lives in that home. Notice the rewards found in that fear. First of all we will see the covenant blessedness for many generations. But we will also see a peace in God's church. Let us fear Jehovah, and let us live out of that fear in the homes established in and by our covenant God. Sing Psalter 360.

July 25 Read Psalm 129

Israel as a nation and as individuals faced enemies throughout their history. Whether it was heathen nations, individuals who hated God and his cause, or even those who were related to them, there were those who tried to destroy God's people and his cause. It has been no different throughout the history of the church. Even today God's people are afflicted. But, like Israel of old, we can say "Jehovah is righteous." We can relay on him who will make the enemies as grass that faces a mower. Jehovah's blessing will be upon us. Let us bless those in the church in his name who protects his people in all situations. Sing Psalter 361.

July 26 Read Psalm 130

Christians from all time periods of life have been in the depths of despair. It may be despair caused by their own sins or despair caused by the wicked around them. When in despair there is only one thing to do. We must cry unto Jehovah God. Notice the contrast in verses 3 and 4. On the once hand there are sins so great that they cannot be numbered. On the other hand there is unfathomable forgiveness. We must wait upon God even when the situation seems the darkest. There is the foundation for our hope. That foundation is mercy and redemption. We can have confidence that he will deliver us from the depths of deepest despair. Wait on Jehovah, people of God, and he will afford to us deliverance. Sing Psalter 362.

July 27 Read Psalm 131

David like all children of God did not always walk in this truth. It is so against the nature of man not to be proud. We wish to insert "I" into every sentence and every conversation. Daily we need to pray for humility of spirit. Only in this way can we truly love God and especially love our neighbor as ourselves. We need to be weaned away from the "me first" attitude. This is done only by grace. When we do this, then we can hope only in Jehovah for all things. Let quiet humility be our prayer and desire in this life. Sing Psalter 366.

July 28 Read Psalm 132:1-10

Do we have as much concern for God's house as David did? Now it is true that the church buildings in which we worship do not have the symbolism as the tabernacle or temple and their furnishings had for Israel of old. We do not live in the age of types and shadows that those saints did. Christ has come and we must worship God "in spirit

and in truth" as Jesus taught us. However, we must be concerned for the church. Not the building but the body of Christ must be our concern. Do we find rest within that body? Are we concerned about it so that we can find that rest? Sing Psalter 367.

July 29 Read Psalm 132:11-18

We continue on with this beautiful Psalm about the church, the body of Christ. God had made a promise to David that he and his descendants would remain on the throne until Christ came. Christ has come, but God still promises to his people peace in that church. He will remain in that body. He will care for all of its members from the very old to the very young, from the officebearers to the poor. All of us are comprehended under Jehovah's covenant promise. Let us show our thanksgiving as we care for the church of Christ. Sing Psalter 368.

July 30 Read Psalm 133

For Israel of old this Psalm had much significance. For us to realize the beautiful meaning of this Psalm we must understand the pictures found within it. As each officebearer was anointed, the sweet smell of the oil that wafted over the crowd reminded them of the sweetness of the love God had given to them, and that they must show to each other. The moisture that settled from the mountains over their fields reminded them of the same thing. Do we desire that unity in the church? Do we work to keep that unity? Do we seek that unity as it is found in the Word of God? Do we seek it each week and even each day of that week? There is a blessing found in that unity. It is the blessed life in heaven united with Christ and his whole body. Let us seek that unity and its blessings. Sing Psalter 371.

July 31 Read Psalm 134

In this Psalm we are called, first of all, to bless Jehovah. We are called to speak good things about him. We must do this in our prayers both private and public, and we must do this as we engage in conversations with each other. The Psalmist calls us to do this, but he also pronounces a blessing upon God's people. We must do this as well. We must proclaim to each other that our creator God will bless us only in the way of the church. Notice the progression from Psalm 132 to 133 to this one. Let us seek the good of the church by blessing God and seeking his blessings upon us. Sing Psalter 372.

August 1 Read Psalm 135:1-14

Here we have another Psalm of praise. There are many reasons given in this part of the Psalm why Israel and we should praise Jehovah. Notice what the first one is. Jehovah has chosen us. What a wonderful thought that is! What a precious thought that is! As we continue down life's pathway we can know that he will care for his precious treasure. The God who is in control of all things will care for us no matter what the circumstances are. Is this not comforting? Let us praise the Lord whose name is everlasting, and let us remember him in all that we do. Sing Psalter 374.

August 2 Read Psalm 135:15-21

We might be inclined to think that the first part of this section has little meaning for us in the Western world. We might think that our brothers and sisters in the East should read this often, but all of God's people must consider it. There is much idol worship in this land. We are prone to fall into that sin as well. Just think about the program American Idol. When we are inclined to fall into this sin, let us remember the last three verses of the Psalm. Our God is in the heavens. We must speak good things about him at all times. Finally, we are called to praise him and him alone. Sing Psalter 375.

August 3 Read Psalm 136:1-9

This Psalm is antiphonal in nature. It was used for some of the special celebrations in Jerusalem. Imagine half of the congregation on one side of the city chanting or singing the first half of the lines, and half on the other side doing the same with the second halves. Or imagine a choir of Levites doing the same thing. The verses have synthetic parallelism for the poetic effect as well. The oft repeated "for his mercy endureth for ever" gives the reason for all that is done. May we remember the great Creator's mercy that he has shown to us. May we do this every day. Sing Psalter 376.

August 4 Read Psalm 136:10-22

History lessons are always good for God's people. Israel needed them; that is why we have so many historical or national Psalms. Not only are these types of Psalms good for us, but they also show us the merciful loving kindness of our God in the church's history. We, like Israel, do not deserve the least of the benefits God has bestowed upon us. God's care for his church throughout the ages is unsurpassable. It is another picture of how limitless his grace is toward the church. Let us give thanks to the God whose mercy endures forever. Sing Psalter 377.

