

Insight Into



July / August 2022

“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Meditation • “By Me Kings Reign” • Five Commands Traditions • Why Such Shocking Histories? David Dickson on Psalm 70 • In the Potter’s House Which Way Do You Go? • There are Still Flowers “Now God Speaks my own Language”

Insight Into

General Information

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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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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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Meditation

by Rev. G. M. de Leeuw pg. 1

“By Me Kings Reign”

by Rev. M. Romeyn pg. 3

Five Commands

by Rev. K. M. Watkins pg. 5

Traditions

by Rev. H. de Leeuw pg. 8

Why Such Shocking Histories?

by Rev. J. Schipper pg. 10

David Dickson on Psalm 70 pg. 11

In the Potter’s House

by A. H. pg. 12

Which Way Do You Go?

Submitted pg. 14

There are Still Flowers

by Rev. P. van Ruitenburg pg. 15

“Now God Speaks my own Language”

by Rev. C. Sonneveld pg. 16

With Quotations from Rev. Albert Mohler,
Rev. J. C. Ryle, J. W. Whitehead, Matthew Henry,
Rev. Thomas Brooks, and Rev. George Whitefield.

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MEDITATION

“Whosoever”

“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord shall be saved”

(Acts 2:21).

Rev. G. M. de Leeuw

Dear young people,

You all know that in daily life we hear about emergency calls. Then people are on their way to help other people. Then every second counts. Now about calling, we read in Acts 2:21, *“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord shall be saved.”* Is this also an emergency? In a way, yes, it is. These words are spoken by the Apostle Peter. Is he the same one who, not that long ago, denied the Lord Jesus? Yes, he is the same one. Then at that time, because of fear of men, he had no courage to confess His dear Master, which denial has cost him much grief and sorrow. Yet, now things will go very differently.

Boys and girls, do you know about situations when you were confronted with people who had a different religion, or no religion at all? If not yet, sooner or later you will confront this situation. And then, what do you do? Please, listen.

It was a very special day, that day of Pentecost. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, filling all the house where they were sitting. Upon each one were *“cloven tongues like as of fire”* (Acts 2:3). And amazingly, each one, filled with the Holy Ghost, spoke in other tongues. This is as a prelude for hereafter. Namely, they will go out into the whole world, to reach other people, who are speaking different languages. Going into the world to reach them with only one goal, namely, their conversion to the living God. By preaching to them the sound doctrine of the Bible. But, how do you do this when not knowing their language? Because what happened on that special day of Pentecost, speaking without any learning in different languages, was just for that occasion.

We can read of the late Rev. Lamain when he wrote of his beginning years in the USA, how difficult it was for him to learn the English language. And not for him only. But the Lord helped him. And for how many souls the Lord has used his manifold labours will be known in eternity.

Now this preaching commenced on the day of Pentecost. You can read in Acts 2:9-11 from where they all came to attend the day of Pentecost at Jerusalem. But then, what a blessing fell upon them. We read in verse 41 of the conversion of three thousand souls.

Dear boys and girls, tell me, is there a nicer goal? Because conversion is salvation. But now, tell me; did that happen to you already? Do you ask the Lord for this conversion day and night? Do you seek for this conversion by faithfully using and attending the means of grace? As we have told you often, there is so much available in the English language.

There is one word in the text which is asking us for some special attention, which is the word “*whosoever*.” Whereas Peter says: “*And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord shall be saved.*” “*Whosoever*” means each and every one, be it young or old, rich or poor, known or unknown, etc. Now we all know that for a long time the Lord did not work among Gentiles, except for some exceptions. But we also know what it says in Romans 2:9-11, “*Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile. But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. For there is no respect of persons with God.*”

Please realize that for thousands of years, the Lord did not work among Gentiles, with a few exceptions, as previously mentioned. It was, according to the Scriptures, first the Jew and then the Greek. And the word Greek means all the nations outside Israel. Going to Israel today, you will not meet many people who have a New Testament. We have witnessed in this country that out of a brand-new Bible with Old and New Testaments, they tore out the New Testament and threw it in the garbage. Dear reader, think about that. Is the Lord’s forbearance not incomprehensible? Yet, we have to realize that He is not an idle Onlooker either. Oh, what will it be when He will come to judge the nations. Where now His judgments are upon earth.

