

Insight Into

March / April 2022

“The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come” (Song of Solomon 2:12).

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Insight Into

General Information

Insight Into is the official youth periodical of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations in the United States and Canada.

As a Reformed magazine, **Insight Into** seeks to promote the knowledge of the truth and to give biblical guidance to young people in their daily lives.

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MEDITATION

Two Swords

“And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And He said unto them, It is enough” (Luke 22:38).

Rev. E. Hakvoort

Before Jesus will suffer and die, He once more instructs His disciples. In Luke 9, He sent them out to preach the gospel, without purse, scrip, and shoes. And had they lacked anything? In holy admiration they confessed that they had lacked nothing. In Luke 10, they had come back with joy, because even the devils were subject to them through the Name of Jesus Christ.

But now a different time would come. Now Christ would be obedient even unto death. Now He would suffer and die. The enemies would not rest until He was crucified. But Christ would not stay in death. He would arise and ascend into heaven. And the disciples would be sent out as His witnesses to proclaim the gospel of sovereign grace even to the end of the world.

That is the reason that from now on they not only need a purse and a scrip, but also a sword. That sword is so indispensable that *“he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one”* (Luke 22:36). But what is that sword? Must the disciples defend themselves with a sword like Simon Peter did in the Garden of Gethsemane when he cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant?

No, it is the *“sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God”* (Ephesians 6:17)! Paul says that God’s Word is so *“quick, and powerful,”* that it is even *“sharper than any two-edged sword”* (Hebrews 4:12). It means that when the disciples go into the world, they must be resilient to speak God’s Word honestly, not in their own name, but in the Name of Christ. And it must still be heard in our churches, in our schools, and in our families: *Thus saith the Lord. And hear the Word of God.*

But we must also be resilient to defend God’s Word, because there are many attacks against the Bible. What always was certain among us is not that sure anymore for many. Words and opinions of men seem more important than God’s Word. What the Lord calls sin, we

consider that not to be sin. In all things we clearly see that we live in the very last days.

Satan is going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He attacks our families, schools, and churches, not only from without, but also from within. His work is – as his name means – to divide and destroy. We must be vigilant, because we do not have a battle against flesh and blood, but against the three spiritual enemies, against Satan, world, and sin.

But how is it possible that sinners learn to use that spiritual sword? Because the sword of God’s wrath turned against Christ! He died on the cross so that sinners may live in Him. There lies the hope also in our days. When that two-edged sword of God’s Word pierces our heart, it cuts us off from all unrighteousness, and strips us from all self-righteousness. It teaches us that there is no ground in us to exist before God, so that we may flee unto the throne of grace for mercy.

Restless is the heart until it may find rest in Christ. But there is more. In that way, God’s Spirit also teaches us to fight the good fight of faith with the sword of God’s Word. We learn to hate sin and fight against sin. We learn to love the Lord and His service, and to use the sword of His Word. And when the devil attacks, we may say: *“Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written”* (Matthew 4:10).

Dear young friends, seek then the Lord while He may be found. If you take up the sword of the world against the Lord and His people, you will perish by that sword. But those that learn to use the sword of God’s Spirit will live. Oh, the battle against the three-headed enemy may be fierce. But one day, God’s people may lay down that sword to receive the crown. Then they don’t need the sword of God’s Word anymore. Because in heaven there will be no enemies, but there they will be with the Lord to glorify His Name forever. Is that not something to be jealous of?

“No one is redeemed except through unmerited mercy, and no one is condemned except through merited judgment.”
~ Augustine (354-430)

“Nothing has contributed more powerfully to wean me from all that held me down to earth than the thought, constantly dwelt upon, of death and of the last judgment.”

~ Augustine (354-430)



God Gave the Ten Commandments

Rev. Thomas Watson (1620-1686)

If God spoke all the words of the moral law, several duties are enjoined upon us:

(1) If God spoke all these words, *we must hear all these words*. The words which God speaks are too precious to be lost. As we would have God hear all our words when we pray, so we must hear all His words when He speaks. We must not be as the deaf adder, which stops her ears: He that stops his ears when God cries shall cry himself and not be heard.