August 5 Read Psalm 136:23-26

As we end this Psalm whose words give to us great reason to give thanks unto Jehovah, let us contemplate the great things God has done for us. In our sins we were in a very low estate. He has not only redeemed Israel from its physical enemies, he has redeemed all his church from Satan and his hosts. He cares for us both physically and spiritually. Our God sits in the heavens reigning over all. Our sovereign God cares for each of us every day. Give thanks to him! Sing Psalter 378.

Be Firm in the Truth

by Rev. Rodney Miersma

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ (Eph. 4:14, 15).

The last time we heard from the Pastor's Study we were instructed in the first verse of this chapter to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." This time we once again look at another admonition from the apostle Paul as he applies the doctrinal truths which he gave us in the first three chapters of this letter. Although written to the whole church of Christ, this word can be applied specifically to the youth of the church. Youth are like tender saplings which can easily be bent or broken by the winds of false doctrine. Thus the exhortation to "be firm in the truth."

Youth are like tender saplings which can easily be bent or broken by the winds of false doctrine. Thus the exhortation to "be firm in the truth."

There are two figures in the text. First, there is the figure of a child, of an inexperienced babe, that can easily be led astray and is inclined to follow others. Second, there is the figure of a ship. It sails across the ocean and is met by angry waves and all kinds of contrary winds, which the apostle calls winds of doctrine. A ship must have a strong helm. And at the helm of the church there must be a strong helmsman. The helmsman is Jesus Christ who steers the church to the safe destination of that eternal harbor. He uses his word which he has revealed to us in the holy scriptures, and by his Holy Spirit.

Negatively, the youth of the church must be firm over against all kinds of false doctrine. You are like a ship crossing a storm-tossed sea that meets all kinds of winds which, if not fought against, will prevent the ship from reaching a safe harbor, her proper destination. These winds try to drive the ship off her course so that it gets nowhere and is even shipwrecked.

So also are false doctrines in relation to the church of Christ. There are all kinds of false doctrines. Not one doctrine of the truth as it is in Christ has not been denied or attacked. The holy scriptures are denied as the infallible record of the word of God. Also attacked are the doctrines of the Trinity, predestination, the natures of Christ, his atonement, resurrection, exaltation, and his coming again. There are the truths concerning the church, the means of grace, and the sacraments. Many not only have been but are the false winds that seek to throw the church off its straight course, most recently the old heresy of denying justification by faith alone as set forth by the proponents of the Federal Vision.

The question is why? What motivates these false teachers? Is it because they simply honestly err? Do they not know any better? Are they simply honestly presenting what is their conviction? In answer we do not have to depend upon our own opinion. The answer is in our text. It is because of the sleight of men, cunning craftiness, and because they lie in wait to deceive. Scripture has no patience with men of such like and warns us that we must not even say good-bye nor receive into our home those that do not teach the truth of Scripture.

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The sleight of men in the original makes one think of the game of gambling. One gambles with the truth. They do so for filthy lucre, not because they love Christ or his church. Such a one fleeces the sheep rather than feeds them. They seek their own carnal ambitions. Such is a false prophet.

One who practices cunning craftiness plays hocus pocus with the truth. They twist and twist the truth in such a way that you no longer can recognize it from the lie. One who speaks the truth can do so clearly, unambiguously, so that you do not have any question as to the truth. Only when you exercise cunning craftiness, play hocus pocus with the truth, do you have to camouflage it.

Why? Because they lie in wait to deceive. All these things belong together. The gambling part of it is the selfish motive of their own ambition and filthy lucre. Cunning craftiness is the method that they employ. All with the purpose to deceive the people of God into believing that the lie is the truth.

Therefore, the apostle warns you young people as well as the whole church of Jesus Christ. Thus, also the exhortation to not be as children, meaning that one must not be easily led astray, but strong in the truth. These false doctrines will come at you from many different ways. You will not be able to prevent your coming into contact with all these false doctrines. By the grace of God you must use these false doctrines to establish the truth. God uses them to wake up the church that it may be set strongly against false doctrines. The calling of the church is to develop the truth over against the false doctrine. Instead of being docile in regard to false doctrine, one must be strong and say "No!"

If tossed about by every wind of doctrine we lose Christ. The text says that we must grow up, grow up into Christ. Without Christ we have nothing, for in Christ as the organic head of the church is all our salvation. Therefore, we must grow into Christ in order that we may grow out of Christ, become like him, conformable to his image.

Positively, then, you must be firm with a view to the truth. You must grow into Christ. Just as a little tree strikes its roots into the soil so you must strike your roots into Christ. If God in his grace gave us roots so that we are able to strike into Christ, then we seek all our food, all our nourishment, all the spiritual blessings from Christ alone. Hence, we strike our roots deeper and deeper into Christ. If we do that, then we must not have false doctrine. There is no other Christ than that of the Scriptures. As soon as you depart from the truth of the Scriptures and follow false teachers, you lose Christ, you strike your roots into the wrong soil. The result is that you suck poison into your soul instead of Christ.

As soon as you depart from the truth of the Scriptures and follow false teachers, you lose Christ, you strike your roots into the wrong soil. The result is that you suck poison into your soul instead of Christ.

Not only must you grow into Christ, but you must also grow out of Christ so that all the manifestation of your life becomes like Christ. As one grows into him, one derives everything out of him; and deriving everything out of him, one becomes conformable to his image. In this way you and I work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

This is all a very serious matter. One cannot be indifferent with respect to the truth. You may not gamble with the truth. It is either…or, not both…and. Therefore, grow up into Christ in all things. You must not grow into anything that is outside of Christ. You must have nothing to do with that which is foreign. Both in one's inward life and outward manifestation and walk of life one must grow spiritually into and out of Christ.

You can do this by speaking the truth in love, the truth as it is in Christ. That must be done in love. It must not be the goodie-goodie love of man which embraces false doctrine and which does not want controversy. But it must be the love of God, that which he has towards his people in Christ, the love which he puts into our hearts so that we taste it. This love will find its response by the grace of God in the love of us to God.

That, young people, is your calling. Speak the truth in love; put away all false doctrine, and grow up into Christ. In this way the Lord pours out his blessings. ❖

Rev. Miersma is an emeritus minister of the Protestant Reformed Church. This article is adapted from a chapel speech given at Trinity Christian High School.