Dear people of the Lord, dear youth of the congregations, seek that God while He is there. Call upon Him while He is near. There is a way to Him who says: “*I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life*” (John 14:6). Coming as guilty, unworthy, blind, and stubborn. Oh, do not forget that He, that is the Lord Jesus Christ, came to seek and to save that which was lost. This has cost Him His life. What an expensive price, isn’t it? It went for Him through the steps of His humiliation. But then to apply what He has merited through such a deep way, unto lost and undone sinners, in the steps of His exaltation. Living under the means of grace, beg the Lord for the application of that free and sovereign grace. So be it.

“By Me Kings Reign”

(This article was written in 1968, but it still applies today,
also for Canada and other countries in the world.)

Rev. M. Romeyn (1913-1971)

We read in Proverbs 8:15-16: *“By Me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By Me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.”* This text came to my thoughts when I heard about the outcome of the presidential election. Millions of people have followed with excitement the campaign of the presidential candidates. Millions of dollars are spent by the political parties, to convince the public that their candidate is the most capable person to lead the country. The candidates themselves with their running mates did everything possible to win the public with appearances, with friendliness, and with speeches. Many voters have seriously considered which candidate would be the best for our country. Who is the most able person to solve the many serious problems of our day and time? The housing problem? The civil rights questions? The riots? Inflation? Depression? The economy of the country? Indeed, if we look at all the trouble at home and abroad, we would say we need a superhuman to be a president of the country. After the campaign closed, I heard people say, “Now it is up to the American voter who will be the president-elect.”

Is this so, my young friends? If a house must be built by a carpenter, do we say now it is up to the hammer to drive the nails into the lumber? We know better; the hammer is just a tool in the hands of the carpenter. So the voters are just a tool in the hand of the Lord to elect a new president into office. Civil government is a divine institution. This might be denied in our modern times, with all its education and science and inventions. Nevertheless, it is so, and it shall be so as long as the world stands. It is the downfall of a country if people think or say that religion is not an issue in the election or in the administration of a government. Psalm 127:1 states, *“Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.”*

It is very important for a country to have a government that reigns in the favour of the Lord. Those that are entrusted with the administration of the government have their commission from Christ. It is a branch of His kingly office. *“By Me kings reign, and princes decree justice.”* Religion is very much the strength and support of the civil government; it teaches subjects their duty, and so by it kings reign over them more

easily; it teaches kings their duty, and so by it kings reign as they ought; they decree justice while they rule in the fear of God. Those rule well whom religion rules. Out of the history of the Bible, we observe that Israel prospered when they were reigned by a king who feared the Lord. In other words, if Israel had a government who were obedient to the Lord, they did well. We have seen this also in the history of America. At the time that Abraham Lincoln was president, America was blessed and prospered. To reign a country, a person must have wisdom. *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom”* (Proverbs 9:10). The word of God was, for Lincoln, a fountain of wisdom. Psalm 119:105 states, *“Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”* The Word of God discovers to us, concerning God and ourselves, that which otherwise we could not have known; it shows us what is amiss, and what will be dangerous. It directs us in our work and way, and a dark place indeed the world would be without it. Young friends, knowing that Christ places, according to His supreme power and authority, kings and presidents in office, we must respect them and be obedient to them for the Lord’s sake. We must support them with our prayer and ability. The rulers of the country must be dependent upon the Lord, so that they may rule in His favour. The dissolvment of all the trouble and dangers of our time is in the true prayer of the president and the prayers of the inhabitants of the country. We hope that the individual person shall pray, *“Lord bless us with obedience to Thee, for myself, for my home and relatives, for our country, for our government. Bless our present and the next president with grace to know Thee and obey Thee.”* And America shall be blessed!

QUESTIONS

1. Who places a government in office?
2. What kind of government do you prefer to have?
3. How can problems and trouble be dissolved in the Lord’s favour?
4. What is our obligation toward the government?

