
Beacon

August/September
2001

Volume LX
Number 8

Lights

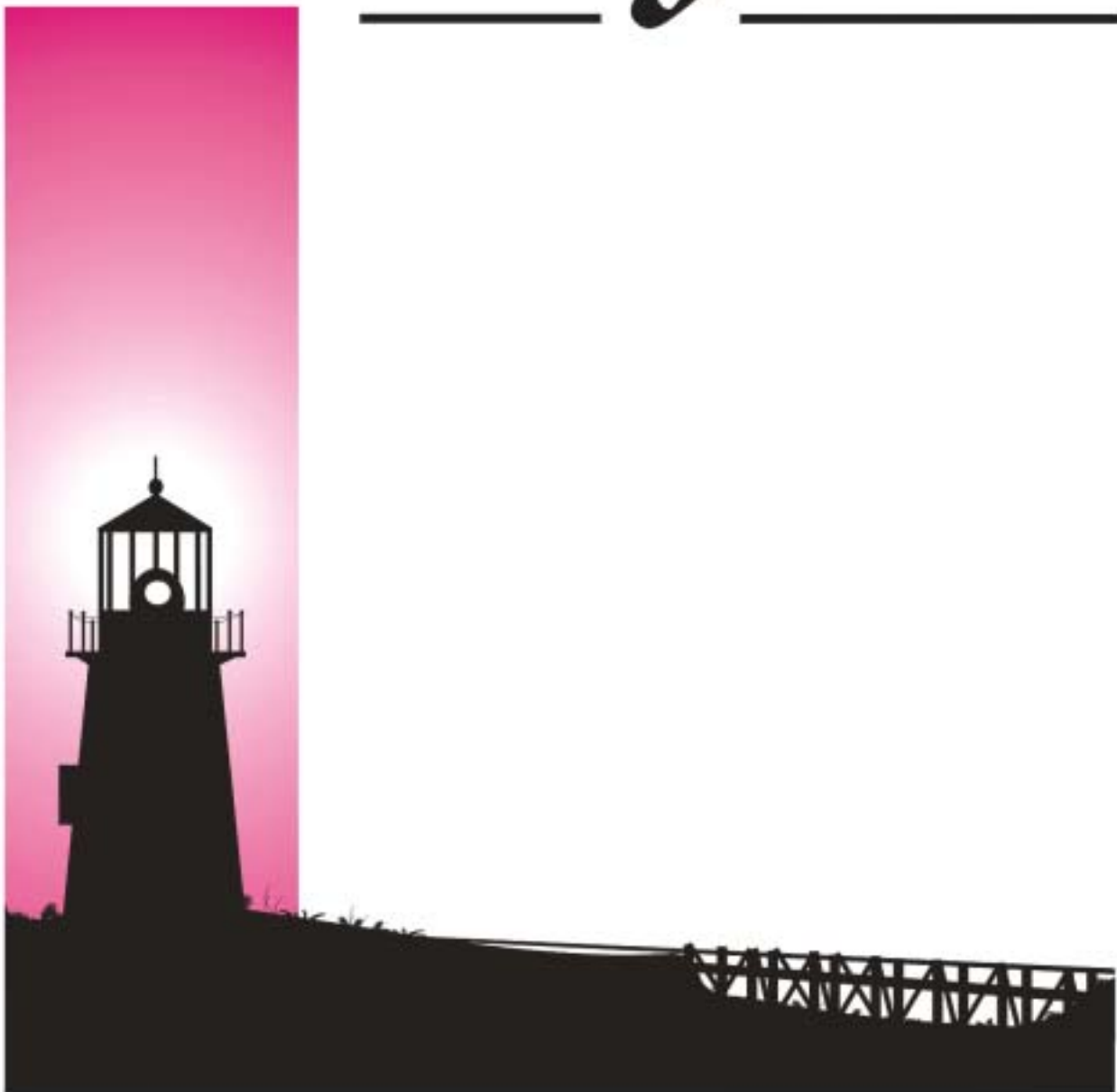


Table of Contents

	EDITORIAL
3	Spectator?
	FRUITFUL BRANCHES
4	The Coming of Our Lord
	STORY TIME
6	The Fourth Man (Chapter 10): Around the Fire on the Hearth
	GEM OF THE MONTH
9	The Lighthouse on the Harbor
	PASTOR PROFILES
10	Professor Robert Decker
	CREATION THROUGH THE SPECTACLES OF SCRIPTURE
11	The Setting Sun's Promise
	DEVOTIONAL
13	Watching Daily At My Gates—August
17	Watching Daily At My Gates—September
	MUSIC
22	The Origins of Music
	CHURCH FAMILY
23	Godly Conversation
	WHERE WE STAND
24	The Necessity of Christian Discipline
	CHURCH HISTORY
25	Where Grandfather Came From
28	A Church at Urk
29	The Churches in The Netherlands
30	Church News
	LITTLE LIGHTS
31	On the Trail