"The Lord Gave the Word": Commemorating the 400th Anniversary of the King James Version (2) "Open to the Understanding of Simple Men": John Wycliffe and the Beginning of the English Bible (2)

by Jonathan Langerak, Jr.

Wycliffe's Translating

Wycliffe put the truth of "feed[ing] his flock on the Word of God"[1] into practice. First, he preached God's Word faithfully for his congregation at Lutterworth, especially after his expulsion from Oxford in 1382. Secondly, he trained hundreds of men—only men—and sent them out from his parish in Lutterworth two-by-two to bring God's Word throughout England. The authorities of the Roman Church in England scornfully referred to them as "Lollards"[2] and persecuted them grievously. Third, Wycliffe began the process of the translation of the Bible into English.

There is debate today as to whether Wycliffe himself actually translated the versions of Scripture known as the "Wycliffite Bibles." We are not interested in the details of this debate, but will take the position that seems most credible, as it is presented by Stephen Prescott: "With his massive literary output and his scholarly circle of disciples at hand, we might envisage [Wycliffe] organizing, overseeing, correcting, and editing the work, and probably also undertaking parts of it himself, and the result was the 'First [Wycliffe]' version of 1380."[3]

And if someone should complain that there is not sufficient evidence to sustain the position that Wycliffe himself translated at all, then we fall on the correct assessment of British scholar and professor Gordon Campbell: "The translation was certainly inspired by [Wycliffe], so, even if he was not directly involved in the translation, it is rightly known as the 'Wycliffite Bible.'"[4]

The Wycliffe translations were of two versions. The first was made between 1380-82 by Nicholas Hereford, a student and friend of Wycliffe at Oxford and a fellow of Queen's College, Cambridge. (A "fellow" was a student incorporated into the governing body of a college and thereby entitled to certain privileges.) Hereford translated literally, following the word order of the Latin so closely that the meaning of the text was often obscured and effectively rendered useless for use by laypersons in private reading. The second, superior version was made in 1395, eleven years after Wycliffe's death, by his personal secretary John Purvey. Purvey made better use of English idiom; that is, he used English phrases in English word order to render a fluid and understandable text. He also provided a prologue and epilogue for each book of the Bible, as well as a General Prologue for the entire translation, and introduced marginal notes from the writings of church fathers such as Nicholas of Lyra and Augustine of Hippo, and from the writings of Dr. Robert Grosseteste, a professor first of Wycliffe and later of

1 C.P. Callihan, *The Authorised Version: A Wonderful and Unfinished History* (London: Trinitarian Bible Society, 2010), 9.

2 The origins of the label "lollard" are of some debate. The most reasonable explanation is that this abusive epithet is derived from the English form of the Latin word "lolium" (plural: 'lolia'), meaning 'tares.' The comparison of heretics to tares sown by the devil in the wheat-field of the Romish Church was a cherished motif of the papists. This was the thrust of the papal bull against John Wycliffe which he received at Oxford on May 22, 1377: "Tares among the pure wheat," or, in Latin 'Lolium inter purum' (*The Lollard New Testament*, trans. and ed. Stephen P. Westcott (Fairfax, VA: Xulon Press, 2002), 24).

3 Ibid, 25.

4 Gordon Campbell, *Bible: The Story of the King James Version*, 1611-2011 (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010), 9.

Purvey himself at Oxford,[5] whose teaching had helped to formulate their mature view of Holy Writ. The nearly 170 hand-written (manuscript) copies of the Wycliffe Bible that survive are mostly of the version by John Purvey.[6]

The Importance of the Wycliffe Bibles

The importance of the Wycliffe Bibles is two-fold.

> …the translations of Wycliffe and his colleagues were the first ever English translations of the *complete* Bible.

First, the translations of Wycliffe and his colleagues were the first ever English translations of the *complete* Bible. In the early ecclesiastical history of England, before the Romish Church had tightened her suffocating grip on the realm, there were many translations of portions of Scripture into the very crude English of that period, especially of the Psalms and the four Gospels. Wycliffe, due in no small part to the instruction of Dr. Grosseteste, recognized that God's Word is a unified whole, united in both the Old and New Testaments in Jesus Christ: in the Old Testament as Christ prophesied and looked-for as Israel's hope and expectation; and in the New Testament as Christ incarnated, crucified, risen, ascended, and hoped-for in His final, triumphant coming for judgment. Therefore, Wycliffe saw to it that the entire Vulgate was translated into English.

Second, Wycliffe's translation approached more to the method of translation known today as *formal equivalence*. That is, Wycliffe insisted upon a careful, word-for-word (Latin: *verbum pro verbo*) translation from the Latin into the English. For one Latin word, there was only the required number of English words. *Words*, not thoughts or "senses," were translated. The translation of thoughts or "senses" of passages, instead of actual words, was the practice widely followed in the making of the earlier, fragmentary English translations of Scripture portions, which translations were often poetic settings or paraphrases of a passage. The translation of thoughts or "senses" is the shoddy method of *dynamic equivalence*, followed in the making of most, if not all, modern Bible versions. Wycliffe would have repudiated, indeed did repudiate, such nonsense. His carefully formulated doctrine of Scripture as God's Word to his church demanded that he insist upon a careful, word-for-word, literal translation from the Latin to the English.[7] If the meaning should in some places be obscured, then let the travelling Lollard preacher sort it out for the people in his expository preaching on the text!

The Wycliffe translations were not perfect. Their single greatest weakness was that they were not based on the original languages of the Bible—Hebrew for the Old Testament and Greek for the New—but on the Latin of the Vulgate, and crude Latin at that. In as much as they were based on the Latin Vulgate, his translations also incorporated the errors of the Vulgate into English. However, in its weakness we may perhaps see its greatest strength: they emphasized the great need for translations based on the original languages. More than two centuries later God would raise up William Tyndale, John Rogers, Miles Coverdale, and the King James men to supply this need.

