"And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made"

Genesis 2:2
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CHURCH NEWS

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Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a Sabbath of rest TO the Lord," so we read in the first part of verse 2 of Exodus 35. A Sabbath of rest TO the Lord; this is how we must consider the day of rest which God has given us.

No longer do we observe the seventh day of the week as the day of rest, but the first day of the week, Sunday, or the Lord's Day as it is referred to in Rev. 1:10. The first day of the week is now the day of rest, first of all, because Christ rose from the dead on the first day of the week. Secondly, before His ascension, Christ met with His disciples on the first day of the week. Thirdly, Pentecost, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit was on Sunday, the first day of the week. Finally, the church in the days of the apostles began to meet on the first day of the week. Today also, we ought to observe Sunday as our day of rest to the Lord. We must not fall prey to the error that we are free, in our Christian liberty, to choose whatever day we please as a day of rest. Neither must we imagine that a day of rest was a thing of the Old Testament church only, and that we are free to treat all days equally and have no day of rest at all.

In order to understand how we must observe the day of rest that has been given us, we must first understand what this day is and how it came about. The Sabbath is an institution of God in creation. In Genesis 2:2,3 we read, "And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made." The Sabbath was a perfect work of God in creation. Adam and Eve were brought into this rest of God.

In Exodus 20:8-11 we read the fourth commandment of the law, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." This command is grounded in God's work of creation. We are to observe the Sabbath because "the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." As we read in Exodus 35:2, the Sabbath day is an "holy day." Holiness carries with it the idea of separation and consecration. The Sabbath is no ordinary mundane day. It is a special day, different from the other six, not because man has chosen this day to have some special significance, but because God said, "but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord."

Only with this in mind can we have a proper understanding of the day of rest. The Heidelberg Catechism, in Lord's Day 38, explains what God requires of us in the fourth commandment. In the words of the Catechism we are to "on the Sabbath, that is, the day of rest, diligently frequent the church of God, to hear His word, to use the sacraments, publicly to call upon the Lord, and contribute to the relief of the poor, as becomes a Christian." After reading this, we may ask the question, "But I thought the Sabbath was a day of REST?" After reading this explanation of the fourth commandment it may seem that the Sabbath is no day of rest at all, but a day of work.
In order to understand that the Sabbath is a day of rest, we must know what rest really is. True rest involves work. The rest of the Sabbath involves spiritual work. First of all, it means faithfully attending the house of God, twice. Secondly it involves the hearing of the preaching of the Word of God. We come to God’s house with thirsty souls because for the past six days we have been in a “dry and thirsty land, where no water is.” (Psalm 63:1). And we leave God’s “sanctuary” having seen His “power and glory” with refreshed souls, ready to enter the desert for another six days. Thirdly, it involves our use of the sacraments, the means by which the promises of the preaching are sealed to us. Fourthly, it involves coming to God in prayer and casting our burdens and cares upon Him and asking for the grace He only can give. Finally, it involves contributing to the relief of the poor through our giving of what God has given us. This is our Sabbath rest; a spiritual work.

But what about the remainder of the day? What are we to do between services? What about after the evening service? Again, if we understand that God has sanctified this day as a day of rest we will know how we are to conduct ourselves. We do not need a detailed list of “do’s and don’ts” in order to properly observe the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of rest TO the Lord. Neither will we go to the other extreme and allow ourselves every pleasure under the sun because of the liberty we have in Christ, because we have the understanding that the Sabbath is a day of rest TO the Lord.

In Isaiah 58:13,14 we read of the warning to Israel against “doing thy pleasure on my holy day.” Later in verse 13, Israel is warned against “doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words.” How applicable are these words to our day and age. The world around us goes out of its way to desecrate the Sabbath. Sunday has become the one day of the week in which the world especially seeks pleasure. No longer is it true that the world outwardly respects the Sabbath day. What a great temptation this pleasure-seeking can be to Protestant Reformed adults and young people. How we are tempted to join in the world in their pleasure on God’s day of rest.

Along with this great temptation to use Sunday as a day of pleasure comes the error of an improper view of rest. The world does not know what true rest is. Most churches have also adopted a false view of rest. Their resting is not a spiritual rest which is only to be found in the Lord, but it is an earthly, unspiritual pleasure-seeking. It is a rest which puts all thoughts of God out of mind. This is the exact opposite of the rest we seek. Our Sabbath rest is the putting of God and His works at the forefront of our thoughts and meditation. The world seeks to put God and the terrible judgment in which they stand out of their thoughts. We, as children of God, and by His grace, seek to put God and His great work of salvation at the center of our thoughts.

God’s works and ways are so great, that he has separated a day for His own glory and for our benefit, that we might contemplate Him and His works. In this contemplation we find true rest. What a tragic thing it is then, when we are not found resting in the works of God on the Lord’s Day. When, instead of diligently frequenting the house of God to hear His preached word, we are elsewhere; on vacation away from Reformed preaching, at home in front of the TV, at the beach, or in a church where God is robbed of His glory by man-centered preaching. What a pitiful thing it is when we use this day of rest TO the Lord as a day of pleasure-seeking to ourselves.

The penalty of God to those Israelites who did not keep His Sabbath was death (Exodus 31:15). This is our punishment too. While we may not be physically stoned to death, we will surely die a spiritual death if we ignore the spiritual rest of the Sabbath.

But by God’s grace we are drawn into His rest. It is His rest, His work, of which we can only stand in amazement. It is by the death of Christ that He has earned for us the eternal rest. And this Sabbath rest is a foretaste of the eternal rest we will experience in eternity. ❖
Why Do I Believe That the Bible Is True?
by Rochelle Van Den Top

I have grown up in a family that believes in God and the Bible, and therefore have never doubted the truth that I have been taught. The Bible has always been there in our family. I never even thought to believe anything else because this makes logical sense.

Yet the question asks why, and so I must answer why. Many scientists believe that there has to be a reasonable scientific explanation for everything that ever happened on earth. They always seem to be coming up with some new explanation for something or another. It never ends. They never even stop to see that the Bible, because God is a God of order, is perfect in explaining these types of ideas. Hebrews 11:1 & 3 confirms this by stating, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen... Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” This would give them all the proof necessary to bring their theories to rest if only they took a minute to look at it.

Scientists are constantly coming up with new theories for the beginning of the world. Some believe that this world came from an explosion or “big bang” in the solar system. Others believe that over the course of millions and millions of years some electrons evolved into what man is today. Theories of everything are brought to their attention of how many millions of years old this world is already. Yet they cannot confirm any of their speculations because their ways of proof backfire again and again. One way they thought they were going to get more of their evidences straight was when they landed on the moon. They all believed that millions of years of dust would be on the moon. But there was not. Why? Because the world had not started as a “big bang,” and the animals were not evolved. God created the heavens and the earth, the animals, and man. Everything in this world, if you would pay attention to it, reminds you of what God has done. He has all this stated in the Bible for any man to read. Genesis 1:1 states, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

So you would not classify the Bible as a science book necessarily, but its proofs which God inspired to His chosen men along with our faith in Him explain everything there is to know about the world. And we can be assured that our beliefs will never backfire because we believe in a true God and His word, the Bible, is true as well.

Rochelle is from Doon, Iowa. She was a ninth grader this past year at Western Christian High School.
Mitchell and Gretchen Herring* were married half a year and this Saturday morning they wanted to pay a visit to grandfather for the occasion.

On other weekdays Mitchell works in a bank, and Gretchen does correction work at home for a company with correspondence courses. They live in the city of Salzburg, in Austria, and Grandpa Herring lives in a small apartment building, where he has had a flat since Grandma died five years ago.

His grandson lives in an old house at the left bank of the river Salzach in lower Salzburg, which he has restored himself, with the help of Gretchen. On the Lord’s Day they always go to a very simple Protestant church. Austria is mainly Roman Catholic, but when it is the tourism season there are often nearly 200 people. Mitchell always makes video copies of the services for Grandpa, because he is rheumatic.

Mitchell has the loan of his neighbor’s car, and this trip is full of joy and happiness for the young people.

It is fine weather, in the midst of the summer, the car is open and they fill their lungs with fresh air. It is quiet at their side of the road, but from the other direction a lot of traffic moves down to the city. The mountains are clearly visible because the sky is clear with only a few small clouds here and there, and lots of birds.

“I had expected you,” says Grandpa Herring at the doorstep. “I have your wedding day marked on my calendar.”

They embrace each other, and he points to the table in the middle of his living room. “Look, I have a cake with cream and cherries already waiting for you, if Gretchen will make the tea.”

Mitchell notices that he looks pale. Bags under his eyes show that he is tired and has probably not slept very well.

“Grandpa, what is the matter? What has happened?”

He strokes his chin and points to another part of the building. “You will see. You will both go with me to a man I want to speak to and whom I have known during the war, when we both lived in Amsterdam. I never told you about him before. I thought I would never see him again. It is quite a shock. The manager has told me that he has come here to die. He says it is only a matter of a fortnight yet. I have to speak to him. I must say something. I feel it is my duty.”

Gretchen puts cups on the table and says, “We have news for you. We are expecting a baby. What do you think about that, grandpa?”

“Ah! My happiness is without flaw, Lord, I have hoped for this.”

Mitchell realizes that he has no brothers or sisters, and his father is also an only child, a widower in London.
They are all very happy. Grandpa has tears in his eyes.

"If it is a boy, the Lord willing, we will name him after you," says Mitchell laughing unconcerned.

"No, no, not a John again. Your father was enough. And if it is a girl, take your mother's name, Anna. Well, it is up to you both to decide that of course," Grandpa chuckles.

They knock at the door of number fourteen, just as a nurse leaves who says that she has given Willy Schaumeister his daily medicines. They go inside and see in the living room an old man as thin as a lath, sitting in a wheel chair with a pair of glasses on his nose, and a Dutch newspaper in front of him.

"Good afternoon," says Grandpa politely. "Do you recognize me, Willy Schaumeister, or should I use your real name, Daan van de Beuk?"

The man takes his glasses off and stares at him. Suddenly he trembles and he says with a tremor in his voice, "You, John Herring. I have cursed you for half a century. You were sitting next to the judge of the tribunal."

"Wait a minute, you were standing there in The Hague in a court of justice for traitors and war criminals. By the way, this is my grandson and his wife."

Daan was obviously not interested. He continued, "You put your signature also under my death sentence."