BEACON LIGHTS

BEACON LIGHTS STAFF

Editor-in-Chief John Huizenga
 Associate Editor Aaron Cleveland
 Finance Manager Joshua Hoekstra
 Secretary Open

DEPARTMENT MANAGERS

Fruitful Branches John Huizenga
 Dating and Marriage John Huizenga
 Devotional John Huizenga, Chester Hunter,
 Cornelius Jonker
 Science John Huizenga
 Poetry John Huizenga
 Doctrine Jeff Kalsbeek
 History Open
 Little Lights Connie Meyer
 Church News Melinda Bleyenbergh

Subscription Manager Cathy Postmus (616)662-4326
 Book Sales Becky Kalsbeek (616)735-3608
 Typesetting Bob Vermeer
 Printing Jim Huizinga

EXECUTIVE FEDERATION BOARD

President Mike Noorman
 Vice-President Cory Terpstra
 Secretary Tricia Flikkema
 Treasurer Nathan Lanning
 Librarian Annise Koops
 Vice-Secretary Maria Bodbyl
 Vice-Treasurer Nathan Yonker
 Youth Coordinator Brad Duistermars
 Spiritual Advisors Prof. R. Dykstra
 Rev. Doug Kuiper

All information and letters pertaining to the contents of the *Beacon Lights* mail to (e-mail if at all possible, or computer disks preferred):

EDITORIAL OFFICE

John Huizenga
 621 Williams
 Randolph, WI 53956
 Phone: (920)675-0231
 Internet: huizenga@powercom.net

Subscription Price: \$10.00

For a subscription or an address change, please write:
 Beacon Lights
 P.O. Box 375
 Jenison, MI 49428

EDITORIAL POLICY

The articles of *Beacon Lights* do not necessarily indicate the viewpoint of the Editorial Staff. Every author is solely responsible for the contents of his own article.

The *Beacon Lights* encourages its readers to contact the editorial office with any questions or comments. Letters may be edited for printing. We will not publish anonymous letters, but will withhold names upon request.

If any material of *Beacon Lights* is reprinted by another periodical, we will appreciate your giving the source and forwarding the printed periodical to the Editorial Office.

Spectator?



Reprinted from the March, 1960 issue of *Beacon Lights*.
This editorial was written then by Jason Kortering (Now
Rev. Kortering).

Did you ever notice the reaction of some spectators at a sports event? Whether it be a baseball, football, or basketball game, the spectator is always interpreting the play. He may respond with wild enthusiasm expressed in exuberant shouts, or he may frown and with a disgruntled bark express his adverse feeling.

It is somewhat easy to be a spectator, in fact it is delightful and relaxing. To watch others perform and to judge their ability gives us a feeling of priority. We like to assess and evaluate them. If one player excels over another, we cheer for him all the more.

How true this is in the experience of life. The way of least resistance is the way of a spectator. Let's be more concrete. Take by way of example, your young people's society. A spectator goes to society unprepared, listens to the discussion as best he can, but he has nothing to add to it. When his turn comes up for the program, he has excuses for not participating. If the society should insist, he will conveniently forget, or get some substitute. Invariably, it is such a person who sits back and criticizes the society, saying that its discussions are so dull and uninteresting that he feels justified to conclude that they are not worth attending. One can find such spectators most anywhere. They are content to react to the expressions of others, but have nothing to contribute themselves. I do not mean to overlook the possibility that there are some who study conscientiously, but fear to speak. They are not indifferent or critical, but simply have difficulty in expressing themselves in a group. Rather, we have in mind ones who are quick to criticize, but slow to contribute.

Lest I become guilty of being a spectator and simply appraise, but have no positive contribution, I would like to suggest one thing in this editorial. It seems to me that the cause of the problem of the "spectator" member of society, lies in the fact that he does not study, or acquire any knowledge of the subject under discussion. An unprepared member has nothing to say, and when one refrains from speaking, the society becomes boring.

I feel as if I am perhaps beating the air. These words are in print in *Beacon Lights*. The reader undoubtedly is one who has an interest in reading. It is exactly the ones who do not read *Beacon Lights* that are the ones who tend to be spectators. Yet if this reminder can only encourage the reader to continue and perhaps even broaden out in his reading, it will have served its purpose.

There are many important subjects being discussed in the church today. Questions arise as the church struggles in her militant battle of faith. It is nothing short of amazing, the number of volumes and periodicals being printed today. Yet I often wonder how many of these are ever read by our young people. *Beacon Lights* has added a rubric which contains a discussion of these various problems in the church, written especially for you young people. *The Standard Bearer* also is your magazine. Reading it will not only increase your knowledge concerning our distinctive Protestant Reformed point of view, but also guide you in appraising the thoughts of others. Reading our own church papers serves as a good basis to pursue further study. It awakens one's interest.

Questions arise that demand answers, and thus the quest for knowledge has begun.