“Hell will be highly populated with those who were “raised right.” The citizens of heaven will be those who, by the sheer grace and mercy of God, are there solely because of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. Moralism is not the gospel.”

~ Rev. Albert Mohler

Five Commands



Rev K. M. Watkins

*Q*ur blind dog has come on in leaps and bounds over the weeks. For his own good and safety, he has had to learn a number of commands. The first is not really a command, but it has the effect of one. It is simply to say the dog's name. This never fails to get his attention. It does not matter who or what else is around, when he hears his name, he knows that he is being singled out. Each of us should receive the Word of God like that; we should recognize that it speaks to us as individuals, as if there was not another person in the whole world. David felt that when Nathan said, *"Thou art the man"* (2 Samuel 12:7). Now David saw that Nathan's parable was all about himself. It had become personal. When the Lord opened Lydia's heart, the gospel spoke to her so personally that *"she attended unto the things which were spoken"* (Acts 16:14). It was not that the name Lydia was actually spoken in the preaching, but the message became relevant to her as an individual. The Saviour pictured this when He said of the shepherd, *"The sheep hear His voice: and He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out"* (John 10:3). Each sheep knew its name and could tell when the shepherd called it. So do those who become Christ's sheep. A day comes when they know that the Good Shepherd is addressing them personally. It feels as if He is singling them out, speaking to them only. It is almost as if He is using their very name.

The second command is, "Come!" To begin with, the dog was not sure about this. He could not see what was between him and us. But he soon learned that it would not hurt him to come. Instead, it was for his good, because a treat would be waiting for him. So he began to trust the call and usually he comes if we tell him to. This is another picture. The gospel tells us to come to Christ for salvation. *"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price"* (Isaiah

55:1). The Lord Jesus invites, “*Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matthew 11:28). “*Come unto the marriage*” (Matthew 22:4). But sinners can be afraid to come. They cannot see what is involved, and they fear what might happen. But when they trust Christ’s call, they always find that the Saviour never meant them any harm. He came not to hurt and destroy but to save and bless. He welcomes the repenting sinner with joy, like the father received the prodigal son.

The third command is, “Careful!” As the dog became more confident, he began leaving the path and exploring to the right and left. Soon he would go anywhere, as far as his long lead allowed. Being blind, he needed to be warned when danger was in his way. We have to be his eyes, constantly looking out for troubles in his way. When we see something, we call out, “Careful!” He learned the meaning of this command very quickly. As soon as he hears it, he slows down, he sniffs, he puts out his paw, exploring the obstacle ahead. Carefully he finds his way around it, or changes direction to avoid it. It could be a rock, or a bush, or a tree, or a fence, or a gate, or a parked vehicle, or an abandoned piece of farm machinery, or driftwood on the beach, or a stream, or a rabbit hole. He cannot see these things, but we can. Trusting us to warn him of danger, the rest of the time he goes on his way without fear. In our spiritual blindness, we cannot see all the harmful and dangerous things laid in our way by the world, the flesh, and the devil. But the Lord can. His eyes keep a constant watch for His people, and through His Word He warns them to be careful. When temptation is coming, He warns, “*Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation*” (Matthew 26:41). When they are about to trust in themselves, He warns, “*Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*” (1 Corinthians 10:12). When false teaching is about, He warns, “*Take heed that no man deceive you*” (Matthew 24:4), and “*Take heed what ye hear*” (Mark 4:24). When faith is under attack, He warns, “*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God*” (Hebrews 3:12). This is the all-seeing Saviour saying, “Careful!”