(2) If God spoke all these words, *we must attend to them with reverence*. Every word of the moral law is an oracle from heaven. God Himself is the preacher, which calls for reverence. If a judge gives a charge upon the bench, all attend with reverence. In the moral law, God Himself gives a charge; “*God spake all these words*” (Exodus 20:1). With what veneration therefore should we attend! Moses put off his shoes from his feet, in token of reverence, when God was about to speak to him (Exodus 3:5-6).

(3) If God spoke all these words of the moral law, *we must remember them*. Surely all God speaks is worth remembering; those words are weighty which concern salvation. “*It is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life*” (Deuteronomy 32:47). Our memory should be like the chest in the ark where the law was kept. God’s oracles are ornaments, and shall we forget them? “*Can a maid forget her ornaments?*” (Jeremiah 2:32).

(4) If God spake all these words, then *believe them*. See the name of God written upon every commandment. The heathens, in order to gain credit to their laws, reported that they were inspired by the gods at Rome. The moral law has its pedigree from heaven; He Himself has said it. God spoke all these words. Shall we not give credit to the God of heaven? How would the angel confirm the women in the resurrection of Christ? “*Lo,*” said he, “*I have told you*” (Matthew 28:7); I speak in the word of an angel. Much more should the moral law be believed, when it comes to us in the Word of God. “*God spake all these words.*” Unbelief takes away from the virtue of God’s Word and makes it prove abortive. “*The word preached did not profit ... not being mixed with faith*” (Hebrews 4:2). Eve gave more credit to the devil when he spoke than she did to God.

(5) If God spake all these words, then *love the commandments*. “*O how love I Thy law! It is my meditation all the day*” (Psalm 119:97). “*Consider how I love Thy precepts*” (Psalm 119:159). The moral law is the copy of God’s will, our spiritual directory; it shows us what sins to avoid, what duties to pursue. The Ten Commandments are a chain of pearls to adorn us; they are our treasury to enrich us; they are more precious than lands of spices, or rocks of diamonds. “*The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver*” (Psalm 119:72). The law of God has truth and goodness in it (see Nehemiah 9:13) — *truth*, for God spoke it; and *goodness*, for there is nothing the commandment enjoins, but it is for our good. Let this then compel our love.

(6) If God spoke all these words, then *teach your children the law of God*. “*These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children*” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). He who is godly is both a diamond and a magnet: a *diamond* for the sparkling of His grace, and a *magnet* for His attractive virtue in drawing others to the love of God’s precepts. A good man benefits others more than himself. You that are parents, discharge your duty. Though you cannot impart grace to your children, yet you may impart knowledge. Let your children know the commandments of God. “*Ye shall teach them your children*” (Deuteronomy 11:19). You are careful to leave your children an inheritance: leave the oracles of heaven with them; instruct them in the law of God. If God spoke all these words, you may well say them over again to your children.

(7) If God spoke all these words, *the moral law must be obeyed*. If a king speaks, his word commands allegiance; much more when God speaks, His words must be obeyed. Some will obey partially, obey some commandments, not others; like a plough which, when it comes to a stiff piece of earth, resists; but God, who spoke all the words of the moral law, will have all obeyed. He will not dispense with the breach of even one law. Princes indeed, for special reasons, sometimes dispense with penal statutes, and will not enforce the severity of the law; but God, who spoke all these words, binds men with a legal summons to yield obedience to every law.

~ This is an edited extract from Rev. Watson’s *The Ten Commandments*. The article is a set of points of application, based on the words: “*And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage*” (Exodus 20:1-2).