The only proper basis in that quest must always be the Bible. Human reason, or desires may never come before the Word. That is true for all our discussions whether it be our Bible lesson or the after-recess program. The Bible must be at the root of all our discussion. Read the text for the lesson first of all. Try to see it in the light of the context, chapter, and book. Consult other similar texts of Scripture. If you feel you need more help, consult a commentary. It is a good idea to bring the various opinions of others to society so that they can be discussed, and we together may arrive at a proper conclusion. If you study and read the lesson, I am certain a lively discussion will follow. You do not expect a spectator of a basketball game to take the place of a player, nor can a player assume the role of a spectator. Spectators are not trained as the players. The player knows the plans of the game and can carry out the strategy that he has decided. In the society we all are players. Each one has his own contribution which adds to the total success.

Life is not a grand sports event in which we simply watch others perform. There is no easy road for anyone. The problems of the church are also your problems as young people of the church. You can't just shrug your shoulders and leave them to others. They must be met by you as well. The only way that we can effectively meet them is to try to understand them, to know their significance, and then finally to come to the proper conclusions. Your society is an excellent place to wrestle with them. Questions such as our mission work, is it being pursued to the greatest degree, the singing of hymns, our relationship with other churches within our denomination and without, infallibility of the Scripture, divorce and remarriage, all serve as worth while topics for after-recess programs. Whenever a program schedule is drawn up and the topics listed with the assigned writers, it is a good idea that each member bears the topic in mind and in the preceding week reads about it and comes up with various questions which will serve to help the general discussion. I am sure that the more you prepare for society the less of a spectator you will be. ❖

Fruitful Branches



The Coming of Our Lord

by Clayton Spronk

Scholarship essay for 2000.

Christ is coming: "for the time is at hand!" (Rev. 1:3b) It is to this end that all things exist and occur. For the child of God this is a glorious reality. However, in light of this glorious reality the child of God must heed the warnings of scripture concerning dangers that we face in our present world as the end approaches. The gravest danger we face, especially our young people, is that we become worldly-minded (Matt. 6:19-20). The devil seeks to keep our

minds on our present state and off of spiritual matters which are of God. If the Lord wills that I become a pastor of one of His congregations, one of the biggest challenges I will face is instructing young people how to live in these end times.

Worldly-mindedness manifests itself in two forms of materialism. The first type of materialism is an ideological perspective which acknowledges only physical reality.

The only things that man can know are the tangible things of this world. There is no room for God or spiritual things. Though this is a very serious error, the second type of materialism is even more dangerous for Protestant Reformed youth.

The second type of materialism is not a set of abstract beliefs; it takes place concretely every day—even within the church. This type of materialism consists of an almost insatiable pursuit of worldly possessions. In the United States today with our ever-growing economy people are going wild chasing after money and things. Sadly, the adults who over extend themselves on credit,

...adults who over extend themselves on credit, so that they can buy a bigger house, a fancier car, a new set of golf clubs, etc., have taught young people to find comfort and satisfaction in earthly things. The young people have thoroughly learned this lesson.

so that they can buy a bigger house, a fancier car, a new set of golf clubs, etc., have taught young people to find comfort and satisfaction in earthly things. The young people have thoroughly learned this lesson. Their segment of the population is bent on buying things. Our own Protestant Reformed young people wear the latest fashions and drive the fancy sports cars. In themselves these things are not wrong and are not to be condemned. Christians can buy and sell without being motivated by materialism, but the danger of materialism creeping in is ever present and very real.

The real danger in this type of materialism, as well as in the first type, is that God and spiritual things are altogether forgotten. This is the mistake the rich man made in the parable Jesus told in Luke 12. God punished this man for not thinking to give unto the Lord who owned and took back all that the rich man possessed. It is important for our young people to understand, “The earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof” (Psalm 24:1a). He gives us a short time to live on His earth, yet it is

quickly forgotten that we are but pilgrims and sojourners. We naturally think only of the here and now and give no thought to our eternal dwelling place.

The fact that we are pilgrims and sojourners constantly needs to be brought to the attention of our young people. The world would have them think it is foolishness to prepare for future events. Why think ahead when you can have instant gratification in the flesh through material things? This then is the danger that worldly-mindedness poses to our young people. The world seeks to snare them in strap so that they no longer know who Christ is. This is what the end times are all about; the world seeks to increase its iniquity and deny God, while the church, the bride of Christ, patiently hopes and waits for the bridegroom.

This is not the first time the church has waited for Christ to come. The Old Testament Israelites fervently awaited the coming Messiah. As they waited, they faced the same dangers of worldly-mindedness we face today. The Israelites so often turned away from God and to the world that God sent judgment on them through the surrounding nations. Let this be a warning to our young people too that commitment to Christ cannot wait until they are married or until they make profession of faith or for some other future time and place. God’s judgment is swift and we must “give account of every idle word (Belgic Conf., Article 37).”

...commitment to Christ cannot wait until they are married or until they make profession of faith or for some other future time and place.