"Indeed. And a month later we gave you life instead. That gave you time to think about what you had done. Do you still not feel guilty?" asks Grandpa.

"I did my duty."

"No, that is a lie. You were a Dutchman who of his own free will became a member of the SS. The Netherlands was sorely oppressed by the Nazis, but you made it worse. You arrested and deported 721 Jews to the death camps where they were killed with gas, you picked up 246 Dutchmen who were shot dead and others who were imprisoned. Now also these young people here will know. You were just as bad as the rulers of the gulags under Communist rule in Eastern Europe. Once we went to the same Church, the same Catechism class, the same school. It was only during the war that I discovered who you really are. Daan, what about your conscience? Do you still believe in God, and in Jesus Christ? It is perhaps yet a matter of days that you can repent. Remember what happened at Golgotha."

It was obvious that Daan wanted to say something, but he restrained himself.

"Daan, on August 5, 1944 you came opposite the house where I lived, and a large truck with soldiers were under your command. Three Jewish people were arrested, but did you not know that he was a minister of the Reformed Church, that you were sending Christians to the death camps? I knew their daughter very well. She panicked, threw her small suitcase in your face, you took your pistol and killed her. There was nothing I could do at that moment. You threw her body into the waiting car, and the truck with the screaming parents followed you. Why, Daan, why did you do that?"

The two men looked at each other. Then Daan said, "A sordid business, indeed. I did know they were Christians. I hated the girl, because she did not want to become friends with me. But now it is too late...For everything...I'll go to hell."

"Daan, I can not help you. But you have learned to pray. You can tell God everything, and much more than I know about you. Jesus Christ is also very God. Ask Him to forgive you."

These were the last words of Grandpa to Daan van de Beuk. They left the room and closed the door quietly.

But back in Grandpa's apartment, Gretchen said, "That was terrible, to see a man like that. He has so much blood on his hands and he still does not regret it, well, as far as I can see."

Mitchell wondered how Daan, or Willy, had come to Austria. "Has someone helped him to leave the prison? Could it have been an act of mercy, because he is dying? And why did he go to Salzburg?" Grandpa shook his head and said, "I think, we will probably never find the answers. Or, could it be...that God wanted him to come here, so that he, at the end of his life, would get yet a warning? I believe it is not an accident that we did see each other just now...What is impossible for us, is possible for Him. How often I forget that...God does everything on purpose. Praise His name. Now, let us have another cup of tea with cake. No objections, Gretchen?"

So they spent yet some more hours together. Grandpa showed them the progress in his small flower garden. He made a couple of photos. Before Mitchell and Gretchen left, he played the recorder and they sang together "Praise, praise ye all the Lord of Lords."

*Names and details have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals.

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Introduction

If you were on a journey to a distant town and you had the directions of a friend to that city, what would happen if you forgot the directions? "A disaster!" you answer. Quite right you are.

Now, consider the pilgrim and stranger in this earth on his earthly sojourn to that seemingly distant continuing city. What would happen if he would forget the way? What would happen if he would forget how to walk in that way? What would happen if he would forget why he is walking that way to the continuing city? What if he would forget how to fight along that pathway?

To warn, instruct, and encourage young Reformed pilgrims and strangers in this earth upon their pathway, we are committed in this "new" rubric to what we find in II Peter 1:12. "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth."

The Second epistle of Peter was written also to pilgrims and strangers. The viewpoint of II Peter is that it emphasizes the sojourner’s battle for the truth over against false doctrine and false teachers as we look for the coming of the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we watch for that day, it is above all necessary that we have the spiritual life, food, tools, wisdom, and strength to remain spiritually alert for that coming day. As the day of Christ approaches, more and more the attacks upon the truth as it lives in the hearts of God’s people increase in intensity and frequency.

Because those are the days in which you live, do you share the same desire of the Apostle that you not lose steadfastness in the faith (II Peter 3:17)? Is that your concern as you live in an age of apostasy and increasing wickedness on every side? As a means to keep you steadfast in that living hope of our Lord Jesus Christ, our desire in this rubric is “to put you always in remembrance of these things.”

What are the “these things” of the text?

Perhaps you have your Bible open (which is a good habit when reading the Beacon Lights) and have scanned over the context. The context helps us to define what the “these things” are. We learn from the context that “these things” are not the things of the world. They are not the things of the world’s views of life according to their ungodly philosophy and ungodly psychology. They are not the things of disarmament and peace treaties designed to make this world a better place. They are not the cunningly devised fables (vs. 16) of humanism, atheism, evolution, “theistic” evolution, post-millenialism, arminianism, common grace, or the like.

In contrast, those things which are essential to the believer in this life are the like precious faith (vs 1) and the exceeding great and precious promises (vs 4). Included in this list is what we find in verses 5-7: knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity.

For the Reformed believer today, these things are the doctrines and truths of our Reformed heritage. That is the Reformed heritage which you must confess, adhere to, and vigorously maintain. That Reformed heritage is clearly and carefully spelled out in the Three Forms of Unity. Those confessions set forth the fundamental “thing” in all of what we must know. That fundamental starting point is: God is God alone. Because God is God alone, to Him is all the glory, the majesty, the power, and dominion, forever. He is the Sovereign and Almighty One. He reveals His exclusive Greatness and Majesty in our Lord Jesus Christ. That He particularly reveals in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for our salvation. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the central unifying principle to all the Truth of God. Fundamentally, all that is in Christ is “the things” of which we are to be put in remembrance.

Does the Apostle only mean things of doctrine? What about life? In answer to that, we must be careful in our
questioning and thinking that we never divorce doctrine and life. We must not think of Reformed doctrine and practice as two separate compartments in our life as believers. Doctrine and life are inseparable. Doctrine determines life. Life flows out of doctrine. In fact, true doctrine is the living Truth. The living Truth cannot exist in a vacuum, but lives in the regenerated and living hearts of God’s people.

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Thus, to the things of our faith and knowledge of the truth also inseparably belong what the Apostle writes in verses 5-7. The believer also strives unto a life of temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity unto the brethren. He strives unto that life in the knowledge that the Sovereign God is his God in Jesus Christ. You see only true piety is that which flows out of the true and living doctrine of God’s Word.

That Word of God is the source of “those things.” You find the things of the truth only in the infallible Word of God. There the believer by faith finds the truth as it centers in Jesus Christ and Him crucified and risen. These things are not cunningly devised fables. These are not fairy tales which we pass off as the truth to you, dear reader. No, this is God-breathed Truth of our Lord Jesus Christ. There in the Scriptures we find the truths of God’s sovereignty and power, of His sovereign, particular grace, of double predestination, of the substitutionary and particular atonement of Christ, and of many more truths.

Those things of the Scriptures are necessary for you to know. Such things are necessary to “make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (II Timothy 3:15). These things of the Truth will illumine before your feet the pathway of obedience. These things will be as anchors to your feet to keep you immovable upon the Rock as you are buffeted by the winds of worldliness and false doctrine. These things will direct you to fasten your eyes upon that continuing city rather than to look back to the things of Sodom as Lot’s wife did. These things of the Scriptures will give the reasons about the happenings and history of the world in these last days. These things of the Scriptures will also teach you your duty as children of God’s Covenant. These things alone will truly comfort your hearts in the day of affliction, trouble, and grief.

The question of the young person at this point is an earnest one. “How shall I know those indispensable things? Where may I be instructed in those things that are essential to steadfastness in our hope?” You must go to that place where you are constantly put in remembrance of these things.

What does it mean “to put you in remembrance of these things”?

The Apostle implies something that is true of you and me. We are forgetful. Do you remember what the sermon was about last Sunday? Can you recite the main points of the sermon outline? Do you remember the Psalter numbers you sang? Do you still remember what you memorized from your last lesson in Essentials or Heidelberg Catechism? Do you older ones remember what justification is?

The Word of God exposes a serious spiritual weakness we have. We forget the things of the Truth so quickly. We forget the essentials of Reformed doctrine so quickly. It goes in one ear and out the other. If it does stay in our head, it gets lost under a clutter of many other things that grab and keep our attention.

The Word of God exposes our spiritual weakness as part of our sinfulness. If we really were that concerned about spiritual things, we would not forget them. We do not forget to go out of the house with our shoes on, and seldom do we forget to eat. But, when it comes to the Truth, we foolishly think that we can do without knowing the essentials of the Truth. We forget them. We do not dwell on the Word preached as we ought. How foolish we are! How little our faith truly is!

We must be reminded. We need to hear the history of Scripture again. Maybe we have heard sermons on Christ’s birth for 14 years or 44 years. Even so, we need to hear it again in order to be reminded in the incarnation of the wonder of God’s glorious grace unto His chosen, but totally undeserving sinners.

You have heard before of the Scriptural admonitions unto holiness as God’s Covenant children. Continuously, we must be reminded of our obligation to do all that the LORD has commanded in His Word.

You have heard every Lord’s Day the truth of Christ crucified. We who are sinners and of little faith need to
be reminded that our sins have been blotted out by the blood of the Lamb, that we have life with God, and that we have a blessed, everlasting destination.

You who are a sojourner in this earth need to be reminded of the things of the Truth especially as you journey through an alluring and tempting world.

You are reminded in many ways. Chiefly, you are reminded under the preaching of the Word. That is the kind of reminding we need. We need not just the brotherly reminder of a fellow saint, or the loving rebuke of our parents. That we certainly need, but that’s not all. You need the reminder of Christ Himself. That reminder of Christ by His Word and Spirit in the preaching is the power to make you never forget. That makes the preaching indispensable to us. It is by the preaching of the Word and the working of the Holy Spirit that the things of the truth are engraved upon the believers heart. With those things engraved upon the tables of our regenerated hearts, we may walk faithfully unto that continuing city through our earthly pilgrimage.

Unto that goal, we are not negligent to remind you of the things of the truth. It is for our good that we be reminded “always.”

“But, must that be done ‘always’?”

That is a very real question today. Some of you perhaps chafe a little under the duty to attend Catechism again. You will hear again the doctrines of the Reformed faith. In fact, it is the same things you hear also preached on the Lord’s Day, or what you discuss in society or at home. Perhaps you older readers may sometimes groan a little when the Heidelberg Catechism preaching returns to that section of the knowledge of our misery. Your groan may not be of sincere grief, but of this sinful sentiment: “Here we go again!” Or, you may be tempted to say in your hearts, “I know all of this already. Why don’t we skip this section of the Catechism this time? Let’s hear something new!”