“*All men’s secret sins are printed in heaven, and God will at last read them aloud in the ears of all the world.*”
~ Rev. Thomas Brooks (1608-1680)

The Mote and the Beam

Rev. M. Romeyn (1913-1971)

We read in Matthew 7:3, “*And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?*” This test is an extension to the first verse of this chapter, “*Judge not, that ye be not judged.*” The Lord is a righteous Judge, and the Lord does not appoint man, who is a sinner himself, to pass judgment upon his fellowman who is a sinner also. A worldly judge will investigate every case before he will judge a person who violated the civil law. If the judge is appointed by the government, his judgment shall be binding. Besides this, the person who is judged may appeal to a higher court, etc.

For a Christian, it is different. We must investigate ourselves first before we judge our fellowman. The famous Hillell, who lived a short time before Christ’s time, gave this advice; “Do not judge thy neighbour, until thou comest into his place.” It would be better for all of us if we would put ourselves in the case and circumstances of the person who has done something wrong, before we would consider what judgment we would choose to pass on others. We may not approve if our fellowman does something wrong, but if we pass judgment, it must be with self-knowledge in exercise, and our judgment must be accompanied with love. We might have a sharp eyesight about the sins of others and are blind for our own shortcomings and sins. A wise man once said, “As often as I see a sin committed by my neighbour, I see double so much sin in myself.” On the contrary, selfish love is as a magnifying glass; if we look at the sins of others, they are enlarged. I read about people of the early days who separated themselves from society and lived in tents in the desert. But they take themselves along. We might be able to separate ourselves from sinners, but we can never run away from our personal sins.

One man of this separated group went round about the tents of his neighbours. On his back he carried a heavy bag filled with sand, and in his hand he carried a small bag filled with a little bit of sand, which he carried in front of him all the time. When he was asked what this was all about, he answered, “The heavy bag is an example of my own sins; they are so many and so heavy that I carry them on my back. This way, I do not see them all the time and I do not feel so sad. The little bit of sand in the small bag is an example of my brother’s sin. I carry them before my eyes, and I make it my business to judge his sins for the purpose of improvement.”

Young friends, if we understand this example, we also know what was meant when the Lord Jesus said, *“And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye?”* By mote is meant any little piece of straw, or small splinter of wood, that flies into the eye, and does damage, hinders its sight, and gives it pain. Sin is as an arrow wherewith we wound ourselves, even if it is considered a minor transgression. Minor sins, which may be said to be light faults, in comparison of others. According to our fallen state and conditions, we have an open eye for the light faults of our neighbour, and we are so blind for the greater sins of our own. Jesus said, *“But considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?”* By beam is meant greater sins, grosser abominations, and such as were more peculiar to the Pharisees; as pride, arrogance, a vain opinion of themselves, confidence in their own righteousness, hypocrisy, etc. The Pharisees were overly strict about the disciples of the Lord Jesus. The Pharisees were so strict when the disciples did eat with unwashed hands, which was scarcely a mote, while they encouraged men in contempt of their parents, which was a beam. Pride and uncharitableness are commonly beams in the eyes of those that pretend to be critical and nice in their censures of others. If men are so severe upon the faults of others, while they are indulgent of their own, it is a mark of hypocrisy. By nature, we are soon ready to judge others and justify ourselves. We can never deceive the Lord, but we deceive ourselves, *“For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged”* (Matthew 7:2).

We pray so often, *“And forgive us our debts”* (Matthew 6:12). If this is true in our heart, the other part of the petition shall be true, too, *“as we forgive our debtors”* (Matthew 6:12). Dear friends, this instruction is applicable to me, to you, and to all. The Lord bless us with discovery. It would be a blessing if we would see the beam in our own eyes. The fruit of this blessing will be that we shall be willing and humble to see the mote which is in the eye of our brother with an eye of love.

QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by the mote that is in thy brother’s eye?
2. What is meant by the beam that is in thy own eye?
3. What would be better, to see our own sin or the sin of our neighbour?
4. What would be a blessing for all of us?