To this exhortation of God’s judgement it must be added again that Christ is absent from worldly-mindedness. This is the testimony of scripture concerning the Jewish leaders during Christ’s life and ministry here on earth. These leaders knew the Old Testament scriptures concerning the coming Messiah. They even earnestly sought out the Messiah. Yet, they did not recognize Christ when he came because of their worldly-mindedness. These Jewish leaders were comfortable in their positions of power. They did not seek a Messiah who would teach of a heavenly kingdom rather than an earthly kingdom. They wanted a Messiah who would

regain for Israel an earthly dominance and perhaps increase them in their worldly positions.

The knowledge of Christ coming into this world is spiritual. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth concerning spiritual matters in 1 Corinthians 2. These matters are beyond the comprehension of “the princes of this world” (vs. 8), and are revealed “unto us by his Spirit” (vs. 10). Here we have the truth of election applied to our ability to know and recognize Christ as He presently rules all of creation at the right hand of God, and as he prepares to come again. The world does not receive the spirit of Christ and is left in worldly-mindedness, while the church receives the spirit of Christ (H.C. LD III Q/A 8) and no longer seeks after the things of the world.

Therefore, since our young people know that the world is full of only evil continually and does not possess the mind of Christ, we must teach them to constantly seek after spiritual things, specifically the coming of Christ when we will no longer face temptation and will be made perfect before God.

In John 10 Christ explains to the Pharisees that they are not of His sheep and cannot recognize Him as the Son of God. May our young people find comfort knowing that by the grace of God they are given to Christ as His sheep and on the day of his coming they will recognize his voice. ❖

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

Story Time

The Fourth Man

A Story from the Time of the Afscheiding

by P. S. Kuiper

translated by Rev. Cornelius Hanko

Chapter 10

Around the Fire on the Hearth

(In the last chapter we left Jan Donker and Gijsbert Haan walking in the cold rain to the farmhouse of Ko Boelhouwer. They, with two other men, were returning in their cart from Loosdrecht. In Loosdrecht they had worshipped with a “Seceder” congregation and had been ordained as office bearers so that a similar congregation could be formed in their own village, Hilversum. The “Seceders” were followers of De Cock, Scholte and Van Raalte. These people were determined to establish a new denomination because the State Church had become apostate.

Jan Donker and Gijsbert Haan were walking to the farmhouse of Ko Boelhouwer because, in the rain and

darkness, their cart wheel had hit a large stone and had been broken.

Ko Boelhouwer was the father of Maarten Boelhouwer, whom we met in the first chapters. He was the young boy who, running home from school for his noon meal, had had a collision with the fish cart of the fish peddler and had knocked it over.

The scene opens in the house of the Boelhouwers.)

“What weather, what weather! It looks more like fall and its almost summer!”

Maarten looked up from his warm place by the fire at his father, who hung his cap on a nail by the chimney. A few moments later his father joined Maarten and grandfather in front of the fire putting his stocking feet on the hearth.

The fire of oak blocks burned softly. The flames warmed the black iron pot that hung on the well-polished hearth chain. The pot of grits bubbled and the wooden cover jumped up and down.

Mother and Klaartje, Maarten's sister, sat at the table darning stockings by the light of the old-fashioned, smoking oil lamp.

Suddenly Maarten heard paper rustling, and, to his surprise, saw his father open a newspaper. His father laughed when he saw his son's face. "You probably think that I have become a rich gentleman, and can afford to subscribe to a paper. No, my boy, that is far too expensive for us common people. But when I returned some tools to the neighbor he lent me this paper. I do not know how he got it, but now I can check the news."

He settled himself comfortably behind his newspaper. Maarten glanced at the first page and read in large letters the headline: "THE KING INSPECTS THE BORDER TROOPS."

"Grandfather," he suddenly asked, "Did you ever see our king?"¹ The old man, who was busy filling his pipe with fresh tobacco, smiled.

"No, young man, I would have to travel to The Hague² and all my life I have never been outside of my town. A farmer has no time for traveling."

"Has the king ever been in our town?"

"Of course not, young man; he has no real reason to come, especially not now, after the uprising of the Belgians. But his father, Stadholder William V,³ was here once, and even spent a night sleeping in our town." Grandfather stood up, took a match out of the box that hung on the wall, and held the sulfur tip under the pot hanging over the fire. He calmly lit his pipe with the sputtering, greenish-blue flame that flared up as if he did not notice the eager impatience of his grandson.

"William V," he added later, "was here once as a young prince, before he was stadholder. He was thrown from a horse while he was on his way to Amsterdam. In Hilversum he had extremely bad weather and was therefore forced to spend the night here in a tavern.⁴ Although he used his usual alias "Graaf Van Buuren", the tavern keeper immediately recognized him.

"When on the following morning the prince wanted to pay the tavern keeper, the tavern keeper asked whether instead of pay he might hang a plaque on his tavern wall with the picture and name of this high official. The prince had no objection. Since that time the tavern bore the name "Graaf Van Buuren."

"You can find it on the avenue."

"Oh, I have seen that plaque," said Maarten in a loud voice. He had been listening with eager ears. "Does our king look anything like the stadholder?" he asked as an afterthought.