Sure, you may know the Truth to the measure of your faith, and you may be “established in the present truth” (vs 12) by the grace of God. You may even have such a grasp of the basic issues of doctrine over against false doctrine that you can sense when a teacher or college professor is either subtly or way off the mark. Even though that be true, we may not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things. We must not because our faith is so little, our steadfastness so fickle, our knowledge of the inexhaustible Truth so quickly exhaustible, our conviction of our sinfulness so shallow, our confidence in the cross of Christ so shaky, and our understanding of our duty to express our thanksgiving so very, very small.

Rather than hear something new, the young Reformed believer (and the older ones, too!) must hear the same old precious, battle-tested, and glorious doctrines and truth which God has entrusted unto us in the Reformed Faith. We must be reminded always of Christ crucified and God’s sovereign and particular goodness unto us in Christ Jesus. Without that, we have no comfort, no hope, but only misery. Always we must be pointed to our only hope in the truth of Christ crucified.

That we need to hear “always.” That means: again and again; over and over; repetition and more repetition.

That means further that we continue in this magazine and rubric to remind you, our beloved young people, of the Truths which many faithful writers have written about before in years past. We follow their godly example and bring to you the same things of the Truth which they have brought in this magazine in the past. In so doing, we strive to the goal to be obedient to Christ who commands us not to be “negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.”

Is that your desire, young people? Young adults? Older readers? May God grant us His wisdom, grace and His Spirit to be faithful to that calling and to “be established in the present truth.”

Rev. Smit is pastor of Doon Protestant Reformed Church in Doon, Iowa.
A Look at Bees
Through the Spectacles of Scripture
by John Huizenga

Sunshine sparkles on the dew covered leaves of a melon plant stretching its vines across the damp soil. A fragile blossom slowly opens its large orange pedals to reveal the delicate stigma and the stamen carefully laden with pollen. Deep down within the morning breeze, she will always know exactly where she is and where she could find her hive once again as she buzzed out of sight.

Her mission is to find pollen and nectar, bring it back to her hive, and let others know where the best gathering prospects might be. Her eyes searched the blurred landscape passing beneath for the bright splashes of color advertising the nectar and pollen for which she is searching. Her antennae waggled to detect the faint scent of a flower mingled with all the other scents of the morning. Before long her wings brought her to the melon patch where the large bright orange blossom beckoned for service and to be serviced. She slowed her pace and descended. Ultraviolet patterns on the corolla directed her in for a perfect landing and pointed toward the waiting drop of nectar. In her haste she bumped the stamen and a shower of pollen rained down upon her fuzzy abdomen. She reached in with her glossa (sucking tube) and sucked up the nectar. Before leaving, she quickly combed pollen from the hairs on her body and packed it into the baskets on her legs.

Her time was nearly up. She knew exactly how much liquid honey she had left in her stomach to fuel her flight back to the hive, but she had time to visit a few more flowers. Nearby was another melon blossom, and another and another. Today the melons would be opening their blossoms. Today the bees would concentrate on gathering nectar and pollen from the melon patch. This would be most efficient for the bees and most effective for the pollination of the melons. The bee hurried back to inform the hive of her discovery. Back at the hive she circled furiously and wagged her abdomen in a specific way to communicate the direction and distance of her find. She perfumed the air with melon blossom scent to make sure the other workers found the right kind of flow-
ers. Soon thousands of bees were off and on their way to harvest the day’s bounty of nectar and pollen.

The melon blossom visited first by the first bee needed another visit. Pollen had been taken from the blossom, but because it was the bee’s first visit, no pollen had been carried to the blossom. The blossom would have to secrete more nectar and wait for another visit from a bee that had already been to another melon blossom. As the day grew warmer, the hum of bees in the nearby flowers came and went. Some bees nearly landed on the blossom, but they could tell by a lack of electrostatic charge on the pedals that the blossom had recently been visited and would not yet have enough nectar to make a visit worthwhile. By early afternoon, however, the blossom had produced a new drop of nectar and had acquired a slight buildup of electrostatic charge. The distinctive 160 cycle per second hum—about the E below middle C—grew louder signaling the approach of another bee. The bee landed and bustled into the blossom scattering a cloud of pollen on the stigma as she hurried to the nectar, drank deeply, and then hurried away again. The blossom had received its first dose of pollen capable of producing seeds in the melon. By the days end, the blossom had been visited by some beetles and a bumblebee that brought more pollen. The flower’s work was finished. It had attracted bees bearing pollen necessary for the development of a melon. The corolla would now wither away while the seeds in the ovary developed and the melon grew large and plump.

This description of the interaction between a bee and flower is based upon the discoveries scientists make as they study the world of insects and plants. Man is discovering new wonders in the insect and plant world every day; wonders so astounding that ungodly scientists are forced to confess that their theory of evolution strains to explain them. These are wonders that harden their hearts while at the same time bring the believer to his knees in humble adoration of God who has fashioned the intricate behavior and distinctions of some twenty thousand different species of bee.

Man finds many wonders in the bee when he looks through his sin corrupted spectacles of science, but with the spectacles of scripture we see all the wonders come together into one glorious whole that renders endless praise to the Creator of all these things. To begin with, God speaks in His word directly about the sting of bees and the honey they produce. God has equipped the insects which busily flit from flower to flower, doing the important work of pollination, with a painful sting to defend themselves in their vulnerable work. If they were not given this protection, they would be easy targets for birds and they would be helpless against animals that would take honey from their hives. In the Old Testament, God called (Isaiah 7:18) the bees with their pain inflicting weapons into His service as He prepared a place for His people. God miraculously used the hornet (which is a species of bee) to swarm together and drive out some of the inhabitants of Canaan for the Israelites (Exodus 23:28; Deut. 7:20; Joshua 24:12). But when Israel turned from God to follow the idol gods, God strengthened the Amorites, “And the Amorites, which dwelt in that mountain, came out against you, and chased you, as bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, even unto Hormah,” Deut. 1:44. David writes in Psalm 118:12 that his enemies surrounded and chased him like a swarm of angry bees. The idea of an angry swarm of bees chasing you is dreadful indeed and directs our attention to the wonder of God’s saving grace.

In some other passages, God speaks concerning the honey which bees produce. I will not go into detail on these verses, but it is clear in general from the outline below that honey is used by man for food, and the sweetness pictures the delight we experience in covenant fellowship with God.

**Honey**

Exodus 16:31; 2 Samuel 17:29; Proverbs 25:27; Song 4:11; Isaiah 7:15; Matthew 3:4; Luke 24:42

- *Not to be offered with sacrifices*. Leviticus 2:11
- *Found in rocks*. Deut. 32:13; Psalm 81:16
- *Found upon the ground*. 1 Samuel 14:25
- *Samson’s riddle concerning*. Judges 14:14
- *Sent as a present by Jacob to Egypt*. Genesis 43:11
As we bring bees into focus under the biblical truth of the cosmos we begin to notice some other wonders of the bee. The word “cosmos” is a Greek word that describes anything that has an orderly arrangement. The whole universe is a cosmos. The world is a cosmos. The church is a cosmos. The human body can be called a cosmos or “microcosm.” The world of bees is also a cosmos; in fact, the very word for “bee” in the Hebrew is “de-bu-araw” which comes from the word “dabar” which means “to arrange or speak.” Bees have long been recognized as a social insect with a systematic way of life.

God created the complex system of bee behavior to work in perfect harmony with the tremendous variety of plants that God gives to man to use in service to Him. God created each plant so that it would produce a seed after its own kind in the way of receiving pollen from another plant of its own kind. For this work God created thousands of different species of bees, beetles, butterflies, moths, birds, and even bats. Each creature is designed uniquely to pollinate a certain kind of flower. Some are very general pollinators, but other creatures are designed to pollinate plants that can be pollinated by no other creature. For example, the nectar of the Madagascan orchid is located at the end of a tube eight inches long. The Macrosetia butterfly is the only insect with a glosso long enough to reach the nectar. One reason for creating creatures that pollinate only certain kinds of flowers may be to ensure that the pollinators would visit all the kinds of plants to preserve their kind in the earth and not favor just one type of plant. God created the world of bees and plants to be a cosmos; an orderly arrangement that reflects the beauty of every work of God.

Another fascinating example of the bee–plant cosmos is the Meadow Sage flower. God created this flower with a gate mechanism that can be operated only by a bee or bumblebee, and no beetles or other insects. The gate mechanism is connected to the stamen (part with the pollen) and the stigma (the part that receives pollen). With the first visit, the gate lowers the stamen to powder the abdomen of the bee. Then the stamen wilts and the second visitor opens the gate and lowers the stigma which picks up the pollen on the abdomen of the bee from another flower. This mechanism prevents self-pollination that would weaken the next generation of plants. These harmonious interactions are only a minute piece of the vast and intricate puzzle of the cosmos created and fashioned by God; a dim picture of the church cosmos which God is in the process of creating; an example of the order and harmony of Scripture.

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Workers at Home
by Phil Dykstra

“T”he aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to
be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

The above text is found in Titus 2:3-5. This is the Word of God to the Church in Paul’s day, as well as it is the Word of God to the Church in our day. This article will especially focus on the duty of a mother, aged mothers as well as young mothers; mothers in Israel. Maybe we should emphasize the truth that the Word of God is for the Church. The Word is given to us by God in His love and grace. The Gospel, you know, is particular as to its promise and content. A Gospel for all is a Gospel for none. We, as believers in Christ, must not expect this part of Scripture to be heeded by the world. Obedience to these exhortations from Titus is only possible through the sanctified work of the Spirit in our hearts an lives.

Workers at home, this is what the Word of God says, or stronger still, what the Word of God commands. Is this true of you, older women and younger women? It should be. Many are the excuses and reasons given by our mothers as to why they are working out of the home, and thus disobeying this exhortation found in Titus. Probably the most pious excuse is “If I didn’t go out of the home and get a job, we would not be able to pay our school tuition.” How often haven’t we heard this reason for our mothers in Israel out working? Must we be reminded that God is not mocked? When God declares that mothers be keepers at home, God means just exactly that! One mother gave that very reason for herself getting a job. But, yet, after several months of working this same mother made this comment, “I’ll just work a few more hours a week; then we can take that vacation we have all been looking forward to.” We need not even comment on this type of reasoning. It’s as clear as the nose on our face.