“Those who will not deliver themselves into the hand of God’s mercy cannot be delivered out of the hand of His justice.”

~ Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

The Sin of Lot's Wife

*Lot's wife is known, but her name we do not know.
We do know that she was the mother of two daughters.*

Rev. W. Visscher

She had lived with her husband in Sodom for the last years of her life. It wasn't perfect, but there was much that appealed to her. Paganism with its gods and goods pleased her better than that God of Abram and her husband. That God who had told them to leave Ur, whereupon they had gone, and she had to go with Lot.

"Abram departed" (Genesis 12:4), and Lot had gone with him. He also believed the Word of the God who had spoken to Abram. Before that, he had given up all his prosperity in Ur. The promise of God about a land, a people, and a Seed made them go. They wandered through deserts; they were in Egypt; there was hunger and loneliness. It didn't go well. Thankfully, however, a change had come. In recent years Lot had said goodbye to Abram, and they had been living in the city of Sodom for many years. Their daughters had both found husbands. Not everything in Sodom was pleasant, but Lot's wife could adjust to living there with her husband.

But her husband, Lot, could not sleep at times, and she had tried to encourage him. They were now free of that voice that had told them to leave their country and their kindred. That voice of the God that Abram said was the only and true God. However, in Sodom there were also gods who were more in tune with what she herself liked. She wanted peace and a little prosperity. Then those men sent from God had come, heavenly angels. And again they had to go, as they did years ago when they had to leave Ur. There was loneliness once more. Also that Word of the God that Abram spoke of; the same God her husband spoke of so often. She didn't want to go. It was good in Sodom after all. Certainly, there were also things she couldn't justify. Her daughters had husbands with such different habits. But still, you could live there in Sodom. And yet they had to leave. The men from heaven took them with them. They left everything behind. Their house, their property, the animals . . . everything. How she would like to stay in Sodom. What a pity. She looked back one more time, and she became a pillar of salt.

Centuries later, the Lord Jesus says, "*Remember Lot's wife*" (Luke 17:32). On the way to redemption, she perished eternally. Her heart was left in Sodom. She did not know life as a stranger, nor did she desire it. And so she perished forever.

Heed the warning, lest we fall into the same unbelief. "*Remember Lot's wife.*"

~ Translated, with editing, from *De Saambinder*

"Behold the Man!"

(John 19:5)

"Behold the Man!" Our words must fail,
Nor can we full express
The suffering that did assail
The Lord our Righteousness.

"Behold the Man!" Gethsem'ne's soil
Is witness to His strife;
Great drops of blood, His sweat and toil,
There creeps the Lord of Life.

"Behold the Man!" As strong-armed men
Take Him and bind Him fast.
"If ye seek Me, let these go then."
Fulfilling "none I've lost."

"Behold the Man!" His look of love
While Peter doth deny,
Strikes like an arrow from above,
And Peter then must cry.

"Behold the Man!" He's spit upon
And smitten in His face;
They mock with God's own Holy Son
And load Him with disgrace.

"Behold the Man!" In Pilate's hall
His innocence proclaimed;
And yet they still desire His fall,
Set free a murd'rer famed.

"Behold the Man!" He answers not
The things in hatred asked;
But says, "I am the Son of God."
When He is pressed at last.

“Behold the Man!” Lo there He stands
Arrayed in purple robe;
His back is scourged by hellish hands,
He stands there all alone.

“Behold the Man!” The crown of thorns
Is pressed upon His brow;
Open to man’s contempt and scorn,
E’en friends forsake Him now.

“Behold the Man!” See there He hangs
Between the earth and heav’n;
On cursed tree, with awful pangs
The Saviour’s life is giv’n.

“Behold the Man!” Behold He dies!
Bows down, gives up the ghost;
And yet in this most solemn wise
He ransoms heaven’s host.

“Behold the Man!” He’s risen now
And crowned of kings the King;
Let every knee before Him bow,
And men and angels sing.