"I have not seen the prince, because all this happened before I was born," laughed grandfather. "In any case, they were not much alike in character. The stadholder was a good, brave man, who, however, was no match for his enemies. Our king is a powerful ruler, who involves himself in all kinds of matters, even in the affairs of the church." Father rustled his newspaper; grandfather had touched on a subject that father preferred to avoid.⁵

"You were a bit late coming home tonight, Klaartje," he remarked, more to steer the discussion in another direction than out of concern.

"The farmer⁶ was not at home," the girl answered. "That is why the milking took much longer. But tomorrow I may go home a bit earlier."

"Wasn't Jan Donker⁷ home on the second day of Pentecost?"⁸ mother asked with surprise; and then added somewhat curiously, "Did he have to go to visit his family?"

"No, this afternoon my boss went to Loosdrecht in his Sunday clothes," said Klaartje, looking somewhat timidly at father. He pinched his eyes shut a bit.

"Oh, was it that again?" father asked sternly. "Was the old church of our fatherland not good enough for him?"

Angrily he fumbled his newspaper together.

"Dare you call a church by that name, Ko, in which the ministers can go unpunished even though they deny that Christ is the Son of God? Are you at peace with the sermons we recently heard at Easter time?"

They were all surprised at the vehemence with which grandfather spoke. It all must have weighed more heavily on him than they realized!

"You cannot prove, father, that our minister, Rev. Hellendoorn, denies the resurrection of Christ."

"No, Ko, but neither does he believe in it. He talks around it, and that is already bad enough. A shepherd must not give his sheep food of doubtful value. The food in Loosdrecht is of good quality."⁹

Ko Boelhouwer was silent, although he understood very well the last words of his father. He knew also that father received books from Jan Donker and enjoyed them. He had found the books and had read them. Deep in his heart he knew that his father was right, but he feared the consequences.

“It is getting to be bedtime,” mother quietly remarked. She set aside the darning basket and placed plates on the table for the evening meal. Klaartje and Maarten carried the pot to the table. Mother filled the five plates. Shortly after that she dished out the buckwheat pudding¹⁰ she had prepared. Since it was a holiday a few candles were burning, but no one was in a holiday mood.

The adults were busily occupied with their own thoughts and the children thought it best to be quiet.

All of a sudden mother laid her spoon down and listened. “It seems that there are people coming up the driveway. I hear voices.”

“Well now,” answered father, happy that the tense silence was broken, “who goes out for an evening walk in this kind of weather?” They all laughed.

But then they plainly heard the neighing of a horse and at the same time Bas¹¹ began to growl in his coop.

“What in the world?” said father as he jumped up. “They are probably a couple of animal flayers! That scum is on the roads even on a day like today.” He opened the curtain a little ways and stared into the darkness.

Maarten was not old enough to understand fully the practices of the animal flayers. They traveled at night in a wagon, looking for carcasses of animals that the farmers had buried that day.¹² Their dogs, especially trained to search out these carcasses, found them without fail. These were dug up and the meat was sold in Utrecht or Amsterdam a few days later as “very cheap, fresh meat”.

It was no concern of the flayers that many men and women bought their death certificates with these “bargains”. The money for which they were sold was pure gain. Usually they were rough, careless fellows who were reckless with their knives.

Father closed the curtain with a jerk. “I can see almost nothing,” he complained. “There seems to be a cart out there with a few men standing by it. They evidently want to be on the other side of the road by Aart. Anyway our neighbor told me earlier that Aart had buried two piglets this morning that had been very sick.”

He began hurriedly to eat his pudding that was getting cold; the others had already finished. Just as he was ready to stand up to reach for the Bible on the shelf, according to their custom, the growling of Bas became an angry bark. Father turned pale as he looked first at mother and then at grandfather, “The dirty fellows are coming up our yard,” he said with a heavy voice. “That will be at their own risk.”

Fully determined, he left the room, in spite of the warnings of mother.

Grandfather followed him, after he had forbidden Maarten to come along.

Arriving in the yard, grandfather was shocked to discover that his son held a gun in his hand.

“Don’t be a fool, Jacobus!” he shouted with a loud voice.

“I am not shooting at people, father,” Ko assured him, “but these wicked flayers have dogs. If they attack Bas, I’ll shoot them without regret.” Then he clumped on his wooden shoes to the outside door and threw it wide open.

He remained standing in the doorway, the gun in his callused hand. ❖

¹ Under the rule of Napoleon, the house of Orange had been raised to royal status. The man who had formerly been called “stadholder” was now king. The Dutch, being the independent people they were, had never wanted a king and had been, since the time of their independence as a country, careful to curb the power of the stadholders.

² The capitol of the Netherlands.

³ Also one of the house of Orange. William the Silent, who helped defeat the Spaniards at the beginning of the Reformation in the Netherlands, was William I.

⁴ Taverns were, in fact, inns, although they were like pubs in which ale or beer could be purchased.

⁵ While the grandfather was sympathetic to the Seceders or Separatists, the father was more hesitant.

⁶ The farmer was Jan Donker. Klaartje helped him with the milking.