"Open to the Understanding of Simple Men"

Despite their defects, the Wycliffe Bibles undoubtedly provided that sincere milk of the Word and the meat and drink of righteousness after which the beleaguered and starved souls of God's remnant in England hungered and thirsted with an all-consuming fervor. Now truly "open to the understanding of simple men"[8] was God's holy Word: to the peasant in his thatched hut, to the cloth merchant in London, even to the heretofore mostly ig-

5 Grosseteste once thundered against a command of Pope Innocent VI to make Innocent's infant nephew a canon (council member) at Lincoln Cathedral with these mighty words: "After the sin of Lucifer, there is none more opposed to the gospel than that which ruins souls by giving them a faithless minister. Bad pastors are the cause of heresy, unbelief, and disorder!" (cited in Herman Hanko's, *Portraits of Faithful Saints* (Grandville, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1999), 107). Wycliffe and Purvey both were certainly one in this assessment and warning with their fearless professor.

6 Benson Bobrick, *Wide as the Waters: The Story of the English Bible and the Revolution It Inspired* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 52.

7 I am indebted for this insight to C.P. Callihan, who notes on pg. 25 of his slim but significant volume on the history of English Bible translation: "All translation before Wycliffe reads like poetic paraphrase. Wycliffe, in terms of the text before him (which, of course, was the Latin), approximated more nearly to the formal equivalence approach than these earlier attempts at translation. Unlike his predecessors, Wycliffe had a thoroughgoing doctrine of Scripture driving him to a carefulness that resulted in this more formal equivalence."

8 Bobrick, *Wide as the Waters*, 50

norant village priest, whose knowledge of the Scripture often extended no further than the fragments of the Latin Vulgate he could salvage from his hurried mumbling through the Mass. Wycliffe's translation stood in high demand. The martyrologist John Foxe (1516-1587) tells us that the folk paid whatever was necessary with whatever was at hand to obtain even a small portion of God's Word in their mother tongue; in order "to taste the sweetness of God's Holy Word…some paid more, some less; some gave a load of hay for a few chapters of St. Paul or St. James."[9] Moreover, after the prohibition of

…some gave a load of hay for a few chapters of St. Paul or St. James.

God's Word into English by Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Arundel (1353-1414), when even having a copy of a Wycliffe Bible in one's position was grounds for death, Lollard "cells" still fearlessly gathered in each others' homes to read Scripture, to pray together around God's Word, or listen to a sermon from a travelling Lollard preacher. Truly, "the word of the Lord was precious in those days" (I Samuel 3:1).

"That Wretched and Pestilent Fellow…John Wycliffe"

What was so precious to God's people in England, namely, that they should have their God speaking to them in their own tongue, was odious in the nostrils of the papist church authorities, and they wickedly opposed his doctrine and the out-working of that doctrine in his work of bringing the Bible into the common tongue.

In 1380, when the first Wycliffe edition by Nicholas Hereford appeared, a canon (a member of the cathedral council) of the city of Leicester, Henry Knighton, complained that Wycliffe had made holy scripture "more open to the reading of laymen and women than it had previously been to the best instructed among the clergy; and thus the jewel of clerics is turned to the sport of the laity, and the pearl of the Gospel is scattered abroad and trodden underfoot by swine."[10] Benson Bobrick, in his scholarly and comprehensive history of the English Bible: *Wide As The Waters*, notes in connection with this fuming of Knighton: "Such fears, of course, were not unfounded, as ignorant, confused, and twisted interpretations can be imposed on any text."[11] This reinforces what we noted in our opening article to this series. Such "ignorant, confused, and twisted interpretations" are avoided through the church's formulation of *creeds*, which clearly and antithetically define for the church of Jesus Christ what the Word of God is and summarize and interpret for the people what the Word of God teaches.

No doubt with the calumny of Knighton in mind, Wycliffe offered a spirited defense of his work in 1381, in a work entitled "The Wicket." He wrote:

> They say it is heresy to speak of the Holy Scriptures in English, and so they would condemn the Holy Ghost, who gave it in tongues to the apostles of Christ, to speak the word of God in all languages that were ordained of God under heaven, as it is written [in Acts 11]. And…Christ was so merciful as to send the Holy Ghost to heathen men [Acts 8], and make them partakers of the blessed Word, why, then, should it be taken away from this land, that are Christian men?"[12]

But it would be hard to find a man who hated Wycliffe and his Bible more than Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Arundel. Although his tenure as Archbishop of Canterbury occurred after Wycliffe's death, this did not spare Arundel from having to deal with the full force of Wycliffe's work as the Lollards grew in number and in efficiency. In 1408, Arundel convened a council of bishops at Oxford, and high on the agenda was how to deal with the Lollard problem. The "final solution" the council produced took the form of a "draconian set of laws,"[13] the so-called Constitutions of Oxford. Article VII of these Constitutions read in part: "We therefore command and ordain that henceforth no one translate on his own authority any text of Holy Scripture into English…and that no one read anything of this kind [that is, a translation of Holy Scripture into English—JL] made in the time of the said John Wycliffe…either publicly or privately, whole or in part."[14] And in a 1412 letter to the pope listing no less than 267 purported heresies of John Wycliffe which Arundel considered "worthy of the fire," he fumed insanely: "That wretched and pestilent fellow,

9 Ibid, 73.

10 Bobrick, *Wide as the Waters*, 51.

11 Ibid.

12 qtd. in Prescott, *The Lollard New Testament*, 27.

13 Derek Wilson, *The People's Bible: The Remarkable History of the King James Version* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2010), 22.

14 Bobrick, *Wide as the Waters*, 68.

son of the Serpent, herald and child of Antichrist, John Wycliffe, *filled up the measure of his malice by devising the expedient of a new translation of Scripture into the mother tongue.*"[15] The translation of Holy Writ into the language of the people was, in Arundel's estimation and Rome's, John Wycliffe's filling of his own cup of iniquity! Such was and is Rome's hatred of the Scripture! And such was and is Rome's hatred of the one, true God who reveals Himself in the Scriptures!