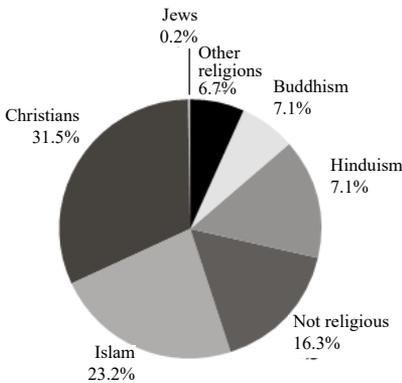
“Behold the Man!” Was it for thee,
That Jesus paid the price?
Gave His own life to set thee free?
Oh, Blessed Sacrifice!

“Behold the Man!” Once more He’ll come
To judge the human race;
And take His ransomed people home,
Redeemed by sovereign grace.

~ A. H.

One Way or Many Ways?

Rev. G. Clements



“More than 60% of young Americans who call themselves born again no longer believe that Jesus is the only way to salvation,” according to Probe Ministries, an evangelical institute in Texas, US.

A majority of young evangelicals embrace a pluralistic (multiform) worldview, according to a study by the RD (Dutch newspaper Reformatorisch Dagblad, August 24, 2021). “It doesn’t matter what you believe, as long as

you are sincere” is a common opinion among these young people. How can this thought take root and what should be the biblical answer to it?

Since the eighteenth century, relativism, the view that everything is relative, has permeated society. Under the influence of the Enlightenment, there was resistance to dogmas and authority, even within ecclesiastical circles. The Secession of the 19th century was a clear response to this. In the 20th century, the borders opened up further due to globalization (the process of becoming global) and the immigration of people from other cultures. Our world has become a village.

Whether one is Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist, Hindu, or Christian, we will have to get along is the general idea. Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi touched many hearts with his statement: “The soul of religion is one, but it is clothed in many forms.” It sounds tolerant, but we doubt his country’s religion is that tolerant, for in India today, many Christians are expelled or even killed, and their churches set on fire.

One God and Father over all

Apart from the worldwide intolerance, there is above all a substantive gap with all pagan religions and philosophies of life. The Hindu has many bizarre gods, such as Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. The Muslim worships Allah, the unapproachable, to whom one bows five times a day. Buddhism has no god. All these religions together are characterized by a way of self-salvation.

The Bible does not begin with man, but with God and His eternal thoughts

of peace. God sought man and “was pleased to seek and comfort him when he trembling fled from His presence, promising him that He would give His Son” (Belgic Confession, Article 17). People who claim that all religions are the same have never given it much thought.

One Name under heaven

According to the Bible, only one Name under heaven is given for salvation. It will be argued that other world religions have also produced great men, such as Mohammed and Buddha. Yet there is a great difference between Jesus Christ and all other prophets. He is the eternal Son of God, “*who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God*” (Philippians 2:6).

No religion and no philosophical system knows this mystery of godliness: God manifested in the flesh. “*He ... became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*” (Philippians 2:8). “*God ... hath given Him a Name which is above every name*” (Philippians 2:9).

All religions have spirits and supernatural powers. It is a dangerous world full of seducing spirits. It was Saul’s downfall to seek advice from the witch of Endor. Paul speaks of devils or even depths of Satan. “*Giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils*” (1 Timothy 4:1).

The Holy Spirit is not a power, but a divine Person, “the Lord and Giver of life” (Nicene Creed). The Holy Spirit causes man to be born again. He convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment. By the Holy Spirit, Christ is glorified in the hearts of His saints. “*He shall glorify Me*” (John 16:14). No religion knows this deep, cleansing, sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.

Heaven

Every world religion has a future perspective, but it is a materialistic coloured “dream.” The Germans hoped for the eternal hunting grounds. The dead in Africa get a piece of meat in their mouths. Eastern religions have nirvana, or a favourable return to earthly reality, reincarnation. The Qur’an does have a day of judgment, but paradise for Muslim men is a place of carnal pleasures.