There are cases, isolated cases, I think, where it might well be that if the mother didn’t go out of the home and get a job, that the tuition would not be met. What does God say about such circumstance? Keepers at home, period. If such is the circumstance, let us use the Biblical method of solving such a problem, and not resort to sinful ways by taking the mother out of the home. Is not the Body of Christ to be knit together in love and always ready to help one another? Where is the help of the Church? If we see a brother in need, do we let him or her sin? By no means, we have to help that brother or sister in the Lord. The Church administers the mercies of Christ through the office of Deacon. It is surely the Church’s duty to see that the children of the covenant are instructed in our Christian schools, and not to let our mothers go out to work for that cause.

Other mothers will say, “I see nothing wrong with getting a job if all the children are in school,” or better yet, “all married and out of the house.” Do we read that in Titus? No, God says, “keepers at home.” Remember aged mothers, you are to train the younger women to be keepers at home. Can you do this if you are out of the home working? You certainly know the answer to that yourself. Aged mothers need not say, “I can find nothing to do now that my children are out of the house.” From God’s Word we know that there are many very good and profitable things to do. What are some of the Scriptural things for you to do? Read 1 Timothy 5:10. Are there not the afflicted ones in your congregation who would delight in your visits? A day would be made full if you would faithfully visit the saints who are in need, or make a meal for those who could use it, or make a shirt or sew some article of clothing for those who are poor in the things of this earth. Remember, train the younger women also to love their husbands and children and to be keepers at home. Why? Because God says exactly that in His Word.

Younger women or mothers, what is your calling? To learn from the aged women to love your husbands and your children and to be keepers at home. Also to bear children and to instruct them in the fear of the Lord. This is what our God delights in, for this is His Word. Obey His Word, and you will also find joy in this work, for this work of motherhood is full-time work. Remember, you are a mother in Israel.

We live in a day when a greater percentage of our mothers work out of the home. This should not be! Let all of our mothers return to the old paths of being “keepers at home,” for this is where the Lord’s blessing rests. It is a matter of principle. We must walk in the way of godliness and sanctification, and may we all hear the words of Christ say of us, “Greater joy have I none than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth. III John:4.”

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The Song of Zion

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

August 1 Read Psalm 68:1-14

Psalm 68:1-2 One source says that this is a prayer at the moving of the ark. These first verses seem to indicate this as they parallel the words in Numbers 10:33-36. David moved the ark into Jerusalem soon after he became king. He wanted this symbol of God’s presence close to him and the center of his kingdom. It is a prayer they we need to consider even as God’s enemies make war on the church today and in the days to come. It seems as we are at peace, but it is a false peace. Satan is preparing his forces to wage all out war against God and his church. Let us prepare for such war by arming ourselves with the Sword of the Spirit. Let us include in our daily prayers the request that God destroy His enemies. With this prayer we also pray “Thy kingdom come.” Sing Psalter 179:1.

August 2 Read I Thessalonians 5:16-28

Psalm 68:3 Today’s verse stands in contrast with those of yesterday. We see this first of all by the word but with which the verse begins. We also see the contrast in the content of the materials. While God’s enemies are being destroyed, the righteous are rejoicing. Why is this the case? We rejoice not at the destruction of those who make our life miserable. That can never be the source of any exaltation on our part. Our rejoicing is that God’s enemies are destroyed! By this destruction His name is glorified. He receives all power, and glory, and strength because He is God. We must rejoice in His exaltation. Today is His day. There is no better day to rejoice in God’s greatness. We must use this day for His good. We must never take this day for our pleasure or advancement. To do that is to despise the glory of the Lord. We need this admonition in this day and age. We easily fall in the trap of using Sunday for our own good. Let God’s name be exalted and let it be done all the day. Sing Psalter 179:1.

August 3 Read Revelation 5:1-14

Psalm 68:4 This verse gives us the manner in which we are to be glad and rejoice before God. We are to do it by singing. The verse also gives the content of such singing. We are to extol the God of the heavens and earth. We are to make sure that His greatness permeates every word of the songs that we sing in praise to His name. We see the word JAH in the verse. According to my research this is an abbreviation of God’s covenant name Jehovah. Therefore our songs are not just about any god, they are about and for the God who has called us by name and has promised to us eternal life. This is a precious heritage. We must sing about it daily. Our songs serve to glorify Him and to thank Him for the wonderful work of salvation which He has done for us. Let us sing to Jehovah our God! Sing Psalter 179:2.

August 4 Read I Kings 17:17-24

Psalm 68:5 If it is not enough that our God is creator of all things, if it is not enough that our God is sovereign over all that occurs on this earth, if it is not enough that our God has established a gracious covenant with us, our God cares for those in distress. We see in this verse this typified in widows and orphans. A widow’s lot was very difficult in Israel. This was so because man’s sin caused him to disobey God’s commands concerning widows. If you are distressed in this life, do not despair. God is on your side. He hears your prayers in heaven. Pray to Him. Cast your burdens upon Him. Call upon His holy name in heaven. He will hear you. He will judge your cause and do it righteously. Cast your cares upon God for He whose eye is on the sparrow cares for you. Sing Psalter 179:3.

August 5 Read Obadiah 1-9

Psalm 68:6 We will be reading this short book during this month. For some of us it might be the first time. There are some thoughts which we would do well to contemplate and take to heart. Edom, Esau’s ancestors, were a constant thorn in the flesh to Israel. It was Edom who formed the cheering section as Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and took Israel into captivity. It was Edom’s lot to live in the dry wilderness southeast of Israel. It was his lot precisely because of whom he was. Esau is the epitome of the reprobate. It is of Edom that God says He hates them. It was Edom through Esau who sold the birthright blessing. Rebellious Edom was sentenced to live in a dry land. It was dry physically, but it was also dry spiritually. Edom serves in contrast to the people of God. God’s people have the blessedness of covenant communion with God and each other. God’s people have been redeemed from the confinement of sin. For this we must be thankful. We can do this even as we pray the prayer of this Psalm. Sing Psalter 179:4.

August 6 Read Numbers 10:33-36

Psalm 68:7 This verse is linked to verse 8. David confesses that it was God who led Israel through the wilderness. It was God that was its leader and God. Today’s reading was alluded to earlier this month. This small ceremony took place every time Israel moved at God’s command. It is worthwhile that we too realize that God is our leader and guide. Decisions made about our futures must only be made after calling upon Jehovah. As our college-age young people prepare for the coming year, they must see
that career decisions must only be made in accordance to God’s will. They and their parents must call upon His name before they make plans for the future. Fathers must ask God to go before them as they lead their families down life’s paths. People of God, do you confess God as your leader? Then call upon Him daily to guide you and obey His commands. Sing Psalm 180:1.

**August 7 Read Habakkuk 3:1-13**

Psalm 68:8 At the close of the previous verse the word Selah is found in our Bibles. It is thought that this word was used to indicate a pause or musical interlude. The next thought of David is that as God led Israel the whole earth trembled at His majesty. Even Mt. Sinai acknowledged that the Lord He is God. God’s presence going before us is an awesome force. Nothing can stand in His way. We must acknowledge His presence in our lives. We do this by going to Him in prayer. We do this by reading and meditating upon His word. We do this by singing and listening to the songs of Zion. And after doing all these things. We obey Him. The heavens, the earth, and even mountains obey the sovereign God. We must as well. Sing Psalm 180:1.

**August 8 Read James 5:7-11**

Psalm 68:9 Those of us who live in areas in which rain or the lack of it is significant can understand this verse of Scripture very well. As Israel lived in an area in which rain was intermittent at best, they, too, could understand God’s message to them. As they lived in the time of types and shadows, rain was a very clear picture of God’s blessing. They needed both the early and latter rain to insure the success of their crops. When the time without rain stretched longer and longer the people began to weep of life. When God sent that needed rain, Israel was reassured that their God was Jehovah. While we no longer live in the time of the types and shadows, we still need the blessing of Jehovah. Periods of times without the sense of that blessing may weary us. Receiving that blessing helps to confirm us in knowing that we are God’s inheritance. Let us pray for spiritual rain to refresh our lives. Sing Psalm 180:2.

**August 9 Read John 12:1-8**

Psalm 68:10 These words are fitting for us to consider on this Lord’s Day. Most of us have opportunity to contribute to the cause of the care of the poor. With what attitude are we giving today? Are we like the widow who gave her all, or are we like the Pharisee who gave so that all could see him? God cares for the poor. He cares for them both spiritually and physically. He has prepared for us poor sinners a place in His inheritance. What is our expression of gratitude for such a place? Are we giving from the heart? Let us examine our giving in this day. Let us look at both the gift and the motive. We must remember what God has given us and then thank Him from whom all blessings flow. Sing Psalm 180:2.

**August 10 Read John 1:1-14**

Psalm 68:11 The Word is a wonderful thing. It is the speech of God. He has revealed it to us in His Son. We have it written for us in the inspired Scriptures. That Word is powerful. Scripture testifies that it is sharper than a two-edged sword. By that Word the worlds were created. By that Word salvation was wrought for the elect. Are you among the company of those who publish that Word? Do you speak of those things which you heard in the house of God yesterday? The minister is not the only one commanded to speak the Word of God. He is ordained to office of ministry. One of the important callings of that office is to speak that Word officially on the Sabbath. But all of God’s people have the office of all believers. One of the important callings of that office is to speak the Word day in and day out. Are you speaking the Word? Sing Psalm 180:3.

**August 11 Read Judges 4:10-17**

Psalm 68:12 One of our thoughts yesterday was that God’s Word is powerful. Reading through Israel’s history will give much evidence of that fact. Our verse for today talks about kings fleeing. It was very evident to Israel and should be evident to us that it was by God’s Word that this was accomplished. Today our enemies will flee at the use of God’s Word. Jesus showed us the way as He answered the devil with the Word. We must learn that Word so that we can be ready to answer all those who oppose us. There is reward for faithful Bible study. It will not be the physical rewards that Israel received, but it will be the spiritual blessing of those who conquer God’s and their enemies by using the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. Sing Psalm 180:4.