At last, Rome could contain herself no longer. The apostate whore of the Romish Church would not rest until she had done her worst to John Wycliffe, who had shed the light of the gospel on the people and exposed her dark and deep apostasy for all to see. God had protected his servant Wycliffe in life from harm at the hands of Rome. For although they had expelled him in 1382, the authorities of Oxford had done so reluctantly, and for the remaining two years of his life had continued to pull the necessary strings to see that no evil came upon him. But Rome was determined to get him. If not while he was living, then when he was dead. At the Council of Constance in 1428, the council which condemned the Bohemian reformer John Hus to burning at the stake, Rome also condemned the corpse of John Wycliffe to the same fate. In a grotesque ritual in the dead of the night, Wycliffe's body was exhumed from its 44-year repose in St. Mary's Churchyard at Lutterworth and burned. His ashes were then scattered on the River Swift.

Conclusion

However, God determined that Wycliffe's ashes, forlornly borne on the currents of the Swift River (called the "Avon" in the poem below), became not the picture of his defeat but a metaphor for his triumph. As his ashes floated widely, so the English Bible whose translation he sponsored had spread through the realm. And his doctrine, founded upon the Word of God, spread beyond the borders of England and would preserve the flame of true faith in God and in Christ Jesus until the day in which God ordained full reformation should break upon Europe. Therefore, this prophecy arose: "The Avon to the Severn runs/ The Severn to the sea/ And Wycliffe's dust shall spread abroad/ Wide as the waters be."[16] ❖

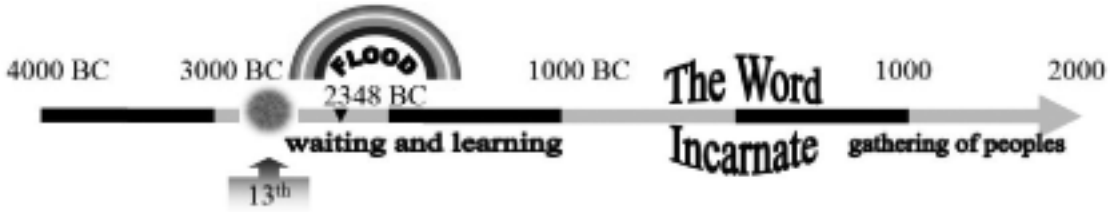
Jonathan is a member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Wyoming, Michigan.

15 Ibid, 69, emphasis added.

16 Bobrick, *Wide as the Waters*, 73.

The Thirteenth Century of His-Story:
The Church in the World that Then Was

by John Huizenga



In the last installment of this series, we noticed how small the church looked as she existed in this world among giants. Even though the church that existed between the time of creation and the flood was in many respects very similar to the church that exists today, in this article we will take note of the fact that the church existed

in a very different world. We speak now of "world" in the sense of the planet with all its life, as well as the geography and climate in which that life lives. God reveals this truth with the words, "the world that then was" (II Peter 3), implying that the world then was so different, that it was like it was a different planet. It no longer exists, but if we could be dropped into that world, we might conclude that we were on a different planet, even though many things would be familiar. We have already looked in previous articles at the plant life and weather. This time we will look at the geology of the world.

The context of the above quote from II Peter has to do with the tendency of natural man to ignore and dismiss any history that doesn't fit into current experience. It is like man lives in his own little bubble of experience where history beyond must be simply an extension of what he now experiences. It is a very proud and man-centered attitude. As God describes the flood, he explains the tremendous upheavals in creation and torrents of water with language that is difficult for us to fathom. We have lived to see some examples in our own world of the power of flood waters, but God inspired Peter to use language that helps give us the proper perspective. On the one hand, ungodly man has worked hard to dismiss the stories as something that belongs in the realm we call "mythology." But God says "For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water." By nature we gravitate toward ignorance as well. But on the other hand, man needs to understand by faith that a world existed then which is no more. "Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (2 Pet. 3:5-7).

One striking fact that God reveals through Peter is that the earth then was a *watery* world; whereas the world now is characterized by *fire*. Fire is the engine that drives geological change in our present earth. The best scientific tools of the day have enabled us to understand that the surface of the earth is but a crust that floats upon a sea of melted rock. This crust is broken into various plates that currently are moving, driven it seems by the slow currents of molten rock flowing below. The plates grind together causing earthquakes. They are forced together in places to form mountains that even now are growing taller at a rate of centimeters per year. In other areas the edge of a plate is forced beneath another into the molten rock beneath. The crust is melted down and "recycled" as is were. At places, plumes of this melted crust rise and the magma pushes through the crust. In the volcanoes we see first hand the great heat and power of the fires below. We live in a world where the various types of rock are defined in terms of the effect of great heat and pressure.

The ungodly scientist assumes that these slow, fire-driven geological movements we currently observe have been continuing at a relatively constant pace over the past millions of years saying "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Pet. 3:4). (By "creation" the prevailing notion among ungodly scientists would be "cooling matter after the big bang etc.) But through the spectacles of Scripture we see that the movements we observe now are but the dying waves of tremendous geological upheaval. Things do not continue as they were from the beginning of the world. God created a world, then that world was shattered and destroyed by the geological upheavals and unleashing of the watery matrix that defined that world. As the earth was broken, mountains pushed upward and ocean floors began to sink. Now the waters are held in deep oceans, ice, and the atmosphere. They no longer permeate the earth as they did. Fire now permeates the earth and drives its geology.

The world then did not have the volcanoes and earthquakes that today are due to the fiery nature of the earth. It may very well be that more of the earth's surface was water, and the land was limited to one continent. Continents and mountains that exist now, were at one time part of the ocean floor as the fossil evidence reveals. Clouds didn't gather to bring rain, but rather "there went up a mist from the earth and, watered the whole face of the earth" (Gen. 2:6). After the flood, God sovereignly ordained that the seasons as we know them along with the cold and heat will continue in this world until the end of time (Gen. 8:22). In the world that then was, God only spoke of night and day. So if the seasons are something unique to this world, then that world did not have seasons which are the result of the world being tilted on its axis. It was a world that was designed for the thriving of life in all its forms. The long life-spans would make it a world in which aging and death would be a rare and unusual occurrence apart from the growing violence and murder. Families were very large and the flow of knowledge and history could be absorbed over long periods of time.