The fourth command is, “Step!” For a blind dog, steep steps are difficult. If he does not know a downward step is ahead, he could stumble and fall right over with a jolt. If he does not know an upward step is coming, he will walk or even run straight into it and bash his nose. So we warn him, saying, “Step!” When he hears that, he slows down and puts out his paw, to feel if the way ahead is up or down, and then he moves forward very carefully. Steep steps can be very difficult for us, too. Some changes in our lives take us steeply downward, like serious illness, losing loved ones, and other disappointments that cast us down. We can stumble by complaining

against God. There are downward steps in spiritual things too, especially when the Lord brings us down from pride and self-righteousness. We are to hear the Saviour's voice at such times, and seek grace to submit to the downward step. Walking softly and humbly before the Lord, we will keep making progress, without getting hurt. Even upward steps can cause harm. When things are going well for us outwardly, it is a time of spiritual danger. God's people can easily forget their dependence on the Lord. Anyone can be tempted to praise themselves for their achievements, instead of acknowledging God as the source of every good gift. That was Herod's downfall when "*he gave not God the glory*" (Acts 12:23) after his big speech. Even spiritual blessings can be dangerous, if God's people try to go on in their own strength. This was Uzziah's downfall: "*When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction*" (2 Chronicles 26:16).

A fifth command is, "This way!" A blind dog is like other dogs – it has a will of its own. If left to himself, who knows where he would end up? It is all darkness to him! Rather, when we come to a fork in the path, or a junction, we decide which direction he will take. We say, "This way!" He knows the command now, and most of the time he is quick to follow. So it is with God's people. Being spiritually blind by nature, how can they choose the right path? They need the Lord to guide them, and this He has promised to do. "*Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left*" (Isaiah 30:21). They are in danger of straying from the right path into the wrong way, whether to the right or to the left, but the Lord guides them by His Word. How precious! In themselves they are blind and cannot see the best way, but the Lord promises, "*I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them*" (Isaiah 42:16). Become one of His people, and you will have a Guide for life.

~ Taken from *The Young People's Magazine*, January 2022

"It costs something to be a real Christian, according to the standard of the Bible. There are enemies to be overcome, battles to be fought, sacrifices to be made, an Egypt to be forsaken, a wilderness to be passed through, a cross to be carried, a race to be run. Conversion is not putting a person in an armchair and taking them easily to heaven. It is the beginning of a mighty conflict, in which it costs much to win the victory."

~ Rev. J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

TRADITIONS

Rev. H. de Leeuw

This is a word which we are all familiar with. Traditions can be held dear. They usually have a lasting value. Each family will have their own traditions. Every culture will also hold to certain traditions. They are sometimes handed down from many generations past. In the Bible you also come across this word. The Lord Jesus speaks against the traditions of the Pharisees (Matthew 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-13) and the Apostle Paul exhorts to “*hold the traditions*” (2 Thessalonians 2:15). What is the difference? Why is the Lord Jesus against it and the Apostle Paul for it?

When the Lord Jesus speaks about traditions, it is in the context of transgressing the law. The Pharisee were using the traditions to excuse them from what the Law commanded. The example is from the 5th Commandment. The Pharisees said if you need to use the gift (money) what is really for your parents, but you want to use it for something else and you find a religious excuse that you need to use it for yourself, then you do not have to give that money to your parents. So, they with their tradition disobeyed the law. The Pharisees made loopholes, so that they could say they were obeying the law, but really they were disobeying it. The Lord Jesus sees right through it. He points out that their traditions are not scriptural; therefore, they are not to be kept. Their traditions were not according to the revealed will of God (the law); therefore, they are guilty of sin. Really, the Lord Jesus refutes their traditions according to the Scriptures.

Paul on the other hand exhorted the church at Thessaloniki to continue “*to hold the traditions.*” Was that an exhortation to find loopholes? No, never! Paul uses the word tradition here to speak of the teachings which have been handed down. And have been given to keep. Literally, it is the truth. Paul has an eye to the future in 2 Thessalonians 2. It will not be easy. There will be many temptations to let go of truth and traditions. Think here of our time. How many traditions have already been let go? How much is compromised to stay friendly with those who follow the man of sin. But in the midst of it, Paul exhorts Thessaloniki, “*Hold the traditions.*” Does Paul exhort because he expects the Thessalonians to do it themselves? Not at all. The Truth, which is in Christ Jesus, receives power in the heart of sinners by the Holy Ghost, and He will give them to understand truth from lies. That brings those people in the inner chamber, seeking their guidance

from the Lord. Therefore, they are bound to the simple means to hear His will declared unto them. To hold to these traditions is God's work, but they need to be exhorted to hold it.

