



REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

I Believe in the Resurrection of the Dead

By Pastor Brian De Jong

1 Corinthians 15:16-19 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; ¹⁷ and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

As I watched my father decline, it became obvious to us that his homegoing was quickly approaching. The sense of sadness hit me at various times, especially when he could not longer think clearly or talk plainly.

At the same time that grief was beginning to set in, I had a growing sense of hope in the resurrection of the dead. If we are united to Christ in His death, we will also be united to him in His resurrection. Because He lives, we too will live.

The resurrection of Christ is at the core of our faith. It is a major component in the Biblical gospel. Paul emphasizes this in 1 Corinthians 15 – that great chapter on the resurrection. Because some in Corinth were suggesting that there was no resurrection, Paul countered that with inescapable logical argumentation.

His argument runs as follows: If the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. If Christ has not been raised, our faith is worthless and we are still in our sins. If Christ has not been raised, we have hope in Christ for this life only. If we have hope in Christ for this life only, then we are the most pitiful of men. We have based our lives on a lie, and we go to death in a deluded stated.

As Paul makes plain, Christ has indeed risen from the dead. And because of that

reality, none of these horrible things are true. In fact, their very opposites are true. Let me paraphrase it this way: Since Christ has been raised, our faith is worthwhile and we are forgiven – no longer in our sins. Since Christ has been raised, we have hope in Christ for this life and for the eternal life to come. Since we have hope in Christ for all eternity, we are the most enviable of men. Our lives are based upon the glorious truth of the Risen Christ, and thus we boldly face death with full assurance.



In the grief of my dad’s passing, the resurrection is burning brightly before my eyes. The resurrection of Christ on the third day, and our resurrection on the last day. I know with confidence that my

father will one day stand in his resurrected and reconstituted body – a glorified body. In his flesh, Norman De Jong will see Jesus Christ standing upon the earth. Jesus will be glorious beyond comparison, and He will openly acknowledge and acquit Norman De Jong, and all who have trusted in Christ for their salvation.

The world faces death without any hope. Because they have denied God and suppressed His truth in unrighteousness, they have no ground or basis for hope. All they have is the dread of an eternity full of torment and pain, in that place where the worm never dies and the flames never go out. They will beg for a drop of water to cool their tongues in the flame, but none will be given them.

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Mnemonics...