**August 12 Read Psalm 68:1-14**

Psalm 68:13-14 These verses need some research in order to decipher the variations found in them. I will leave that for you to do. Maybe that will be a good Sabbath day exercise? The thrust of the verse however is that it was only by the power of Jehovah that Israel was successful in its battles with the wicked kings. There were times in which it looked as if there was no hope, but then Israel won. Think of the battle of Ai. Because of sin Israel lost. But when God was acknowledged as God, they were victorious over their enemies. We must ponder and take these truths to heart. We must put the truth that God is God into action in our lives. God will not be pleased with a life that ignores Him and His decrees. Daily we need to pray for guidance in this matter. If we leave God and His commands out of our lives, He will leave us. For the child of God He will return, but often He will return in the way of chastisement. Think on these things, people of God. Keep God and His decrees at the forefront of your lives and thoughts. Sing Psalm 180:5.

**August 13 Read Psalm 68:15-27**

Psalm 68:15 David begins a new section with this verse. He speaks of the hill of God. This hill is Zion. This is the place where Abraham offered up Isaac. This is the place where the angel of death stopped during the plague punishing David and Israel for the sin of numbering the people. The hill of Bashan was reported to be one of fertile lands and beautiful scenery. Spiritually Zion, the church, is fertile and beautiful. David moved the ark to this place because he wanted the symbol of God’s presence found on this place. Is the church a beautiful place for us? Do we long to enter its doors. It is beautiful because God is there. Let us look forward to our day of worship in that place. Sing Psalm 180:6.

**August 14 Read Psalm 24**

Psalm 68:16 David continues his discussion on the hill of God. There are those who look down upon the church. They say there is salvation in other ways and in other religions. There are those who say that salvation does not necessarily have to come through the blood of the Lamb. Some want to disregard the idea of the church as the body of Christ, and they wish to worship in other places in other ways than He has commanded. This verse tells us that God has chosen Zion in which to dwell. God has ordained the place and manner of worship. Even when those around us tell us that to worship in the God-ordained way is not necessary, we
must remember that God desires to dwell in Zion. Sing Psalter 180:6.

**August 15 Read II Kings 6:8-18**

Psalm 68:17 The world likes to boast in numbers. They look at the size of their armies and the numbers of their weapons. The rich man likes to boast of the amount of his wealth. We could add much to this list of the abundance of things. We, too, fall into this sin. We either think that because we have a multitude of something we will prosper, or we despair because we see nothing but trouble ahead of us. Scripture, in countless places, speaks of the multitudes of God's angels. These angels watch over and protect His church. They sang at creation, they witnessed the giving of the law at Sinai, and they rejoiced over the death and resurrection of Christ. They await the day in which God brings all the church together into heaven. Do not despair, people of God. He has given His angels charge over us, and they will keep us even unto the end. Sing Psalter 180:7.

**August 16 Read Acts 1:1-11**

Psalm 68:18 Several months ago we celebrated the Lord Jesus Christ's ascension into heaven. Have we thought about it since? Christ's ascension was part of our way of salvation. Christ had to ascend into heaven. He could not remain on this earth. He ascended into heaven and sits at God's right hand. He makes intercession for us daily. What a blessing this is for the child of God! He sits in heaven waiting for the day that He will come back to this earth and gather all the elect unto Himself. Are you waiting for that day, people of God? Think about the ascension and its benefits for you. Do that today as you enter into God's house of worship. Sunday is an excellent day to ponder these things. But also ponder them all the days of your life. Sing Psalms 180:8 and 183:1.

**August 17 Read Matthew 6:25-34**

Psalm 68:19 In this part of David's prayer he blesses God for the benefits which God has given him. The word bless means to speak well of. It is good for us to speak well of God for all things that we have come from him. Our reading today speaks especially of physical benefits, but David obviously means more than this. He speaks of salvation in the second part of the verse. David knew what physical salvation was as he was chased often by Saul and God saved him. But David also knew that there was more. That is why he wanted the ark and eventually the temple to be at the center of Jerusalem. We, too, must bless God because of the many gifts he gives to us. We must remember that he daily blesses us with many things; not the least of which is our salvation. Let us bless God in song and prayer daily. Sing Psalter 181:1.

**August 18 Read Job 1:13-22**

Psalm 68:20 David's exultation unto the God of his salvation continues in today's verse but with a different aspect. David understands that his salvation will not come to him on this earth. He realizes that he must go through the valley of the shadow of death and even unto death itself. But even this does not cause him to fear. He knows that God will make his salvation sure even through death. People of God, death is a reality. Those of you who have reached seventy or eighty understand this well. Those of us who seemingly have much of our lives before us must realize that unless Christ comes we must enter the grave. But there is no need to despair. Death and all its accompanying sorrows are in the hands of God. Because of Christ's resurrection death and the grave have no sting for the child of God. Blessed be the God of our salvation even unto death! Sing Psalter 183:2.

**August 19 Read Revelation 20**

Psalm 68:21 The difference between the elect and reprobate can be obviously seen in this passage. David speaks of the blessedness that God's people enjoy and then he speaks of the hopelessness of those whom God hates. This is for our instruction and our comfort. We are instructed to see that even though the wicked seem to profit in this life their end is destruction. We are also instructed not to continue in sin because its end is destruction. Even the child of God will feel the pain caused by sin. We must stay away from sin and cleave unto righteousness. Our comfort is that we have the beautiful hope of heaven. Christ has paid for our sins and we must eagerly look for the day of the wicked's destruction and the exultation of the righteousness. Flee sin, young people, and look for the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sing Psalter 181:2.

**August 20 Read Obadiah 17-21**

Psalm 68:22-23 The depths of the suffering of God's people can extend quite deep. Think of David fleeing from Saul. Think of the various times that Israel was attacked by enemies. Think about Paul as he suffered much at the hands of his tormentors. Think of the reformers and their sufferings. God's people today also suffer. It may not be as physically graphic or distressing in our country. Though saints in some parts of the world suffer much. God's people live a life of suffering. In this suffering God has prepared a way of escape. David knew that God meant it for good and for His glory. He had tasted of suffering and deliverance from that suffering. Thank God for such suffering because He has provided a way of escape and glory for Himself and His people. Sing Psalter 181:2.

**August 21 Read Psalm Joshua 2:8-11**

Psalm 68:24 The wicked know who God is. History bears this out. Today's reading is a confession of faith from one who saw the power of God even when she remained in sin. Even today the world knows who the church is. They should because we should lead a different life. Our church parking lots should be full twice on Sunday while the world plays golf, camps, swims, and attends things which are for their enjoyment not that of God. God has a purpose in making sure that the world knows who He is and who His people are. That purpose is that they are left without excuse in the final judgment. Do not be ashamed, people of God, of proclaiming God's name before men. Do not be ashamed to be different. Be counted among those who go by the name Christian. Let the world know that God is God and that He is your God. Sing Psalter 181:3.

**August 22 Read Psalm Mark 11:1-10**

Psalm 68:25 Music has been a part of the worship of God in both dispensations. Music expresses the joy that the child of God expresses as he blesses God. It was with music that Israel marched around Jericho. It was with music that the ark was moved up Mount Zion. The children sang as Jesus made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Does music attend our way as we praise God? Can the wicked tell by our music that we praise the sovereign God who created the heavens and the earth? Let us sing the songs of Zion as we worship Jehovah. As we go to God's house tomorrow let us give special emphasis as we praise God with singing. In this way we can be ready to hear the preaching of the Word, and we will be ready to rightly worship Jehovah. Sing Psalter 181:3.
August 23 Read Psalm 68:15-27

Psalm 68:26-27 As we look around the church auditorium this morning we cannot help but seeing the evidence of God’s covenant faithfulness. We see in the families with which we have been blessed the evidence that God saves in the line of continued generations. Every family in the church is evidence that God is pleased to dwell in our midst. As we worship today let us bless God for His covenant faithfulness. The worship of Jehovah is one of the benefits of salvation. Let us be glad and rejoice today, the day which the Lord has made. Let us use this day which He has separated for this purpose of blessing God. Sing Psalm 181:4.

August 24 Read Psalm 68:28-35

Psalm 68:28 Many students and teachers will be going back to school in the next few weeks. For some of us God has given the blessing of parental covenant schools. These schools are a strength to those who have them. David prayed for God to strengthen that which He had given Israel by His presence. We, too, need this prayer as we begin our school year once more. Teachers need the strength of Jehovah as they carry out the work of teaching the covenant seed. Students need the strength of Jehovah in order to do all their work to God’s honor and glory. The work of both teacher and student is part of the council of God. Strengthen that work. O God, so that we may do it for Thy glory. Help us to work to show ourselves approved unto Thee and to Thee alone. Sing Psalm 182:1.

August 25 Read II Chronicles 32:21-23

Psalm 68:29 As David prayed this prayer, he had no idea of the victory God would give to Hezekiah many years later. He also did not know that foreign kings would bring presents to Jerusalem. We see here David prophesying of that which would happen. Because it was the will of God, it did happen. What was the reason that these heathen kings brought presents? They did it to glorify God. Was this an act of faith? By no means, but rather it was an expression of God’s sovereignty over all of His creation. As we study history in this school year, let us remember that our God is a sovereign God. All things are in His hands. And all things work for His glory and the good of His church. Even wicked rulers must bow before God. Comfort yourselves, people of God, with these words even when it looks the darkest for the church. God is in control. Sing Psalm 182:2.

August 26 Read Obadiah 10-16

Psalm 68:30 Those of you who have been following these devotionals will have noticed that I have had us read the whole chapter though not in order. By now you realize that the focus of this chapter is the condemnation of Edom for going against the people of God. They had done this many times in their history. But as we saw yesterday, God is sovereign. His sovereignty over the wicked should give to us much comfort. Not the comfort that delights in “getting even”. This comfort is the comfort that comes from obedience to God’s covenant. Esau was brought up in a covenant household. But because of his rebellion, he was cast out and eventually destroyed by God. Obe, young people. Obey God’s covenant and He will bless you with all the blessings of salvation. Sing Psalm 182:3.

August 27 Read Acts 8:26-39

Psalm 68:31 We live in the day and age where we see the fulfillment of this prophecy. Oh, it was begun shortly after Pentecost, but the full realization is happening now as the gospel is spread to the four corners of the earth. God has given to us a great heritage. We need to remember that we must spread that heritage to all lands. One of the signs of Christ’s return is the spread of the gospel. He will use us to do this. We must not ignore the opportunities that we have to spread the gospel. It may be down the street, across town, or in distant lands. We must seize the opportunity knowing that this is the will of God. Let us spread His name by what ever means He is pleased to give us. Sing Psalm 182:4.