How differently the Bible speaks of eternal life. Everything earthly and sinful has been destroyed there. “*And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new*” (Revelation 21:5). Heaven is the place where the triune God receives the glory, and communion with His people is fully restored. “*He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people*” (Revelation 21:3).

In the midst of all the pagan delusions, the only way of salvation is revealed to us in Scripture. “*This is the way, walk ye in it*” (Isaiah 30:21).

Translated, with editing, from *De Saambinder*

“Treasures of the Snow”

“Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow?”

(Job 38:22).

Mr. S. Timmer

What does man really know? The Scriptures tell us, *“For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow”* (Job 8:9). In Job 38 and 39, we find 77 questions that God asked of Job, who had no answer for all these questions. They pertained to the formation of the earth, oceanography, meteorology (the study of weather), biology (the study of various living organisms), and astronomy (the study of heavenly bodies).

Job had sought an answer for all his suffering, but the reason for it was never supplied to him in the Book of Job. The awful events, such as the sudden death of all his children, were given to him as God’s secret council unfolded. Maybe we also have the question, *“Why are all these things occurring?”* as we witness in this present world the chaos, disease, and death where the very fabric of society is crumbling. Certainly, this is all brought about by our sin and departure from God and His Word. *“Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it”* (Micah 6:9b).

The questions asked to Job were meant to humble and bring him to repent of his wrong thoughts and words concerning the difficult providences of God towards him. The questions God asked Job magnified God’s eternity with Job’s brief existence, God’s omniscience with Job’s ignorance, and God’s all-powerfulness with Job’s weakness. If Job could give no answer to these 77 questions dealing with things he was somewhat familiar with, then how could he possibly understand God’s secret council concerning his suffering?

Even today, with all our sophisticated equipment, we cannot plumb the depths of the various questions asked to Job. For every layer that is a little understood, layers exist far beyond our comprehension. For example, in living organisms we are able to visualize to a very small degree how individual molecules, with their 3-dimensional shapes, affect receptor cells, but the sheer magnitude and scale in organisms made of trillions of

cells seems infinite. As we study these topics, we should have as a frame of heart, “*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me*” (Psalm 139: 6).

A particular question that God asked Job, however, we would like to study to a limited depth. This has to do with the wonders of snow. “*Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow?*” Who has not felt some amazement at the beauty of a single snowflake as it fell on your coat on a cold winter day? If one looks at a snowflake under magnification, a picture emerges of beauty and symmetry. Below are some photos of snowflakes.



<https://www.rferl.org/a/russian-photographer-uses-soviet-technology-to-photograph-snowflakes/28919831.html>

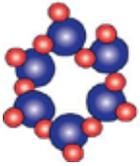
Snow crystals form in clouds where water vapor condenses on pollen or dust and crystalizes into ice. These crystals grow as more water vapor freezes on the original crystal and beautiful patterns emerge. Though every snowflake is different, yet each one has the same 6-sided hexagonal shape. This shape is partly due to the bond formed between the hydrogens and the oxygen in the water molecule. These atoms have been designed by our Creator to form a bond angle of 104.5 degrees, making water act like a magnet with a positive and negative end. This molecule takes on a “V” shape with the hydrogen on the ends and the oxygen in the middle as the model above shows. As the temperature drops, the hydrogen bonds between the various water molecules fixate the molecules into a beautiful shape as shown on the next page. No matter what aspect of the universe we study, we see symmetry, design, and orderliness. This was a comfort to the Psalmist as he looked above all the discouragements of his time and saw the orderliness of day, night, and the seasons:

The day is Thine, and Thine the night,
And Thine the shining sun;
At Thy command earth’s bounds are set
And changing seasons run,
And changing seasons run.
~ Psalter 205:10

Why Snowflakes Always Have 6 sides



A Water Molecule (H₂O)