- 3/8 Session Meeting
- 3/18-3/19 Presbytery Meeting



www.merf.org

MERF News

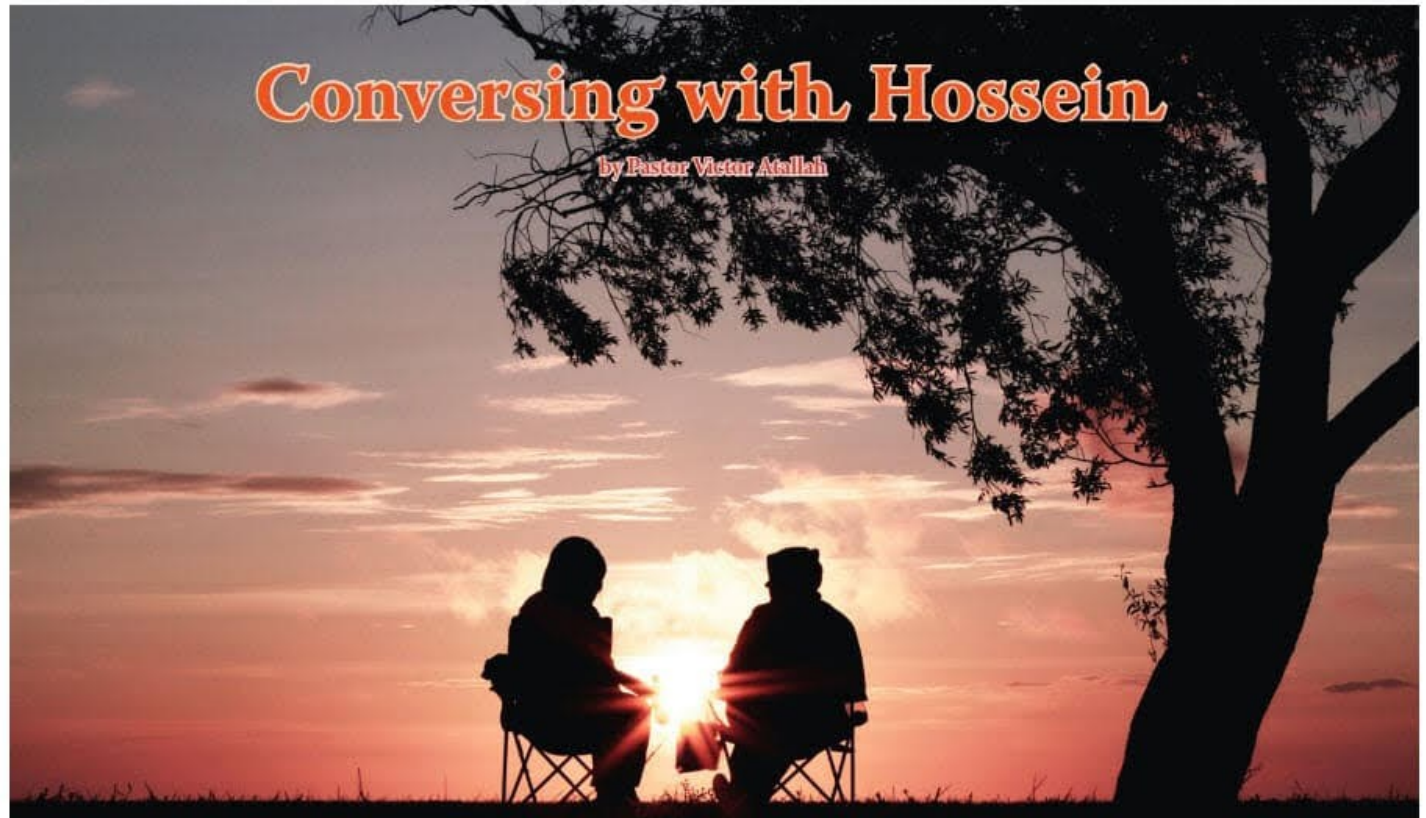
February 2022



Middle East Reformed Fellowship—“Declaring the Whole Counsel of God”

Conversing with Hossein

by Pastor Victor Atallah



By coincidence, I happened upon a man and a woman in a heated argument about parking their cars in a tight spot. They were immediately in front of where I had parked mine. I offered to move my car back a bit so that both would have sufficient room to park. The argument ended and both were happy. The man came to thank me, addressing me as pastor. So, I asked him how he knew that I am a pastor. He replied that he heard a person in the street calling me ‘pastor.’ In the providence of the Lord, this led to a very interesting conversation.

Life Witnesses

I gave him my name. He identified himself as ‘Hossein.’ It is a popular Muslim name. Many are named after the famous grandson of Mohammed. (He is especially revered by Shiite Muslims who annually mark his murder in the year 680 AD by Sunni Muslim competitors in Karbala, southern Iraq. The place is a Shiite shrine.)

So, I realized that he came from a Muslim background, but wrongly thought that he was Arab. I asked him if he spoke Arabic. He answered that he is Iranian and Farsi is

his native language, but he knew some Arabic because he lives in Abu Dhabi where his business is located. He went on to say that he never met an Arab clergyman before and that he likes to work with Christians. I asked him “Why?”

He said that he feels comfortable with Christians and finds it easy to trust them, adding, “At least the ones that I have had business dealings with.”

I asked him if he is a Shiite Muslim. He said that his family is and that he respects all religions, but he himself is not religious at all. He added

that he respects and loves especially Jesus and Mohammed.

Jesus and Mohammed

So, I asked him what he likes about Jesus. He said that Jesus’ message is clearly about love and peace. He went on to say that he heard about the virgin birth and the miracles, but these were supernatural religious ideas that he never studied. Yet, he had no doubt whatsoever that Jesus and his life and teaching must be admired by all people.

Then, I asked him what he liked about Mohammed.

Continued on next page...



He remained silent with a faraway look for a few moments and then said, "Mohammed was a very strong and effective leader."