August 28 Read Isaiah 35

Psalm 68:32 It is interesting that the call to all nations is to sing. We take for granted the gift of music. Or we disregard its usefulness in the cause of the kingdom. This verse, however, states that the kingdoms of the earth are to sing to God. The content of that singing never changes. That content is the praise of God. After we see these two commands, we see the word Selah once again. If a pause is indicated, we need to contemplate the importance of the preceding commands. What does God want? He wants us to praise Him in song as the almighty One that He is. Let us heed these commands and teach others to heed them as well. Sing Psalm 182:5.

August 29 Read Job 37:1-14

Psalm 68:33 In the time between the writing and reading of these words, I am sure that God’s voice has been heard on this earth. There has probably been a storm that has seized the attention of the world. Maybe there has been an earth quake. Maybe disease or famine has broken out. God speaks through these things. These are not natural disasters, the news media likes to call them. These are the voice of God. Are we listening, people of God? Are we seeking to know what God is saying to us? His voice is mighty. It has power. Its power is more than the destructive nature of a storm or earthquake. In those things He speaks to both the wicked and the church. Are we listening? Sing Psalm 183:3.

August 30 Read Revelation 12:7-12

Psalm 68:34 Does God’s power have meaning for us today? I mean this more than in a physical way. Do we acknowledge the strength of God in our daily spiritual life? A battle was fought in heaven, and Satan was thrown down from heaven. Today, God fights spiritual battles in our lives for us. This is a great comfort for us. If we had to rely on our own strength to fight against Satan, we would have no chance. We must realize that there is such a battle in our lives. The battle against sin is a daily one. God is powerful. By His power which He has and shows to the church, we will win the battle against sin, Satan and all evil. Confess the power of God and glory in it. Sing Psalm 182:5.

August 31 Read Psalm 68:28-35

Psalm 68:35 We come to the end of this month, this prayer of David, and this Psalm. Throughout the month we have learned of God’s power and how He has used it for His people. This closing verse is a confession that not only is God a God of power, but that He has also given power to us. How will we use that power in the upcoming school year? How will we use that power from week to week at work? How will we use that power as we interact with those around us? That power must be used for the service of all-powerful King. Any power we have, only comes from Him. This is not an easy confession to make. We would rather have the power ourselves. We would rather proclaim ourselves as number one. With David we must speak well of God with the closing words of this Psalm, “Blessed be God.” Sing Psalms 182:6 and 183:4.
The Lord Our Maker is the appropriate title for this versification of Psalm 139. In the very first line, we are reminded that we owe everything to our God and that we are nothing. We are called to give constant praise to God for fashioning us in His infinite wisdom. The fact that God created us in His image seems difficult to comprehend because of the corruption of our wicked nature. God has a perfect plan for all of us, and we do not often understand His plan and we try to fight against it. We want to make our plan God’s, rather than accepting His plan as ours. When we learn to submit to God’s perfect plan, we find peace and contentment, resting in the knowledge that the plan existed before we did.

The thoughts of God are at times incomprehensible to us, yet exceedingly precious. God’s thoughts are worth far more than the riches of this earth, even than gold and silver. At times we think that these things are beyond us, and therefore not for us, but God shows us by the inner working of the Spirit that these things are for us His beloved people. We know that one day we will see this all clearly when we are in the new heaven and earth. What a glorious gift is the salvation that God has bestowed upon us, for we were in His thoughts before our very existence.

The wicked, who persecute God’s people, shall be slain by the Lord in the final judgment. They receive constant judgments for their sins but will eventually be cast into the eternal fire. We know that we also deserve this judgment if God had not predestined us. In this Psalter we ask that God will keep His people from sinners and from the persecution that accompanies living in the world. The wicked frequently speak against God’s holy name and use it in vain. We are to count those that are God’s enemies as our own and turn from them as well as admonish them.

The last stanza of Psalter 383 calls upon God to search our hearts and thoughts to see if there be any truth in them. We know that often our thoughts are filled with sin and evil. Yet through the blood of Christ we have been made pure and clean. God sees only our clean white inner self and continues to lead us in the right way. We are not able to fall from God’s grace, because having given us His grace, God preserves us in it. This is a great comfort when we find ourselves straying into sinful paths. God will always be our guide, and all things are in His eternal plan for us. We may not allow this to be an excuse to sin, but rather as an encouragement for us to continue in the way of living a life that gives thanks and glory to God. May our lives show this thanksgiving to God in all our actions and words. Praise be to God for His righteousness.

Beth is a member of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Standale, Michigan.
The Marriage Bond

by Sherry Koole

As teenagers and young adults
We should be "choosy" who we date
For it's through the dating process
We receive our lifetime mate.

We should not date just anyone
But be selective in our search
So the partner that we choose for life
Is a member of the church.

Our wedding days are joyous days,
Ones we look forward toward.
But we also have the calling
To marry in the Lord.

For marriage is a life-time bond,
It joins two one for life.
Let's remember that when choosing
One's own husband or wife.

The husband heads and rules the home,
Provides for all their needs;
The wife submits and shows her love
With many loving deeds.

And if, God's will, their home is blessed
With the sounds of little feet,
This couple's love is richly blessed
With a joy that is so sweet.....

For words cannot begin to tell
The joy of man and wife
When God sees fit to bless their love
With the precious gift of life.

But now their role increases
They have children now to raise.
They must raise them in the fear of God,
Teach them to sing His praise.

If they're faithful in their calling
As they raise these precious youth,
They'll have the joy to know and see
Their children walk in truth.

And through their years together
The love vowed long ago
Does not diminish with the days
But with each day it grows.

For a marriage in the Lord, my friend,
Does not soon fade away,
But being one in love and faith
It grows stronger still each day.

They will at times in sadness weep
And experience some pain.
But if their trust in God they keep
They will find joy again.

Perhaps their children's children
Will greet them in this life.
They are grandparents! what great joy
For the Christian man and wife.

To see their children's children
Gives them joy in sunset years
For they know the day is coming
When they'll leave this vale of tears.

And when that day does come
And the death of one takes place
There's joy amidst their sorrow
For there's comfort in God's grace.

Though all earthly ties are severed
And they've lost their life's helpmeet,
They know the day is coming
When they'll meet at Jesus' feet.

The surviving one has memories
Of the years they lived as one
And the knowledge that the fight of faith
Their loved one now has won.

What joy the marriage bond does hold
For the Christian man and wife,
A bond they base on love for God
Which joins the one for life.

So as teenagers and young adults
As we look and start dating
We must seek a Christian helpmeet.
That in marriage we may sing:

"May the grace of Christ our Saviour,
And the Father's boundless love
With the Holy Spirit's favour
Rest on upon us from above.

Thus may we abide in union
With each other and the Lord,
And possess in sweet communion
Joys which earth cannot afford."

GEM OF THE MONTH
Confession of Faith (1)
by Rev. R. Cammenga

Reprint from the January 15, 1987 issue of the Standard Bearer

One of the most joyful occasions in the church is the public confession of faith of the young people. For the pastor and elders there is no more joyful occasion than when young people come to the consistory room to make confession of faith before the consistory, when that confession is approved, and when young men and young women stand up in the congregation publicly to acknowledge faith in Jesus Christ. This joy is shared by the parents of the young people, and by the whole congregation, who witness the confession.

Joy over the confession of faith of our young people is due to the fact that their confession of faith is an outstanding evidence of positive fruit on the labors of the church. Many prayers have been offered on behalf of these youths. Much labor has been bestowed in their instruction, by parents, by Christian school teachers, by pastor and elders. Confession of faith is tangible evidence that these labors have not been in vain, but have been blessed by the Lord.

In the next several articles in this rubric, it is our intention to discuss confession of faith. The first couple of articles will be of an introductory nature. In subsequent articles it is our intention to discuss the significance of confession of faith by examining the three questions in the back of The Psalter, which are asked at the time of public confession of faith.

Confession Not a Matter of “Joining the Church”

A common misconception in connection with confession of faith is that by public confession one “joins the church.” Public confession is viewed as the act of being “received into the church.” As long as one has not made confession of faith, he is essentially not a member of the church.

There have been serious results in churches which have fostered this conception of confession of faith. This view has been carried out to excuse the living of a blatantly wicked life on the part of those who have not yet made confession of faith because, after all, they are not yet really members of the church. These young people go to movies, attend dances, take part in wild parties, become drunken, and make public spectacles of themselves, but the elders do nothing because these young people have not yet become members of the church. Since they have not yet made confession of faith, and probably not yet had the “experience” that precedes confession of faith, they need not be expected to live the holy life of a member of the church in full communion.

The view that confession of faith is essentially a matter of “joining the church” is seriously mistaken.

The view that confession of faith is essentially a matter of “joining the church” is seriously mistaken. It is a view that is fundamentally Baptist and ought not to be the way confession of faith is viewed in a Reformed church. The fact is that by virtue of the baptism, the infants of believers are already members of the church. That is brought out very clearly in the first question that is asked parents at the time they present their child for baptism: “Whether you acknowledge, that although our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are subject to all miseries, yea, to condemnation itself; yet that they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore, as members of His church ought to be baptized?” The Heidelberg Catechism, in Q.A. 74 teaches that baptism is a sign
of the truth that the infants of believers are “also admitted into the Christian church...”

Confession of faith is emphatically not to be viewed as an act of joining the church. Instead, the significance of public confession of faith is that those who are already members of the church publicly acknowledge that membership and publicly assume the duties and privileges involved in that membership. A baptized member of the church is an undeveloped and immature member. During his childhood and youth he matures, not only physically and psychologically, but also spiritually. At the time when he arrives at spiritual maturity, the time when he understands the privileges and obligations of church membership and is ready willingly to assume these, he ought to make confession of faith.

We may draw on an analogy to make our point clear. Our children are members of our country. They are as much citizens of the United States (or Canada, Singapore, Northern Ireland, New Zealand, or whatever other country) as we are. No one would deny that my three-year-old daughter is a citizen of the United States, as much a citizen as I am. But children are immature citizens. They do not have the same citizen rights and privileges, nor do they have the same obligations, as mature citizens. Although fully members of our country, our children may not vote, hold office, obtain a driver’s license, and it is not expected of them that they pay taxes. This analogy may be applied to the church, which is the kingdom of God. There is a difference in the kingdom of God between those citizens who are young and immature, and those citizens who have arrived at years of discretion and may be considered to be mature members of the church.