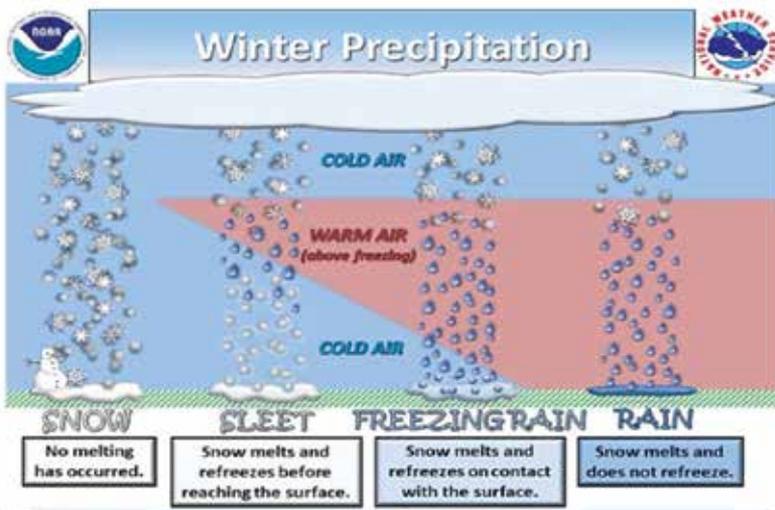


When water molecules freeze they form a 6-sided ring (hexagon). As more molecules freeze the snowflake becomes a 6-pointed crystal.

As the crystals fall through different temperatures, humidity, and wind conditions they each take on a particular growth pattern. It is estimated that there are over 100 different basic shapes to the ice crystals that make up snow. Many snowflakes are made of a single ice crystal while more complicated

snowflakes are made of up 200 ice crystals fused together. All 6 arms of a particular snowflake are symmetrical as they experience particular atmospheric conditions. However, snowflakes from different parts of a cloud can be very different because of alterations of these atmospheric conditions.

Meteorologists have discovered that as you ascend above the earth's surface, bands of unique temperatures are encountered. Most precipitation that forms in wintertime clouds starts out as snow. This is due to the fact that clouds in the winter are cold enough to create snowflakes, but what falls to the ground depends on what temperatures the snow falls through. The diagram below proposes 4 alternate routes snow could take to form sleet, freezing rain, rain, or remain snow.



It can be too warm to snow but not too cold to snow. As long as some moisture is in the air and the air can be lifted, snow can form. Large snowfalls usually occur when the air is relatively warm at the surface, -9

degrees C (15 degrees F) or warmer.

There are about 25 references to snow in the Scriptures. The Israelites were familiar with snow as we find Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the writers of the Gospel referring to it. The Israelites would have traveled to Jerusalem each year for various feasts along the Jordan River, whose waters were primarily from the snow melt of Mt. Hermon. Let us focus upon one reference to snow found in Isaiah 55:10-11, *“For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither; but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall My Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”*

As we have seen in the context of Job and the unfolding councils of God for him, so also in the context of God’s councils concerning redemption, His will shall be done.

1. If we look down to this earth, we find God’s Word there powerful and effectual, and fulfilling all God’s great intentions. The effect of God’s Word in the kingdom of nature is visible to us as He commands the snow, *“Be thou on the earth”* (Job 37:6). God appoints when the snow shall come, how much shall fall, and how long it shall remain on the earth. The snow falls to the earth to do *“whatsoever He commandeth them upon the face of the world ... whether for correction, or for His land, or for mercy”* (Job 37:12-13). Precipitation can be a great blessing to a scorched earth as we experienced last summer during the drought across our continent. Precipitation can also be a judgment, for example, when God sends a hurricane and thousands become homeless and many die. Snow is sent to accomplish God’s purposes. Farmers have first-hand knowledge of the importance of snowfall in regard to soils’ moisture. A land cannot be fruitful without moisture, and neither can a seed germinate, grow, and form fruit without the continual life-giving influence of the Holy Spirit: *“Thy Spirit, O Lord, makes life to abound,”* we sing in Psalter 287:1. God makes the plants to *“bring forth and bud,”* for the products of the earth depend upon the various forms of precipitation from heaven, and in this way *“bread is provided for those who eat,”* but also seed for another year.