I asked him if Jesus killed anyone. He quickly answered, "I am sure he never hurt anyone. He even taught people to love their enemies."

I asked the same about Mohammed. He replied, "That is a very different story." He added that Mohammed was a man of his day, who lived an Arab tribal context, where there was a lot of killing.

I pointed out, "but there was a lot of killing in Jesus' time too." and added "Islam teaches that Mohammed came as a superior prophet to all the prophets who preceded him."

To my surprise, he answered, "I cannot understand why anybody

would believe that he is superior to Jesus."

Following his lead, I said, "If Mohammed had been superior to Jesus, his teaching and life would have been better than Jesus."

He agreed and went on to say that his father always told them that Jesus is his favorite teacher of religion and that Muslims have the wrong idea about Jesus. Then he said, "I want to be frank with you, I have a lot of doubts about all religion but not about the existence of God." He added that many of his friends and some of his relatives have similar doubts and that generally religion is not important to most Iranians.

New Ideas

He was surprised to hear me reply, "But Jesus did not come to establish a religion."

"What about Christianity?" he asked, and added that it is largest and richest religion in the world.

I said, "Yes, it is a religion, but a lot of it is not Christian at all."

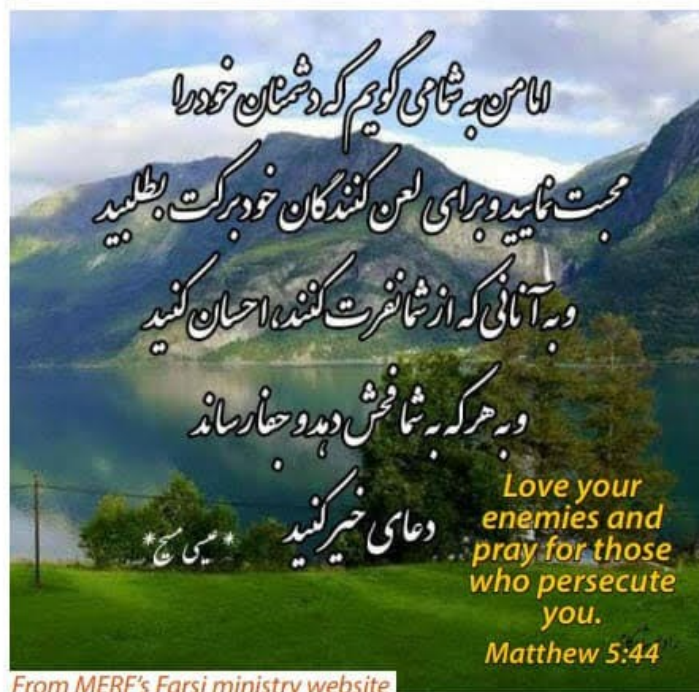
He found this fascinating. I went on to explain why Jesus came and how he is the new Adam, as unlike all people, he was not born sinful. I explained how he died to be our Savior; and that those who believe in and follow Him receive new life and become a new creation.

Hossein said that he never heard about Jesus' death to provide salvation and never heard about the new life. He added that now he is eager to learn more about Jesus and promised to start by read-

"And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption."

— 1 Corinthians 1:30

ing the gospel of John, as I had recommended. Then I inquired if he could find the Bible in his language online. He said that he will also look for the Bible in English, because he understands English well. Also, he agreed to become friends with one another on WhatsApp. I continue to pray for him and his family, his wife and two teenage daughters.