A Privilege and a Responsibility

For those young people who have arrived at years of discretion, public confession of faith is both a sacred privilege and a solemn responsibility.

The young person who makes confession of faith ought to count it a great privilege that he may make confession of faith. What a privilege of grace that God in His goodness caused him to be born to believing parents and brought up in a covenant home! What a privilege of grace that he should for many years come under the means of grace, hear the preaching of the gospel, and receive instruction in the truth! What a privilege that he should be able to identify himself with the cause of God and of Jesus Christ in the world! What a privilege that he should be able to confess the name of Christ with the mouth! We don’t deserve these blessings! We have no right to have faith or any of the blessings of salvation which are ours through faith! Confession of faith is a privilege of the highest order, a privilege of grace.

Besides being a privilege, confession of faith is also a responsibility. It is not only an honor to be able to confess our faith publicly, but it is also our duty before God.

There are those who question or deny this responsibility of making public confession of faith in the church. There are many denominations which maintain that the church does not have the right to require such a confession. This is the position of those who are advocating paedo-communion today, that is, child communion, that children ought to be granted the right to partake of the Lord’s Supper. A few centuries ago, the Arminians in the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands denied that the church had the authority to insist on a public confession of faith in the congregation prior to admittance to the Lord’s Supper. These people point out that nowhere does Scripture explicitly require this confession of the young people when they arrive to years of discretion and before they are allowed to partake of the Lord’s Supper. How can this practice in our churches be maintained, therefore? And on what grounds do we base the responsibility to make public confession of faith?

Basis for Public Confession of Faith

The basis for public confession of faith, although not explicitly in Scripture, is certainly implicit. Public confession of faith is one of those things which, to use the language of The Westminster Confession of Faith, “…by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture....”

The Responsibility to make public confession is based, first of all, on the general calling that the Scriptures place upon God’s people to confess His name in the world. Many passages of Scripture could be cited which bring out this calling. Christ Himself says in Matthew 10:32, 33: “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.” In Romans 10:9, 10 the Apostle writes, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness: and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

There certainly is nothing strange or un-Biblical in the fact that the church should require of adult members a confession of faith. This is something to which the
Word of God everywhere calls us. Confession of our faith is simply part of the Christian life.

A second reason why Reformed churches have always insisted on a public confession of faith by the young people has to do specifically with the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. The question whether the church has the authority to demand a confession of faith is closely bound up with our view of the sacrament. Those in the past who denied this right to the church maintained what is called “open” or “free” admission to the Lord’s table. They maintained that attendance at the Lord’s Supper is exclusively a matter of the personal conscience of the individual attending. Whether or not he would partake was his private decision. Those who maintained the right of the church to require a public confession of faith of those who would come to the Lord’s Supper did so because they maintained that attendance at the Lord’s table, besides being a personal matter, was also subject to the jurisdiction of the church. They emphasized the duty of the consistory to “fence,” that is, to supervise the administration of the sacrament.

Next time we will discuss this matter of the supervision of the Lord’s Supper by the consistory, and the implications of this for public confession of faith.

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Bible Code
by Rev. Moore

Question

Lately I have heard so much about the “Bible Code.” I have read the book also by the same title, and it is quite believable. If you haven’t heard about it, a computer program was developed that takes the original Hebrew text of the Bible and develops a sequence (every tenth letter, every 1456 letter) which then spells out current happenings, current leaders, for example Bill Clinton. It accurately predicted the Oklahoma City bombing and other events. The hidden code also tells of future events. The author, Michael Drosnin, states that this “secret code” in the Bible is the book the angel told Daniel to “shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the End” (the book of Daniel). Please shed some light on this subject.

Answer

This is another attempt by Satan and the powers of antichrist to bring man away from the Scripture so that they can foist upon man their own goals, namely to destroy the faith of the elect if it were possible.

The man, Michael Drosnin, that wrote the book Bible Code, is himself an unbeliever. That is, he does not believe in the God of the Scriptures, in fact he maintains that aliens from outer space have written the Bible. On the other hand, he presents the so called Bible code as another means in the hands of man whereby he can save himself. This in itself ought to warn us that this supposed hidden Bible code is no more than another attempt to draw one away from the obedience to the Word of God.

Also this book has become a best seller, and the movie rights have been sold to the book. The personal profit is tremendous and again leads one to see the true nature of this hoax.

The writer of this book and his supporters are not interested in truth; in fact the book itself is designed to take you away from the truth of the Scriptures. It is striking that in all the so-called hidden code in the Bible the author and others find the names of all the rabbis of the Jewish faith of any importance, even names of political leaders, as you mention, even Clinton, but the name of Jesus is absent in this so-called code.

There are several important truths that we must ever keep in mind. God has given us the infallibly inspired Scripture as a complete whole which reveals all that we need to know for faith and life. This is our confession and this is the testimony of the Scripture itself. The Word of God is given unto us clearly and plainly that we may be led in such a way to be made perfect, that is to be
prepared to dwell with our God forever. II Timothy 3:16-17 “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” We do not need more than this. In fact Paul warns us “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Galatians 1:8-12. In this passage we learn that the gospel that is preached is the gospel received by the revelation of Jesus Christ. It is this revelation that we now have in the Holy Scriptures. No man may add or subtract from that gospel. To do so is to bring a false gospel. Who must interpret the so-called code? Mathematicians or other highly learned men that can explain not only how the so-called code works, but that it reveals things that God did not reveal in His revealed Word. This is foolishness. God has said that He hides the Word from the wise and prudent, they cannot even know what Jesus taught plainly in the parables; but He reveals His Word and the things of His kingdom to babes. How different from all the technical knowledge needed to read and to interpret this so-called code. Jesus Himself says “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” Revelation 22:18-19. It is a matter of life and death, eternal life and eternal death to attempt to add or subtract anything to the Scriptures. Already in the Old Testament we hear the warning of God, in Deuteronomy 18:9-12 “When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee.” Basically this is that which is attempted through holding that there is a secret code that needs to have special divination to determine its meaning. Especially is this true when those that hold to the special code would say that the future things, even in their details, can be foretold by this code. It is an abomination unto the Lord.

God clearly reveals to us all that we need to know about the future in the various prophecies of the Scriptures. Man is not satisfied, he wants more, he will not walk in faith. That is the problem and trouble. Are we satisfied with God’s Word, are we content with His ways or shall we make a god of our own understanding? Almost anyone can use a computer and with a mixture of the letters of the Scripture that is taking any one theme could produce spellings of almost all of the known words in the language of man. But this proves absolutely nothing other than the tremendous capacity that man has to do what he pleases. With statistics it is said you can prove anything you want, so it is with such mathematical play with the words of Scripture. God gives man over to his foolishness unto destruction.

In faith we receive God’s written clear Word of the Scriptures, and receive the gospel of salvation by grace alone. Do not listen to the call of antichrist so prevalent today that would draw you aside from obedience to that Word.

Finally remember God is light and truth, He does not deceive nor does He hide for ages from His people that which they need to know. We read this very simply and wonderfully in the First epistle of John in verses four through seven, “And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” There is no darkness in God at all.

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

Rev. Moore is pastor of Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa.
Through Strife to Victory

Chapter 7

Storm Clouds Gather
by Rev. C. Hanko

If you were to take a trip and were traveling along the freeway, sooner or later you would come to a crossroads. Imagine for a moment, that you either took this crossroad inadvertently, or that for some reason it appealed to you, so that you found yourself off your course. At first you would be only inches and feet from the freeway, then yards and miles. In fact the farther you traveled in that wrong direction the farther you would get from your highway. Unless you stopped and retraced your steps, you would never reach your destination.

The same thing happens with churches. Possibly unawares, possibly in the search for something different, the church departs from the way of Scripture and the Confessions. At first the difference is minimal, but the church is nevertheless apostate, and if it does not repent it will ultimately, under the righteous judgment of God, be given over to its sin and become the false church.

It was January of 1924 and the unrest in the churches had become a tempest. There seemed to be great haste.

Three members of the Eastern Avenue congregation, who were seen to meet in the Hoeksema Shoe Store with Wabko Hoeksema’s brother, now came to the parsonage to present a protest to Rev. Hoeksema.

This was a rather strange procedure for a couple of reasons. First of all, they had never spoken to the minister of their grievances. Secondly, this formal protest was addressed to the consistory. There was no effort made to come in a spirit of love and discuss this matter with their pastor.
When Rev. Hoeksema asked that the protesters discuss the matter with him, two of them refused, while the other came to him, but was not able to defend the contents of the protest. What was even more serious was the fact that the protesters accused the pastor of being guilty of a public sin, for denying the theory of common grace in his preaching and his writings. This presumed an official stand by the denomination in regard to common grace, which had never happened.

When this protest came to the consistory, of Eastern Avenue C.R.C., the consistory realized that if it treated this protest it would in effect be agreeing with the protesters. The consistory would be agreeing that their pastor was guilty of a public sin in his denial of common grace and with this they could never agree. The only procedure left was to demand that the protesters recant. Since the protesters refused to do so, they were placed under censure for unjustly accusing the minister of a public sin, but, ignoring the action of the consistory, they appealed to Classis East in May.

At this classis there were three more protests. First, there was one from Rev. Jan Karel Van Baalen, who, as mentioned before in previous chapters, had written two brochures against Rev. Danhof and Rev. Hoeksema. He demanded of Rev. Hoeksema and Rev. Danhof that they “take back your unreformed utterances and your slanderous remarks respecting Dr. A. Kuyper, Dr. H. Bavinck and a host of your fellow ministers.” Rev. Van Baalen’s protest raised the following objections:

1. They (the two ministers) contend that God is never kindly, mercifully, graciously disposed toward the reprobate.

2. They place election and reprobation on a par, as though they came forth in the same manner from God’s counsel.

3. They deny that God restrains, holds in check, the evil, sin.

4. They contend that the unregenerate can do absolutely no good.

5. In a rash and improper manner they accuse a number of office bearers in our churches, and also in sister churches in the Netherlands, as being unreformed in doctrine and guilty of worldly-mindedness.