What are our traditions? Are they loopholes to serve the world? To name certain traditions would be endless, because we have so many. Therefore, examine if our traditions bring us away from God and His Word, or are they in line with God's Word? The exhortation was to "*hold the traditions*" which glorify the work of the Lord.

"If you mix humanism with Christian truths, the basic message of Christianity is destroyed."

~ J. W. Whitehead (1857-1939)

"Our fear must save our hope from swelling into presumption, and our hope must save our fear from sinking into despair."

~ Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

"Human doctrines have no humbling power in them."

~ Rev. Thomas Brooks (1608-1680)

"He that was our help from birth ought to be our hope from our youth."

~ Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

"The ground of our hope is Christ in the world, but the evidence of our hope is Christ in the heart."

~ Matthew Henry (1662-1714)



Why Such Shocking Histories?

Rev. J. Schipper

In God's Word, we can read about the miracles the Lord did: the dead are raised, the lame and paralyzed are healed, the blind are able to see, and so forth. In short, the Bible contains beautiful and encouraging words.

However, we must recognize that there are also profound and shocking histories recorded. Especially in the Old Testament, we come across many passages full of violence and drastic matters. You might wonder why it seemed good to the Lord to have all that written down as well.

The glory of God

Take the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire and brimstone. Those cities were completely overturned, that whole plain with all its inhabitants, and also the crops of the land. A terrible disaster! Only Lot and his family were led out in time. But then we also read about the shocking end of Lot's wife: "*But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt*" (Genesis 19:26). What are we to understand of all that and more?

Before we express all kinds of opinions about this, we must realize that the shocking things in the Bible also have a certain connection, and that they always have to do with sin and its consequences. Thus in the wicked cities of Canaan, the honour of God was horribly tarnished, just as man in Paradise did not have the glory of God in view. Man sought his own honour. However, the righteous and holy Creator of heaven and earth shows that He cannot have fellowship with sin. He is angry with iniquities, for He created man that he might honour, fear, and serve Him. What has man done under the Old Testament regarding this? And what do we get out of it?

Lot's wife

As for Lot's wife, she could not help but stop and look, against the express command of the Lord. She was still attached with all her existence

to Sodom, on the old life! Then she was involved in the judgment, for she became a pillar of salt.

But this woman had been seriously warned before judgment. Warned by the men of God that the city should perish by heavenly fire, for the Lord is not endlessly mocked. Lot's wife has seen the beginning of the execution of the judgments. She witnessed it. She was a woman of many privileges; she had seen and heard so much, and yet she repented not in truth. It is set before us in Scripture by the Lord Himself as a warning example: "*Remember Lot's wife*" (Luke 17:32). That we might seek the Lord, before it is too late, and not perish like this woman!

~ Translated, with editing, from *De Saambinder*

"The great and important duty, which is incumbent on Christians, is to guard against all appearance of evil; to watch against the first risings in the heart to evil; and to have a guard upon our actions, that they may not be sinful, or so much as seem to be so." ~ Rev. George Whitefield (1714-1770)

David Dickson on Psalm 70

"Let all those that seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee: and let such as love Thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified" (verse 4).



Whatever be our own hard condition at any time, we should seek the welfare and prosperity of the rest of God's children, and it is the property of each of the godly in their trouble, to wish all the rest to be partakers of the blessedness which their own souls seek after, but not to be like to them in trouble or bonds: "*Let all those that seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee.*"

If one of the godly be delivered out of his troubles, all the rest, who prayed for the delivery, should rejoice in God also as for a benefit given to themselves: "*Let all those that seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee.*"

In the Potter's House

(Jeremiah 18:1-6)

Come with me to the potter's house
And see what happens there:
The potter on his wheel with skill
Makes vessels, oh so fair.

He takes the shapeless lump of clay
And while the wheel he turns,
He prods and presses, and he kneads
No effort will he spurn.

See now his hands begin to shape,
And from the formless clay
A vessel's made that seems to be
Perfect in every way.