HEN a man has a particularly empty head, he generally sets up for a great judge, especially in religion. None is so wise as the man who knows nothing. His ignorance is the mother of his impudence and the nurse of his obstinacy; and though he does not know a bee from a bull's foot, he settles matters as if all wisdom were at his fingers' ends—the Pope himself is not more infallible. Hear him talk after he has been at a meeting and heard a sermon, and you will know how to pull a good man to pieces if you never knew it before. He sees faults where there are none; and if there be a few things amiss, he makes every mouse into an elephant. Although you might put all his wit into an eggshell, he weighs the sermon in the balances of his conceit with all the airs of a born-and-bred Solomon. If it be up to his standard, he lays on his praise with a trowel; but if it be not to his taste, he growls and barks and snaps at it like a dog at a hedgehog. Wise men in this world are like trees in a hedge; there is only here and there one. When these rare men talk together upon a discourse, it is good for the ears to hear them; but the bragging wiseacres I am speaking of are vainly puffed up by their fleshly minds, and their quibbling is as senseless as the cackle of geese on a common. Nothing comes out of a sack but what was in it; and as their bag is empty, they shake nothing but wind out of it. It is very likely that neither ministers nor their sermons are perfect—the best garden may have a few weeds in it, the cleanest corn may have some chaff—but cavaliers cavil at anything or nothing, and find fault for the sake of showing off their deep knowledge. Sooner than let their tongues have a holiday, they would complain that the grass is not a nice shade of blue and say that the sky would have looked neater if it had been whitewashed.

One tribe of these Ishmaelites is made up of high-flying ignoramuses who are very mighty about the doctrine of a sermon: here they are as decisive as sledge hammers and as certain as death. He who knows nothing is confident in everything; hence they are bullheaded beyond measure. Every clock, and even the sundial, must be set according to their watches. The slightest difference from their opinion proves a man to be rotten at heart. Venture to argue with them, and their little pots boil over in quick style; ask them for reason, and you might as well go to a sand pit for sugar. They have bottled up the sea of truth and carry it in their waistcoat pockets; they have measured heaven's line of grace and have tied a knot in a string at the exact length of electing love. As for the things which angels long to know, they have seen them all as boys see sights in a peep show at our fair. Having sold their modesty and become wiser than their teachers, they ride a very high horse and jump over all five-barred gates of Bible texts which teach doctrines contrary to their notions. When this mischief happens to good men, it is a great pity for such sweet pots of ointment to be spoiled by flies, yet one learns to bear with them just as I do with old Violet, for he is a rare horse, though he does set his ears back and throw out his legs at times. But there is a bragging lot about, who are all sting and no honey, all whip and no hay, all grunt and no bacon. These do nothing but rail from morning to night at all who cannot see through their spectacles. If they would but mix up a handful of good living with all their bushels of bounce, it would be more bear able; but no, they don't care for such legality. Men so sound as they are can't be expected to be good at anything else; they are the heavenly watchdogs to guard the house of the Lord from those thieves and robbers who don't preach sound doctrine; and if they do worry the sheep or steal a rabbit or two by the sly who would have the heart to blame them? The Lord's dear people, as they call themselves, have enough to do to keep their doctrine sound; and if their manners are cracked, who can wonder! No man can see to everything at once. These are the moles that want catching in many of our pastures, not for their own sakes, for there is not a sweet mouthful in them, but for the sake of the meadows which they spoil. I would not find half a fault with their doctrine if it were not for their spirit; but vinegar is sweet next to it, and crabs are figs in comparison. It must be very high doctrine that is too high for me, but I must have high experience and high practice with it, or it turns my stomach. However, I have said my say and must leave the subject, or somebody will ask me, what have you to do with Don Quiote's windmill?

Sometimes it is the way the preacher speaks which is hauled over the coals. Here again is a dime field for fault-finding, for every bean has its black, and every man has his failing. I never knew a good horse which had not some odd habit or other, and I never yet saw a minister worth his salt who had not some quirk or oddity: now, these are the bits of cheese which cavillers smell out and nibble at, this man is too slow, and another too fast; the first is too flowery, and the second is too dull. Dear me, if all God's creatures were judged in this way, we should wring the dove's neck for being too tame, shoot the robins for eating spiders, kill the cows for swinging their tails and the hens for not giving us milk.

When a man wants to beat a clog, he can soon find a stick; and at this rate, any fool may have something to say against the best minister in England. As to a preacher's manner, if there be but plain speaking, none should cavil at it—because it lacks polish, for if a thing is good—and earnestly spoken, it cannot sound much amiss. No man should use bad language in the pulpit—and all language is bad which common people cannot make head or tail of but godly, sober, decent, plain words none should carp at it. A countryman is as warm in homespun as a king in velvet, and a truth is as comfortable in homely words as in fine speech. As to the way; of dishing up the meat, hungry men leave that to the cook, only let the meat be sweet and substantial. If hearers were better, sermons would be better. When men say they can't hear, I recommend them to buy a horn and remember the old saying, "There's none so deaf as those who will not hear." When young speakers get downhearted because of hard, unkind remarks I generally tell them of the old man and his boy and his ass, and what came of trying to please everybody. No piper ever suited all ears. Where whims and fancies sit in the seat of judgment, a man's opinion is only so much wind, therefore take no more notice than of the wind whistling through a keyhole.