⁷ The man with Gijsbert Haan who, even while this was happening, was coming up the driveway.

⁸ Pentecost was celebrated two days, Sunday and Monday. Sunday was the religious holiday; Monday was the national holiday. This arrangement held for all the Christian holidays except Christmas and Good Friday. “Sinterclaus Dag” was celebrated December 6. This day was also a national holiday and on it people exchanged gifts.

⁹ The reference is to the preaching which could be heard in the Seceder’s congregation.

¹⁰ The Dutch word here is “pap.” Pudding is not really a good translation. “Pap” is a kind of hot dessert which was much thinner than pudding. It could be made with different ingredients. One kind of “pap” was called in our home when I was a child, “soupen brei.” This was made of barley and buttermilk, and, while my father and mother thought it delicious, it was, in fact, scarcely edible.

¹¹ Their dog.

¹² These were usually animals that had died of some disease.

The Lighthouse on the Harbor

by Deane Wassink

The lighthouse stands a sentinel strong,
Though battered by wind and wave.
It stands as a beacon to the countless throng,
Who seek refuge from the storms that rage.

Ships that sail in peril of storm
See Her light through the foaming billows
That threaten to send them battered and torn,
Into the shoals that make a wife a widow.

Some say: "Tear the old lighthouse down,"
"She's full of rust, old and outdated."
"Her paint is chipped; her tower not sound,"
Because by men her light is hated.

Her fresnel lens, hand wrought with care,
Brightens and reflects the lamp within.
It pierces the darkness of night that is there.
A light of direction and hope again.

The keeper with his family dwells alone
there.
He makes the tending of the lamp his care.
With gentle touch the lens he makes clean,
So neither spot nor grime corrupt the pure
beam.

He sounds the horn in time of fog so white,
When searching eye cannot a light
discern.
He sleeps not, working day and night,
Providing fuel for the lamp to burn.

See him now with furrowed brow and
piercing eyes.
"Come to the harbor a refuge find,"
His heart from the lips wrings the cry.
"Come to the harbor; safety is thine."

Families, like ships in storm, have found,
Her light to shine bright as the daily.
As they upon the sea of life, heaven bound,
Seek a port wherein to dock and stay.

Her light is the gospel cutting through
darkness and sin,
Reflecting the purity of the truth within.
Her keepers are ministers proclaiming the
Word,
So that in storm and strife the truth is heard.

In her port the ships do lie,
Anchored row by row they stay.
Closely bound by love and covenant ties,
Moored, they rest against the quay.

May the keepers continue to fuel the flame
So that the light, in love, may shine so
bright.
Loved by those led home again,
For whom the light dispelled the dark of night.

The fuel of her light she shares,
With other beacons on the sea.
Keepers guard the "Reformed" lens with care,
That both inward and outward it shines to
those in need.

May she stand in the ages still to come,
Her beacon by truth guiding the way.
Where seeking souls, content as one,
Together in harbor await the great day.

Written in honor of the 75th anniversary of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Deane is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan.

Professor Robert Decker

edited by Kris Moelker

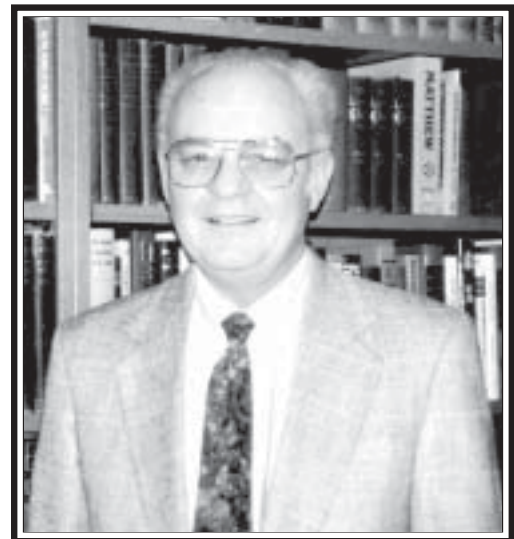
Peter and Dorothy (Jansen) Decker, Jr. became the parents of Prof. Robert Decker on August 10, 1940. Prof. Decker was born in East Grand Rapids, Michigan. He was baptized by Rev. Herman Hoeksema in First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Growing up in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Prof. Decker attended Baldwin Christian School (1945-1951) and Adams Street Christian School (1952-1955). He then went to Grand Rapids Christian High School where he received his high school diploma in 1958. After he graduated from high school, Prof. Decker studied at Calvin College where he received his Bachelor's Degree in 1962. After this, he attended the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

As he was growing up, Professor Decker enjoyed playing softball, tennis, and basketball. He also played the baritone and liked gardening. Now he enjoys boating, traveling, reading and yard work.

Although there were pressures to be accepted and liked by his peers and to do well in high school and college, these pressures were not a problem for Prof. Decker.