2. The effect of God’s Word in the kingdom of grace is certain and sure: *“So shall My Word be ... it shall not return unto Me void”* (Isaiah 55:11). God’s Word will affect His purposes regardless of the opposition of men or evil spirits. First, this assures us that the promises of God shall all have their full accomplishment in due time, and not one iota shall fail. These promises of mercy and grace shall have as real an effect upon the souls of believers, for their sanctification and comfort, as ever the rain or snow

had upon the earth, to make it fruitful. Second, according to the different errands on which the Word is sent, it will have its different effects. If it be not a savour of life unto life, it will be a savour of death unto death; if it does not convince the conscience and soften the heart, it will sear the conscience and harden the heart; if it does not ripen for heaven, it will ripen for hell. One way or another, it will take effect. Thirdly, Christ's coming into the world, as the dew from heaven will not be in vain. For, if Israel be not gathered, He will be glorious in the conversion of the Gentiles; to them therefore the offers of grace must be made when the Jews refuse them, that the wedding may be furnished with guests and the gospel not return void. (Thoughts summarized from Matthew Henry on Isaiah 55:10-11).

O Lord, refresh us by Thy grace,
Revive and quicken all our pow'rs,
As failing streams are made to flow,
Replenished by abundant show'rs.

The sower bearing precious seed
May weep as in his toil he grieves,
But he shall come again with joy
In harvest time with golden sheaves.

~ Psalter 357:3 and 4

"I have always considered, with Luther and Calvin, that the sum and substance of the gospel lies in that word Substitution--Christ standing in the stead of man. If I understand the gospel, it is this: I deserve to be lost forever; the only reason why I should not be damned is, that Christ was punished in my stead, and there is no need to execute a sentence twice for sin. On the other hand, I know I cannot enter heaven unless I have a perfect righteousness; I am absolutely certain I shall never have one of my own, for I find I sin every day, but then Christ had a perfect righteousness, and He said, 'There, poor sinner, take My garment, and put it on; you shall stand before God as if you were Christ, and I will stand before God as if I had been the sinner; I will suffer in the sinner's stead, and you shall be rewarded for works which you did not do, but which I did for you.'"

~ Rev. C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

Our Only Comfort

Rev. P. van Ruitenburg

You have most likely heard of the Heidelberg Catechism, possibly the fourth most printed text in the world and one of the most beautiful summaries of the Bible. This booklet in question-and-answer format (1563) is not a small dogmatics, but a booklet of comfort that I can heartily recommend that you read through regularly, even if we know this catechism almost by heart.

The writing begins with a personal question, namely, what is our only comfort in life and death? In other words, what can we fall back on, what helps us get back on track if things aren't going so well? But the question is also what really gives our life colour, what our life is all about, what our joy and our true happiness are. The thoroughly biblical answer is beautiful, and I invite the reader to read the answer below slowly and ask for the Light of God's Spirit. I will now only highlight the core. The only comfort for a true believer may be that he or she is not his or her own, but the property of my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. He has paid, He has redeemed, He holds me, and without His will not a hair falls from my head. Everything has to work for me. He assures of eternal life, and He makes me willing to live for Him. This Catechism could not have started more beautifully and heartily, and I would like to follow that example. When asking the meaning of our lives, this may be the first thing to think about and keep in mind. Without this one and only, and unique and exceptional comfort, our lives are and remain pale. We must first of all be released from our guilt, be of Christ, and be made willing to live for Him. Everything else is secondary in comparison. Never be content with a life without this sole comfort!

Question 1: What is thy only comfort in life and death?

Answer: That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ; who, with His precious blood, hath fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil, and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, and therefore, by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto Him.