There came a second protest from Rev. J. Vander Mey, who was a member of the Eastern Avenue congregation and who had left the ministry to become donation collector throughout the churches for Calvin College. At an earlier time he had written Rev. Hoeksema: “Of all your beautiful sermons this one crowns them all” but now he had a protest against his pastor. Rev. Vander Mey also failed to inform his pastor of this protest and had some 500 copies of it printed even before the classis met, some of which he had distributed. He charged the following:

1. He accused the minister of having a wrong conception of God. (The delegates were shocked by this charge, yet there was truth in the fact that his pastor had a different God than he had.)

2. He objected to “excessive” emphasis on the doctrine of predestination and the counsel of God. Conversely, he felt that man’s responsibility was not emphasized strongly enough.

3. He objected that his minister did not sound the true gospel note in his preaching.

4. He charged that his pastor made the second table of the law of none effect.

The third protest came from Rev. Schans. Rev. Schans, at the time a minister in Kelloggsville, presented his protest as purported to be from his consistory. In actuality his consistory had refused to sign his protest, but he presented it regardless. Incidentally, Rev. Hoeksema became aware of this protest of Rev. Schans when he preached in one of the neighboring churches. The elders of Classis East had all received a copy, but Rev. Hoeksema had received nothing and had known nothing about it. Schans had a two-fold request:
1. That the two ministers, Danhof and Hoeksema, be examined as to their orthodoxy on the following subjects: The general offer of the gospel; Election and reprobation; The restraint of sin; Civil righteousness; The responsibility of man; and God's providence and government over all things.

2. To examine and test the writings of these two ministers on the basis of Scripture and the Confessions.

The classis meeting was held in the Eastern Avenue church. During the noon meal, one of the women of the church who was serving the meal made the remark that she could not see why the women should feed the delegates when they were planning to kill their minister. Whether this was the reason or not, the classis moved to Sherman Street church to continue its meetings.

Classis wrestled for some time, trying to declare these protests as being legally before their gathering. By doing this, Classis would ignore the fact that the protesters had not walked the proper way of church polity in refusing to discuss the matter and even neglecting to notifying Rev. Hoeksema of their protests against him. Article 30 of the Church Order states that "In the major assemblies (classis and synod) only such matters shall be dealt with as cannot be finished in minor assemblies (the consistory or classis)."

Rev. Hoeksema informed the classis that he would have no part in their unjust dealings and he left the meeting, refusing to return unless they declared the protests illegally before the classis. After much dispute classis finally did decide to declare the protests as illegally before them.

At one point during the course of the discussion, the pastor of Eastern Avenue made the remark that one would have to search with a candle in order to find true Reformed preaching among the ministers in the churches. One of the delegates made a motion to demand a retrac- tion of this statement. After a bit of discussion Rev. Hoeksema suggested that they add the amendment: "Unless he can prove it." Thereupon the motion was dropped.

All the protesters appealed to the upcoming synod, which was due to meet on July 18.

We should notice:

1. That the protest of the three members of the Eastern Avenue congregation had not been finished by the consistory, nor by the classis.

2. That the pastor and the consistory were not even notified, still less had time to treat these protests. None of the other three cases had been finished either in the consistory or in the classis.

3. That in two instances, copies of the protest had been made and distributed without the pastor and consistory that were involved being informed.

4. That all the material for the synod should have been in the hands of the stated clerk of synod by May 1, in order to give the delegates to synod time to study the material that was to come before the meeting. The classis met in the latter part of May, too late for any material to be forwarded to the next synod.

5. That in spite of all this, the protesters forwarded their protests to synod. There was great haste with these matters.

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

by J.P. de Klerk
It was difficult to get a picture of this French Reformed Church because it is in a narrow street in the city of Alès. But it is symbolic for the long and difficult road generations of Reformed people had to go. The ancestors of most members of the “Église réformée de France” were refugees. They had to leave everything behind because of their faith. Once a year, for special occasions like Easter, Pentecost and Christmas this Church has a united meeting with the “Église réformée évangélique indépendante” and the building is filled to the corners. There is room for 2000 people. The architecture of this building is in general like all the Reformed Churches in this region, in Neo-Roman style, built in 1856-1869 (after a lot of quarrels with officials and financial problems) designed by Architect Revoil.

In the past there was a chapel at this place, used by the Reformed people in 1707 till 1729 when the government condemned all the Protestants in France, so that they had to gather secretly. This time is called in the French history books “La période du Désert.” Friends in Ales sent me photocopies, made in the library of the university there.

You see the organ inside the Church, which is well maintained. Another church has existed, somewhere further on, but destroyed by followers of the French Revolution.

It was Napoleon who gave the Reformed Church the freedom to exist and to gather, so the congregation started to bring money together for rebuilding on the ruins of the chapel in the Peyrollerie Street (1802).

They were supported by other Reformed Churches, in Valmalette, Deleuze, Verdier, Roquier, Jalabert and others. Because of the high costs of bricks and stones the church got a simple shape. To enter the pulpit, the minister has to go to the hall of the church.

On December 3, 1869, minister Breton opened the new church, in the presence of two colleagues, Bonnefon and Decoppet, Mayor Pages and Judge Thézillat. On a commemoration plaquette, the text is mentioned from Matthew 24:35 that heaven and earth will pass away, but not the Word of God.

In 1882 the church was enlarged behind the pulpit.

In 1913 the roof was renewed. In 1938 the organ was replaced with a new one. In 1950 central heating (with gas) was installed. In 1960 a sound installation came in place, both for the pulpit and the table of the Holy Supper. In 1975 the City Council took care of restorations and improvements of the interior of the building, in a cream color. In 1992 the organ received some technical improvements.
The Dutch town of Ede is one of the biggest municipalities in The Netherlands, because it includes such a great number of villages in the province of Gelderland (West Veluwe). It has attracted a lot of all kinds of industry, but almost half of its area is natural beauty (woods and moorland). The “Oude Kerk” (State Reformed) is built in late gothic style, in the years 1375-1450 and was in that time called the Saint Jean Baptiste Church. Inside and outside the building there are many tombs covered by marble showing names, dates, etc.

In 1635 the church was struck by lightning and the whole building went up in flames, that is to say anything that was not made of stone. The restoration took a very long time, and there were construction problems, so in the years 1964-1967 the church was again restored with the roof exactly in the shape shown at the oldest drawings. Also the chancel (choir), and both towers are like the originals.

The church has a beautiful organ that was built in 1877 in the State Reformed Church of Nieuwe Niedorp (in the province of North Holland), but was transported to Ede, piece by piece.

The pulpit has the traditional handmade shape, complete with an hour glass so that the minister would not forget the time.

This Church has once had a famous minister who later became professor in the city of Groningen. His name was Cornelius van Velzen (1696-1752). He wrote several books, like “Institutiones Theologiae Practicae,” in three volumes, about Biblical ethics, and “Een Geestelyk Mensch” (A spiritual human being). All 131 books he wrote are kept in “De Schatkamer,” in the town of Veenendaal, since 1987.

J.P. de Klerk is an author and journalist from Ashhurst, New Zealand.
A Wonderful Fish Story

The early morning air was cool and brisk, but Michael shivered with more excitement than cold as he boarded his uncle’s fishing boat. This would be his first fishing trip with “the men.” He clutched his pole and tackle box tightly.

“Just set them there for now, Michael,” said Dad. “We won’t cast our lines until we’re quite a distance off shore.”

Uncle John started the motor of the little boat and the three seamen made their way through the channel and onto the open water of the huge lake. Michael was silent as he took in all the sights and sounds. A small, pink, eastern sliver of light grew and changed into peach and then to a full, glorious, golden yellow. Mist layered the shoreline like frost, until the yellow sunlight licked it up. Sea gulls scolded and squawked as they travelled through their territory. Then more distant became their caws and more distant became the shore, until finally they were quite away and quite alone. Uncle John turned off the motor.

Michael looked in every direction and couldn’t help exclaiming, “It’s…it’s so big!” Waves gently rocked the boat, making him feel even smaller.

Father chuckled as he opened the tackle box and prepared his line and lure. “It is a special experience, isn’t it? Water all around…and no land in sight.”

“It never fails to remind me of Psalm 107,” said Uncle John, “They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; These see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep.”

“How true,” added Dad, “how true.”

All three cast their lines and patiently waited. Then suddenly Michael felt a tug on his pole. Just in time he gripped it with all his might, because a second tug nearly pulled him and his pole into the water.

“Help! I got one!” he yelled.

Dad dropped his pole and helped Michael hold onto his line. Uncle John coached them through each round of pull and release. Finally Michael warily reeled in his catch.

“Well, look at that. A chinook!” said Uncle John.

“One of the wonders in the deep,” said Dad.

Michael beamed. He would never forget this wonder-full day.

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

Unscramble these words from Psalm 107:43.

Shoow si sewi, dan liwl roveebs

eshte ghitsn, neev yhet halls
drennutsad het sinkvoigenndls

fo eht

LORD."
Church News

BAPTISMS
"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."
Mark 16:16

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:
Jenni Anne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Rick Elzinga—Faith, MI
Michelle Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Greg Holstege—Faith, MI
Jeffrey Robert, son of Mr. & Mrs. Keith Noorman—Faith, MI
James Henry, son of Mr. & Mrs. Scott Haaksma—Georgetown, MI
Shane Robert, son of Mr. & Mrs. Bob Cammenga—Holland, MI
Rebecca Anne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jon Hop—Hope, MI
Henry Jonathan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Harlan Hoekstra—Hope, MI
Timothy Lewis, son of Mr. & Mrs. Duane Bruinsma—South Holland, IL
Keiggen Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Todd Lange—South Holland, IL
Michala Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeremy Lubbers—South Holland, IL
Samuel David, son of Mr. & Mrs. George Ophoff—South Holland, IL

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH
"...and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."
Romans 10:10

Public profession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made by:
Leah Cleveland—Hope, MI
Nathan DeVries—Hope, MI
Dawn Kalsbeek—Hope, MI
Cara Kuiper—Hope, MI
Scott Ensink—Hudsonville, MI
Erika Braaksma—Randolph, WI
Jon Regnerus—Randolph, WI
Ben Soodsma—Randolph, WI

MARRIAGES
"...and they twain shall be one flesh."
Matthew 19:5

United in the bonds of Holy Matrimony were:
Mr. Ron Kuiper and Miss Marlys VanMaanen—Hope, MI
Mr. Ryan Mowery and Miss Heather Bruinsma—Kalamazoo, MI