In leading Prof. Decker to consider preparing for the ministry, the Lord blessed him with a love for Him, His Word, and His Church. During a Young People's Convention, Rev. Marinus Schipper took Prof. Decker aside and told him that he ought to prepare himself for the ministry. When he graduated from high school and was considering the course of study to pursue in college, the Lord led him to ask himself the question, "How can I best serve the Lord in my work?" He was faced with the choice between becoming a Christian school teacher or a minister. After much prayer and thinking, the Lord led him to pursue the ministry of the Word. Rev. C. Hanko was an excellent example for Prof. Decker of a faithful minister of the Word. Prof. Decker's family, and especially his wife, was very pleased and supportive when they learned of his desire to prepare for the ministry.



While he was a high school student, Prof. Decker met and began dating Marilyn K. Poelstra. They were married on August 18, 1961, while Prof. Decker was still a college student. Without his wife's help, Prof. Decker feels that he could have never become a minister of the Word. The Lord has richly blessed them with one daughter and three sons who are all married to godly spouses and all are members of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Prof. and Mrs. Decker have been blessed with nine grandchildren. They have experienced the blessing of which Psalm 128 speaks so eloquently.

As a seminary student, Prof. Decker remembers Prof. Herman Hoeksema's lectures on G. C. Berkouwer's book, *Divine Election* and Prof. Hoeksema's fine lectures in his Old Testament History classes. Prof. Decker also remembers the sheer agony of Practice Preaching.

Prof. Decker served as pastor of two congregations before he took up his labors in the Seminary. He was ordained in 1965 and his first charge was in Doon, Iowa. He labored in Doon until 1969 when he was called to labor in South Holland, Illinois. He served in South

Holland until 1973 when he was appointed Professor of Practical Theology in the Protestant Reformed Theological School.

Prof. Decker enjoyed teaching children of the church in catechism. He says that he is impressed that most parents do a very good job of preparing their children for catechism. This is a strength of our churches and a reason for profound gratitude to God.

As a pastor, Prof. Decker has memories of the joy of preaching along with “vivid memories of God’s grace, given by means of His Word causing the sick, the dying, the bereaved, the anxious and despairing among His saints to triumph, sometimes in very tragic circumstances.”

At the time of the split of 1953, Prof. Decker was 13 years old. In June, membership of First Church went from over 500 families down to 196 families. He still remembers arriving at the chapel of Grand Rapids Christian High School that first Sunday morning after the split and Prof. George Ophoff was the first person to greet the families. They worshipped at Grand Rapids Christian High School for a few years until they were given back their church building on Michigan and Fuller. There were 34 students in Prof. Decker’s 8th grade class at Adams and only 15 students in his 9th grade class.

Adams’ total enrollment dropped from around 350 students to 115 students.

Prof. Decker remembers other controversies that we as churches have faced. In First Church, several families left because of the controversy surrounding the last months of Rev. Herman Hoeksema’s life. Prof. Decker also remembers the controversy between the South Holland and Oaklawn, Illinois churches over school issues.

In his over 35 years of labors, Prof. Decker sees that “serving the Lord in the ministry of the Protestant Reformed Churches has been and continues to be a blessed experience.”

Prof. Decker has advice for young men considering the ministry to be their calling. This advice was given to him in a letter from Rev. Gerrit Vos. “Of all the things I counseled you, remember this, be humble. There is a humility that is feigned. That is abominable in God’s sight. Be humble from the heart and God’s people will bear you up in their arms.” Prof. Decker has found this to be true.

Regarding the lives of our young people, Prof. Decker is encouraged to see a goodly number of them remain in our churches, marrying in the Lord, and establishing good covenant homes. ❖

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

Creation Through the Spectacles of Scripture

When I In Awesome Wonder... The Golden Coast Of Michigan The Setting Sun’s Promise

by Deane Wassink

There are few things that inspire quiet reflection, even melancholy self examination, than the setting of the sun when viewed from the Golden Coast.

The setting sun can be viewed from the dunes without interruption because the whole expanse of Lake Michigan lies to the west. The lake is very wide at this point, about eighty to ninety miles, so that the curvature

of the earth causes the horizon to be water as far as the eye can see. Because the wave action is relatively more quiet than the ocean's, there is often a more brilliant light path leading to the setting sun. Further, the cloudiness of the weather that moves from west to east as it crosses the humidity of the open water makes for many varied and dramatic "sunscapes" of different hues and color. Not one is the same as another. Often the sun bursts from under the clouds as it sets in a last few brilliant moments of color.

Probably the most memorable sunset I have ever seen (other than the one's I have seen with my wife, of course) followed a day filled with thunderstorms and rough windy weather in the month of September, several years ago. I was near the shore in Muskegon when the sun burst from the clouds overhead as it was setting. Everything, including the marching rows of clouds turned a brilliant gold color. It was the purest gold color I have ever seen in the sky. The heavens and the earth literally shone with it. Ten minutes later it was gone; the sun had completely set.

I was humbled to witness that sunset. God's glory shone forth with great power. In the Scriptures the color gold denotes the holiness of God. The reflection of that light on all things spoke of the coming day of judgment when all things will be measured by the holiness of our glorious King and purified or destroyed by fire. It also pictured the new Jerusalem with its gold in the glory of the new creation.