Why was God pleased to have two worlds? I think we can find at least two reasons given in Scripture. First, God in II Peter compares the first judgment and destruction of the first world to the second when he comes to

destroy this world with fire and make a new heavens and a new earth. In this we see the power of God who in the past has made a new world, and who has revealed that he will again make a new heavens and a new earth in the way of a fiery destruction. Another reason is suggested by the truth that Jesus is coming quickly. God often reveals that the fulfilling of God's plan and purpose of saving the church in Christ is being accomplished as quickly as possible. The old world of long life-spans favored a quick development of sin and the power of antichrist. In this world we have a quickened pace of generations—it is as though history is in fast forward hastening to the second coming of Christ. It is a world in which nations multiply and the various tribes and peoples which God ordained to populate the church quickly form and develop. It is a world in which we better see the glory and power of God to save his church.

Let us rejoice as we see the great power and sovereignty of God to create new worlds and quickly gather his church. ❖

John is a teacher at Trinity Christian High School, a member of Hull Protestant Reformed Church and the Editor of Beacon Lights.

Creation Through the Spectacles of Scripture

A Perspective on Global Warming

by Rev. Marcus

Not many years ago, we began to hear that the carbon dioxide (CO_2) gas, produced by man and accumulating in the atmosphere, was causing the earth's surface temperatures to rise. CO_2 is produced when people and animals breathe; but it is also produced when carbon-based fuels such as coal and gasoline are burned in power plants and cars. Almost every process related to industry can be tied to the production of CO_2 in some way, because industry requires energy, and most of the energy we use is produced by burning carbon-based fuels.

If CO_2 were to cause a temperature increase in the earth's atmosphere, some fear it would bring widespread misery for mankind and creation as a whole. With higher temperatures, ice caps on the poles might melt, causing sea levels to rise and overwhelm coastal cities with rising tides. A rise in earth's temperatures would affect all kinds of ecosystems, from rain forests to coral reefs. If ecosystems changed, the plants and animals in them would also be affected, possibly leading to the extinction of many species. On the other hand, species such as the Malaria-carrying mosquito might become more widespread, thus increasing the incidence of disease. Not only that, hurricanes, tornadoes, and other storm phenomena might intensify as a result of global warming. In short, global warming is predicted to be the great spoiler of the earth as we know it.

In light of such dire predictions, the United Nations along with many governments and non-government organizations have been pushing an agenda ostensibly aimed at limiting the production of man-made CO_2 with the goal of curbing global warming. If mankind was able to reduce CO_2 emissions to a sufficient degree, we would be able to stop global warming and its horrible consequences; so goes the thinking of global warming proponents.

* * * * *

Most would agree that the earth warmed somewhat in the 1990s. But much disagreement exists concerning the cause of that warming, specifically whether or not mankind is responsible for it. As believers, we are thus confronted with the question as to what is a proper biblical and informed response to the idea of global warming.

Below are a few thoughts.

What if CO_2 pollution from mankind is truly causing global warming, and dire consequences are likely to follow? How should we respond as believers?

In the first place, whether man-induced global warming is happening or not, it behooves us to be responsible stewards of God's creation. Therefore, if we believe that mankind is responsible for global warming, we ought to limit those activities which increase CO_2 in the atmosphere. However, we do need to be careful that we not fall into the worship of creation. Our care of creation must always be subservient to our worship and service of God. Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Yes, we should be good stewards of creation; but, it is not our place to go on crusades to stop global warming. It is our place to seek first the spiritual kingdom of Christ.

Secondly, if and when laws are made that seek to curb global warming, we ought to submit to those laws knowing that God has placed that authority over us. As long as obedience to government does not cause us to sin against God, it is our duty to obey. 1 Peter 2:13-14: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well."

If indeed, the earth warmed to unprecedented levels and weather chaos resulted in famines and pestilences, we must see all these things as part of God's greater purpose in history.

In the next place, if we believe that man-made global warming is occurring, we must not be anxious about events that may or may not be unfolding. That might be a temptation if and when disasters begin to occur around the world. We need to remember these things form part of God's plan to bring about the goal of all creation. Jesus himself predicted such things would happen as the end approaches. Matthew 24:7-8: "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows." If indeed, the earth warmed to unprecedented levels and weather chaos resulted in famines and pestilences, we must see all these things as part of God's greater purpose in history.

The four horses of revelation do not ride through the earth doing their own will and pleasure; rather, they all have riders who direct them according to God's glorious plan to save his people. Two of the horses especially, the black horse and the pale horse, have to do with the growing of crops and the lives of people, which things might be affected by global warming. Revelation 6:5-8: "And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine. And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth." The black horse controls famine and plenty, which many believe would be affected through global warming. Similarly, the pale horse represents death in all its forms. Should a great world-wide famine occur, the pale horse could oversee the deaths of millions upon millions of people. The fact that the black horse was not allowed to hurt the oil and the wine shows that the horses are carrying out God's will of decree, not going beyond it in any way, shape or form.

Finally, as regards the possibility that global warming might be occurring, we must keep in mind that there will be no global warming (or cooling, for that matter), but what God himself has decreed. And, since we belong to Jesus Christ body and soul, in life and in death, we can have comfort even if the most dire predictions came to pass. Nothing shall separate us from the love of God, which is ours in Christ Jesus (cf. Rom. 8:35-39).

* * * * *

Another response to global warming is to look at it more skeptically. We must be careful that we not simply believe something because the mass media declares it and the majority of people believe it. "He that is first in his own cause seemeth just"(Prov.18:17a). An argument presented, when it is not rebutted, often sounds quite

believable. Especially is that the case when a seemingly great number of scientists, government officials, and the mass media by and large put forward the same message. It must be admitted that hearing almost exclusively one side of the debate tends to pull us in the direction of believing that global warming is an established fact. "But his neighbour cometh and searcheth him" (Prov.18:17b). When open debate is encouraged, when differing opinions are allowed to be aired, when the other side of the argument is fairly presented, the picture might change dramatically. This biblical principle applies to many areas of life. We do well to make sure that we do not unquestioningly receive every opinion endorsed by so-called experts. For example, the vast majority of scientists and government officials believe in evolution, which Scripture clearly shows to be false, not to mention the scientific evidence that thoroughly refutes the lie of evolution. We ought to be cautious about what we accept as fact.