I have heard men find fault with a discourse for what was not in it. No matter how well the subject in hand was brought out, there was another subject about which nothing was said, and so all was wrong. That is as reasonable as finding fault with my plowing because it does not dibble the holes for the beans, or abusing a good corn field because there are no turnips in it. Does any man look for every truth in one sermon? You might as well look for every dish at one meal, and rail at a joint of beef because there are neither bacon, nor veal, nor green peas, nor parsnips on the table. Suppose a sermon is not full of comfort to the saint; yet if it warns the sinner, shall we despise it? A handsaw would be a poor tool to shave with; shall we therefore throw it away? Where is the use of always trying to hunt out faults? I hate to see a man with a fine smelling about for things to rail at like a rat catcher's dog sniffing at rat holes. By all means let us cut down error, root and branch, but do let us save our pruning shears till there are brambles to chop, and not fall foul of our own mercies. Judging preachers is a poor trade, for it pays neither party concerned in it. At a plowing match they do give a prize to the best of us; but these judges of preachers are precious slow to give anything even to those whom they profess to think so much of. They pay in praise, but give no pudding. They get the gospel for nothing, and if they doff not grumble, they thinly that they have made an abundant return.

Everybody thinks himself a judge of a sermon, but nine out of ten might as well pretend to weigh the moon. I believe that, at bottom, most people think it an uncommonly easy thing to preach, and that they could do it amazingly well themselves. Every donkey thinks itself worthy to stand with the king's horses; every girl thinks she could keep house better than her mother. But thoughts are not facts; for the sprat thought itself a herring, yet the fisherman knew better. I dare say those; who can whistle imagine that they can plow, but there's more than whistling in a good plowmen. And so let me tell you, there's more in good preaching than taking a text and saying, firstly, secondly, and thirdly. I try my hand at preaching myself, and in my poor way I find it no very easy thing to give the folks something worth hearing. If the line critics, who reckon us up on their thumbs, would but try their own hands at it, they might be a little more quiet. Dogs, however, always will bark, and what is worse, some of them will bite too; but let decent people do all they can, if not to muzzle them, yet to prevent them doing any great mischief. It is a dreadful thing to see a happy family of Christians broken up by talkative fault-finders, and all about nothing, or less than nothing. Small is the edge of the wedge, but when the devil handles the beetle, churches are soon split to pieces, and men wonder why. The fact is, the worst wheel of the cart creaks most, and one fool makes many, and thus many a congregation is set at odds with a good and faithful minister, who would have been a lasting blessing to them if they had not chased away their best friend. Those who are at the bottom of the mischief have generally no part or lot in the matter of true godliness, but like sparrows, fight over corn which is not their own, and, like jackdaws, pull to pieces what they never helped to build. From mad dogs grumbling professors may we all be delivered, and may we never take the complaint from either of them. Fault-finding is dreadfully catching: one dog will set a whole kennel howling, and the wisest course is to keep out of the way of a man who has the complaint called the grumbles. The worst of it is that the foot and mouth disease go together, and he who bespatters others generally rolls in the mud himself before long. "The fruit of the Spirit is love," and this is a very different apple from the sour Siberian crab which some people bring forth. Good-bye, all ye sons of Grizzle, John Ploughman would sooner pick a bone in peace than fight over an ox roasted whole.

The “40 Days for Life” campaign has started up again. We would like to get a group to walk alongside the sidewalk across from Aldi’s. Please contact me if you would like to join us. The 3rd and 4th weeks of March have plenty of open times.

- Deb Arndt



“If you believe in prayer at all, expect God to hear you. If you do not expect, you will not have. God will not hear you unless you believe He will hear you; but if you believe He will, He will be as good as your faith.”