Yet suddenly the vessel's marred.
Now it is good for naught;
And once again it's worthless clay
In spite of what was wrought.

But see once more the potter shapes
His vessel that was marred;
So patiently he works the clay
Until it is restored.

And now the potter smites the clay
Upon the wheel and then
He prods and kneads and twists it, till
He gently molds again.

And when his work is fin'ly done,
The vessel is complete,
He'll in the palace of the king
Place it in royal seat.

The message of the potter's house
Is clear, you will declare;
For God Himself in Paradise
Made man, a vessel fair.

But willfully, His vessel dear
Fell into ruin deep;
And yet the Potter sought a way
The fallen clay to keep.

He bows so low to snatch His clay
From out the depths of sin,
And on the wheel of sovereign grace
His skillful hands begin.

His holy wisdom smites the clay
With grief, with trials sore,
With sickness and with poverty,
With sorrows, more and more.

And then again He gently shapes,
Instructs so lovingly;
He molds upon the wheel of grace
In mercy full and free.

Till in the clay He sees at last
His image shining through;
A vessel fit for kingly seat
And with His grace endured.

Then finally the wheel stands still
His vessel's done at last;
The Potter cuts it from the wheel
To which it still holds fast.

He brings His vessels one by one
Into His palace fair,
Where small and great will both be found,
My friend, will you be there?

-A.H.



Which Way Do You Go?

Submitted

As we travel through this world, there are many times that we arrive at a fork in the road, and we must decide which road should be followed. If one is right and one is wrong, how important it is to turn the right way. A minister once spoke of this in his sermon, using an illustration to make it clear. He told of watching a dog following two boys. Because they were walking together, it was not possible to tell which of the two boys the dog belonged to. However, they soon came to a fork in the road and the one boy went one way and the second boy went the other way. Then it was soon evident who the dog's master was, for the dog followed his master.

The minister then explained how there are times when religion and the world travel along the same way, and it is difficult to tell whom we are following, God or the world. But there are many forks in the road, and God by His Word calls us one way and the world calls us another way. Then which way do we go? Do we let the world go, and follow God's law? Or is the world our master, so that we follow the world and the lusts thereof, and let God and conscience and religion go?

We need to think only of a Joseph, a Moses, or of a Daniel and his friends. They too came to such a fork in the road in their lives. Do you follow their example?

*"I went to God's temple: my doubts were dispelled,
The end of life's journey I clearly beheld;
I saw in what peril ungodly men stand,
With sudden destruction and ruin at hand."*

~ Psalter 201:6 /Psalm 73



There are Still Flowers



Rev. P. van Ruitenburg

What misery there is everywhere. After the Fall, there is a deep crack running through creation. Death came in, and as a result, there is suffering and there is pain. The earth works against people, and not only the beasts but also people tear each other apart. The background to this misery is that now a curse has come on creation. We have removed ourselves from God and brought the displeasure of God upon us. We have angered God with our sins and made ourselves hellworthy.

And yet, the consequences could have been worse. We still see children playing, we still hear people laughing, and we still go to weddings. Young people swear allegiance to each other and are happy with each other. There are many people who are healthy and an increasing number are getting older than eighty. Nowadays, medical facilities are unprecedentedly good. Many flowers have already been picked, but we also see a lot of them. The flower of marriage is one. All these remaining “flowers” show us that God is patient, not infinitely patient, but to use an old biblical word, very “*longsuffering*.” I know that eventually all these temporary flowers fade away, but we have to remember that we still receive much more than we deserve.

This earth could have been a hell, a world without joy and without a word of hope. Everyone could have been deathly ill and all people lonely. What a miracle that there are still flowers. On top of that, there’s the most amazing thing: We even hear the gospel. Christ is proclaimed to us. That is encouraging. The question, however, is where that encouraging message takes us. Perhaps we are more concerned with the consequences of sin than with sin itself.

“Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation” (Psalm 68:19).

“For He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45.) Compare Romans 9:22: *“What if God, willing to shew His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.”*

“For My Name’s sake will I defer Mine anger, and for My praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off” (Isaiah 48:9).