When we examine the issue of global warming, there are in fact indications that global warming is not so thoroughly proven as it is often portrayed to be.

Amazingly, the "hot" issue in the mid 1970's was not global warming at all, but global cooling!

Amazingly, the "hot" issue in the mid 1970's was not global warming at all, but global cooling! The June 24, 1974 issue of *Time* magazine made a compelling assertion that global cooling was a serious threat to the planet.[1] The article, "Another Ice Age," detailed how cooling threatened to bring about a global ice age, supposedly caused by man-made pollution. The article asserted, "Since the 1940s the mean global temperature has dropped about 2.7° F." Although such a figure was admitted to be an estimate, such a temperature drop was boldly claimed to be "supported by other convincing data." Further, the drop in temperature was suggested to be responsible for "the Midwest's recent rash of disastrous tornadoes." As with the current global warming scare, global cooling was suggested to be man's fault: "Man, too, may be somewhat responsible for the cooling trend." Just how serious was the threat of global cooling? The article goes on to say, "Whatever the cause of the cooling trend, its effects could be extremely serious, if not catastrophic. Scientists figure that only a 1% decrease in the amount of sunlight hitting the earth's surface could tip the climatic balance, and cool the planet enough to send it sliding down the road to another ice age within only a few hundred years."

Newsweek followed the next year with a similar article entitled, "The Cooling World" in which the author had this to say: "There are ominous signs that the Earth's weather patterns have begun to change dramatically and that these changes may portend a drastic decline in food production—with serious political implications for just about every nation on Earth. The drop in food output could begin quite soon, perhaps only 10 years from now."[2] If we consider that the idea of global cooling was purportedly supported by "convincing data," what makes us think that scientists can be more certain today that global warming is occurring? In light of previous dire predictions, which have failed to materialize, today's language of imminent catastrophe should be taken with a grain of salt.

In addition, claims that we are in the hottest period since the beginning of the century seem to be overblown. The documentary, "An Inconvenient Truth," featuring Al Gore, stated that 1998 was the hottest year in the last century. This statement, however, was apparently based on faulty data. According to one source, the hottest year in the United States in the last century was actually 1934, before CO_2 build-up was even considered to be an issue. Furthermore, of the ten hottest years in the last century, six occurred between 1920 and 1953. Only 4 of the hottest years occurred between the years 1990 to 2006.[3] Moreover, history indicates that temperatures some 1000 years ago were much warmer than current temperatures. Records show that ancient Norsemen cultivated the land in Greenland, indicating they experienced warmer temperatures than they do in modern times.[4]

Global warming skeptics also point out that man-made CO_2 comprises less than 1% of all greenhouse gases

1 "Another Ice Age." A copy of this article can be found online at http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,944914,00.html (accessed 5/3/2011).

2 A copy of this article can be found online at http://denisdutton.com/newsweek_coolingworld.pdf (accessed 5/2/2011).

3 According to the documenatry video entitled "Global Warming or Global Governance?" found on the internet at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_u81qXOYfKg (accessed 5/2/2011).

4 Article: "Ancient Greenland mystery has simple answer" http://www.thetelegram.com/Agriculture/2007-12-30/article-1448847/History-Ancient-Greenland-mystery-has-simple-answer/1 (accessed 5/4/2011)

in the atmosphere. Water is by far the most abundant greenhouse gas, but strangely is not dealt with in global warming models.

Furthermore, recent evidence suggests that the real cause of global warming and cooling has mostly to do with the influence of the sun, which should hardly be surprising. Sunspot activity on the Sun's surface actually correlates very well with earth's temperature fluctuations.[5] Apparently, the Sun's magnetic field influences the amount of cosmic rays reaching the earth. Cosmic rays, in turn, have much to do with the formation of low-level clouds and these clouds may then moderate the earth's climate.

Other evidence could be mentioned that casts doubt on global warming.[6] The point is not that we should put our faith in every alternative source of information. Rather, the point is that caution is in order when it comes to accepting what we hear from the mass media and the so-called experts. There are reasons to doubt whether global warming is actually occurring.

* * * * *

One prominent theme that comes out of the camp of the skeptics points to man-induced global warming as a hoax being used for political purposes.[7] Jacques Chirac, former French president, is reported as saying the following at a United Nations climate-change meeting: "For the first time, humanity is instituting a genuine instrument of global governance, one that should find a place within the World Environmental Organization which France and the European Union would like to see established…By acting together, by building this unprecedented instrument, the first component of an authentic global governance, we are working for dialogue and peace."[8] That global warming might be used as a means to establish a global government should at least be considered to be a possibility.

But, even if this scenario turned out to be true, believers should not fret about this either. Psalm 37:1-4: "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." God will judge the wicked and he will save his church. No scheme could ever change that. Proverbs 19:21: "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand." God is pleased to use even the wicked to accomplish his purposes. His counsel will surely be accomplished. The machinations of Satan and of men are nothing in God's sight. God will allow nothing to happen that does not serve for the advantage of his people.

* * * * *

Believers will likely hold differing opinions about global warming. Some have thoroughly embraced the idea of global warming. Others are more skeptical. No doubt we could find a multitude of other issues that believers disagree about. But, no matter which side is the correct perspective on global warming, we must keep our eyes fixed upon our Lord Jesus Christ and seek first his kingdom and his righteousness as we see the day approaching. ❖

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5 See for example, "How much Global Warming is Natural" by Michael J. Oard at http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/aid/v3/n1/global-warming-natural (accessed 5/16/2011).

6 See for example the video, "The Great Global Warming Swindle" at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YaTJJCPYhlk&feature=related (accessed 5/16/2011).

7 See for example, "Global Warming or Global Governance?" found on the internet at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_u81qXOYfKg (accessed 5/2/2011).