- Charles Spurgeon



MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Paul Damkot	1 st
Lynn Baatz	5 th
Oliver Mamazza	6 th
Tammy Voskuil	8 th
Margaret Adam	10 th
Caitlin Ver Velde	19 th
Tim Voskuil	24 th
Joe Mamazza	29 th



March Anniversaries

Jeff & Wendy Froh

March 1st 26 Years

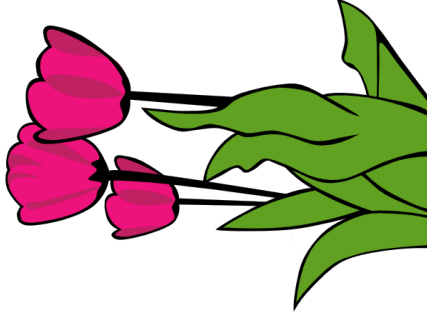




Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

March 2022

Grace OPC



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8 Session Meeting	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18 Presbytery Meeting	19 Presbytery Meeting
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27 Lord's Supper	28	29	30	31		

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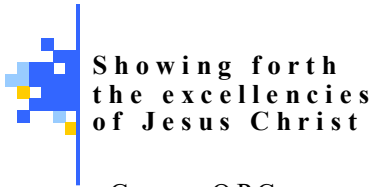
Malawi Floods

Rain, winds and a cyclone have hit southern Malawi the third week in February and caused much damage. Rev. Brian Chicoanda reported that his house had collapsed. His Bible, some books, and some other things had washed away. His biggest need is another Bible and food for his family. Help from his neighbors and church members is not likely because they are suffering the same problems.

The deacons are considering how they might respond to this need. We have some funds in the "Malawi fund." I will be sending some of those funds, I also talked to Doug Clawson of OPC Foreign Missions and he will discuss it with the OPC diaconal committee.

Please pray for the church in south Malawi, the people there and Pastor Peter as he ministers to church members and others.

Ivan



Showing forth
the excellencies
of Jesus Christ

Grace OPC

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Spurgeon Corner

“Thou shalt love thy neighbour.”

Matthew 5:43

“Love thy neighbour.” Perhaps he rolls in riches, and thou art poor, and living in thy little cot side-by-side with his lordly mansion; thou seest every day his estates, his fine linen, and his sumptuous banquets; God has given him these gifts, covet not his wealth, and think no hard thoughts concerning him. Be content with thine own lot, if thou canst not better it, but do not look upon thy neighbour, and wish that he were as thyself. Love him, and then thou wilt not envy him.

Perhaps, on the other hand, thou art rich, and near thee reside the poor. Do not scorn to call them neighbour. Own that thou art bound to love them. The world calls them thy inferiors. In what are they inferior? They are far more thine equals than thine inferiors, for “God hath made of one blood all people that dwell upon the face of the earth.” It is thy coat which is better than theirs, but thou art by no means better than they. They are men, and what art thou more than that? Take heed that thou love thy neighbour even though he be in rags, or sunken in the depths of poverty.

But, perhaps, you say, “I cannot love my neighbours, because for all I do they return ingratitude and contempt.” So much the more room for the heroism of love. Wouldst thou be a feather-bed warrior, instead of bearing the rough fight of love? He who dares the most, shall win the most; and if rough be thy path of love, tread it boldly, still loving thy neighbours through thick and thin. Heap coals of fire on their heads, and if they be hard to please, seek not to please *them*, but to please *thy Master*; and remember if *they* spurn thy love, thy Master hath not spurned it, and thy deed is as acceptable to him as if it had been acceptable to them. Love thy neighbour, for in so doing thou art following the footsteps of Christ.

Morning, March 12th, C. H. Spurgeon

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GRACESHEBOYGAN

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GRACEOPCSHEBOYGAN.COM



We as Christians face death – our own death, the death of our fellow believers, and the deaths of our Christian family members – with strong hope and sure confidence in the Savior who loved us and gave himself for us. Rejoice in glorious hope, the Lord our judge shall come, and take His servants up to their eternal home. Lift up your heart, lift up your voice, rejoice, again I say, rejoice!