“Now God Speaks my own Language”

Rev. C. Sonneveld



Did you ever meet or listen to the preaching of Rev. Sonneveld? He was a minister in Lethbridge (Alberta) from 2004 until 2012 and has been back to North America many times. What you might not know is that he became a missionary minister at the age of 27. In 1981, Rev. Sonneveld was sent out to Nigeria together with his wife and their baby boy. While the Netherlands Reformed Congregations does mission work in Bolivia, our sister denomination in the Netherlands (the Gereformeerde Gemeenten) has done mission work in other countries, including Nigeria. Rev. Sonneveld and his family lived there for more than nine years, before returning to the Netherlands, and eventually coming to Canada. This article is the first in a series of stories that he has written about his time on the mission field.

Her face was beaming. She was one of many people who had come to commemorate a special occasion at the Bible School. A missionary minister had arrived with his wife and one-year-old son, and the young church had gathered to welcome them.

But there was a more important reason why the large crowd had assembled. It was the day of the New Testament dedication. In the early sixties, Mr. Paul and Mrs. Inge Meier, a Swiss couple connected with the Wycliffe Bible Translators, began the work of translating the Bible into the language of the Izi people. The Biafra War (1967-1970) had severely hindered this project, but Paul and Inge had received a safe refuge in the compound of the Nigerian Bible Translation Trust in Jos, Plateau State. The Izi language had not yet been reduced to writing when the Meier family began their work. Izi is spoken by several thousands of people in the northern tip of Nigeria's southeastern region. While it is considered a dialect of Igbo, the language spoken by millions of Nigerians in that part of the country, the average Izi person has difficulty understanding what an Igbo person says. The Igbos, sometimes called Biafrans, look down on the rural Izi people with their strange dialect and backward ways. Sadly, this hampered the spread of the gospel within the Izi community.

The Meiers felt that something had to be done about that. They set out to do their painstaking work with the help of a few Izi language informants. During the process of translating the New Testament (as well as a few books from the Old Testament), they widened their scope to embrace three neighbouring tribes with almost identical dialects: the Ikwo, the Ezza, and the Mbgo. With God's help this monumental task was brought to a good end and the New Testament was translated into four Igbo-related languages. The general dedication ceremony took place in December 1980 at a central location in what was then called Anambra State. A few months later, the Izi church—planted by Dutch missionaries in December 1974—had her own dedication ceremony.

The Izi woman who came to the Bible School on that memorable day had no idea about any of this. The only thing she understood well was that the Word of God would be available in her own language. A few weeks earlier she had asked for a copy and her name had been written on a list. She had worked hard to collect the money that was required to pay for her New Testament, but she loved God's Word and felt that the sacrifice she had to make was more than worth it.

Finally, her dream had come true. Her prayers had been answered. At the end of the meeting, she was one of the first to receive a copy of the New Testament. As she walked away with her treasure, her face was shining. When passing the newly arrived minister, she stopped for a moment and pressed a gentle kiss on her Bible. With tears dripping down onto the book, she whispered something that the missionary could not understand. "What did she say?" he asked the man sitting beside him. The answer was deeply touching. "She said: 'Now God speaks my own language.'"

The young missionary had difficulty controlling his emotions. If ever he had doubted what the heart of mission work is, those doubts had now been removed. Mission work is about passing on God's Word to others. It is about proclaiming and explaining the message of salvation with a prayer that God's Spirit might convict sinners and reveal Christ to the heart of the hearer and the reader. When that happens, the Word of God will stay with them forever. Then the Bible translator and the missionary (as tiny instruments) may return home—they are no longer needed. What a lesson for a missionary on the day he was about to embark upon his wonderful task!

Nigeria is a beautiful country in West Africa with a population of over 200 million. Most of the country's riches are held by a very small percentage of people. The large majority of Nigerians are very poor, living in huts and difficult conditions in remote areas. There are hundreds of tribes, with many different languages. Persecution of Nigerian Christians by Islamic militants is increasing. Please pray for Nigeria!

~ To be continued, the Lord willing