8 Speech by Mr. Jacques Chirac, French President, to the 6th conference of the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Hague, November 20,2000. The entire speech can be found at http://sovereignty.net/center/chirac.html. (accessed 5/2/2011)

Church News

BAPTISMS

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

The sacrament of holy baptism was administered to:

Asher Dominick, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ben Bloemendaal—Calvary, IA

Shaye Louise, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kyle Van Der Brink—Calvary, IA

Elle Elisabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dale Lenting—Crete, IL

Brandon Lawrence, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mike VanTil—Faith, MI

Asher Jon, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jon VanOverloop—Faith, MI

Charlotte Rose, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Travis Vander Kolk—Grandville, MI

Kayla Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan Kooienga—Grandville, MI

Jase Alexander, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan Bylsma—Hudsonville, MI

Brittney, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. David DeBoer—Hudsonville, MI

Maylin, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kyle Zwak—Hudsonville, MI

Olivia and Hannah, twin daughters of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Kamps—Hudsonville, MI

Hudson Liam, son of Mr. & Mrs. Seth Vis—Hull, IA

Madaline Lynnae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Matt Boonstra—Hull, IA

Dean Richard, son of Mr. & Mrs. Evan Bleyenberg—Hull, IA

Noah Brian, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brian Wierenga—Immanuel, Lacombe, Canada

Blake Christian, son of Mr. & Mrs. Andrew Wierenga—Immanuel, Lacombe, Canada

Allison Jane, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ed Tolsma—Loveland, CO

Brynn Ellen, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Brian Bruinsma—Peace, IL

Amber Nicole, daughter of Rev. and Mrs. Clayton Spronk—Peace, IL

Mackenzie Kate, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Terpstra—Peace, IL

Leia Grace, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. David Vermeer—Peace, IL

Case Bradley, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brad Kuiper—Providence, MI

Chase Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joel VanBaren—Providence, MI

Evelyn Rose, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brent Meelker—Redlands, CA

Hannah Faith, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jon Drnek—Trinity, MI

Tori Anna, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Machiele—Trinity, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

"Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established." Proverbs 4:26

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

Ron Kruger—Calvary, IA

Cherith Cammenga—Faith, MI

David Rozeboom—Hull, IA

Jessica VanBemmel—Randolph, WI

Megi DeMeester—Southeast, MI

Brad Ophoff—Southeast, MI

Lyndsay Essenburg—Trinity, MI

Suzie Kuiper—Trinity, MI

MARRIAGES

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3: 5 & 6

United in the bond of holy matrimony were:

Mr. Brad Pipe and Miss Leanne Doezema—Faith, MI

Mr. David Thoms and Miss Shelley VanDenTop—Grace, MI

Mr. Jeff VanOverloop and Miss Evelyn Davis—Grandville, MI

Mr. Chad and Mrs. Anna Wassink—Holland, MI

Mr. Darin Brummel and Miss Ashley VanDyke—Hull, IA

Mr. Andrew Brummel and Miss Erica tenHaaf—Providence, MI

Mr. Nick Schipper and Miss Elizabeth Nagelkerke—Southwest, MI

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine !

The Journey Home... for Salmon

by Connie Meyer

A thousand miles from home—he has a long way to go. He swims on a path in the vast Pacific Ocean, a path that circles halfway to Japan and back. He's never been this way before, but he knows where he is going. He's going back to a freshwater river, to the exact same spot from which he hatched several years before. He's going home.

He swims with his fellow salmon. They all know it's time to go home. They know how difficult their journey has been. Do they know how much harder their journey will yet become? Maybe they do. He and the others swim on in determination now, not even caring about food as much as about the goal.

The salmon has escaped the jaws of killer whales and other bigger fish in the salty ocean. He has escaped the nets of fishermen cast wide in the deep blue sea. More dangers lurk ahead. But he swims on to the river he knows is his own. He finds it. He can smell it. The fresh water fills his gills.

Bears know he and the others are heading this way, too. Eagles soar in the direction of the river. Hungry mouths are ready. Many salmon are caught. But this salmon, again, escapes from being such a meal. He presses on.

He has a hundred more miles to swim upstream. He has already swum a long way with the current of the river trying to push him back. He is no longer so young and his strength is being spent. But he is not through with the hurdles. Rapids lie ahead—and a waterfall.

In the rapids he must jump over many rocks with the force of rushing water running over him. Then—then he must leap seven feet up in the air to reach the top of the waterfall (as high as a ceiling). He is only three feet long himself. He tries to jump to the top. He splashes back into the water that swirls under the falls. He tries again. It's higher than he thought. Every effort uses up part of the precious energy he has left. But he can do it. He could jump even higher if he had to. He leaps once more and clears the falls. God has given him enough strength for the task.

He is very close to home now. The scent of the water in this place tells him he is near. How can water in one stream and one place in that stream smell so different from another? It is not so different to us. We could never tell. But one tablespoon of salt in ten Olympic-sized pools would be easily detected by the salmon. He can detect even less. God has made him with this ability, too. He knows the water where he spent his first year of life growing up. He remembers it. He finds it. He is home.

Now the journey is over. He can rest, and die. A new generation of salmon will hatch and swim out into the ocean and back, even as he had done. It is the pilgrimage God gave to the salmon. It is their way of life.

It is a journey, perhaps, not unlike ours.

Find the following underlined words in the puzzle below:

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:8, 10).

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

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

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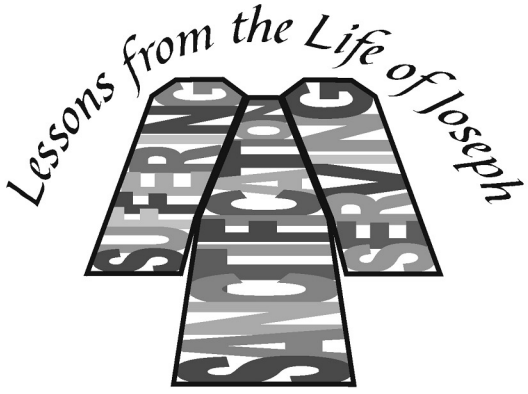
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