The judgment day was pictured that evening in a special way. However, the setting of the sun speaks every day of the coming end of all things. It reminds us that we must be ready to face a holy God. It reminds us that we must be covered with the holiness of the blood of Christ. His righteousness is our only hope and comfort. Yes, it is a sign of the end. It is also a sign of hope, hope of the resurrection and everlasting fellowship with God in the new heavens and earth.

The next time you witness a spectacular sunset, re-

member that in the beauty of the imaginary rivers, mountains and creatures you see there is an amazing witness to the handiwork of the Creator that points to the end of all things. May you have the hope and anticipation that belongs to those covered by His holiness.

*With gold may the things I see be blushed,
My heart in turmoil then be hushed,
All that transpires from day to day,
As guides and patterns along the way,
That leads me home one day with Thee.*

*With gold may the things I see remind
That I the truth of life may find,
No matter what is of value here,
Compared to Thee I'll not hold dear,
That I may be home one day with Thee.*

*For when the silver cord shall break,
And I my final rest shall take,
Tis with the golden sunset hues,
That by Thy holiness I'll be infused,
Forever to dwell at home with Thee. ❖*

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



Watching Daily At My Gates

by Skip Hunter

August 1 Read Genesis 27:1-5

Isaac had received the covenant promise from God. He had heard of it from his father Abraham. He had been told at the birth of his sons that it would be through Jacob that the promise would be realized. But Isaac, like us, had the old man of sin in him. Isaac favored his son Esau for very earthly reasons. He considered Esau a man's man, while he considered Jacob a mama's boy. And so as he neared death he tried to give the covenant promise to Esau. We must not be too hard on Isaac because we are very much like him. We, too, try to ignore the will of God and impose our will on Him. We want things to go our way and not the way ordained by God. Let us remember Isaac when we try to change the will of God or to mold it to our liking. Let us pray for the grace to put off the old man of sin and put on the new man of righteousness. Sing Psalter 295.

August 2 Read Genesis 27:6-10

Isaac was not the only one who wished to make decisions for God. Rebekah heard Isaac's plans and in her own way set out to thwart them. She knew that God had promised that in Jacob the covenant would be established. She knew this even before the boys were born when she prayed to God to find out the cause of their wrestling within her. God had told her expressly that the elder would serve the younger. This she knew, but she still decided to run ahead of God. Yesterday we saw how we are much like Isaac. Today we must see that we are much like Rebekah. We make decisions that we think are in our best interests and will serve even God well. But we forget to consult God and His Word. We refuse to obey Him and we say that we may disobey because our way is better and will serve God. This is what Rebekah did, and if we do this we will suffer the same chastisement that she did. Sing Psalter 98.

August 3 Read Genesis 27:11-17

We have looked at Isaac and Rebekah's plans; now let us look at their sons' reactions to the plans. In verse 5 we see that Esau agreed with his father without the slightest hesitation. He was a profane person according to Hebrews 12 and cared not for the things of God. It did not bother him that he had sold the birthright blessing already; he went out to hunt deer. Jacob on the other hand seems to be a man of better moral character. In himself was he? His protests to his mother's plans were not that they were lies and deceptions, but rather he protests because he is fearful of being found out. After his mother more clearly outlines her deceptive plan, he complies to carry it out. We, too, are no better by nature than either Esau or Jacob, but by God's grace we like Jacob must be brought to Bethel by God. Let us seek to walk a walk of sanctification in this life and not live lives of lying and deception. Sing Psalter 96.

August 4 Read Genesis 27:18-23

We see this sad story of man trying to play God further unfold in today's reading. First of all we see Isaac's misgivings over the identification of his son. Is it really Esau? Obviously he had doubts. And then we see Jacob's boldface lie; "the Lord God brought it to me." God will give his people over into their sins for a time even as he did with Isaac and Jacob. He does this so that His grace will shine most brightly above the dark sordid natures that we possess. In this way we see our need of the Savior who is Christ Jesus. Both Isaac and Jacob were chastised for their sins. We, too, will be chastised if we attempt to impose our will upon the will of our heavenly Father. Sing Psalter 26:1-3.

August 5 Read Genesis 27:24-29

In today's verses we see the end of Isaac's conversation with Jacob. He seems to have satisfied himself that this is Esau as he smells the outdoor smells and feels the hairy arms. He eats the food that appears to his tired, worn-out taste buds to be venison prepared by Esau. He then pronounces a blessing upon Jacob. At first it seems to be everything that Rebekah and Jacob desired. It was the birthright blessing which gave to Jacob the right of ruling the family as was done in that patriarchal society. It seemed to give to Jacob the riches that had been accumulated by Abraham and Isaac as God had blessed them. But there is something missing. Do you know what it is? Is the covenant promise among those blessings that Isaac pronounced? No, it is not. This shows to us that Isaac really knew that the covenant blessing could never be for Esau. That he must have intended to give to Jacob later. This does not excuse Isaac, however. God meant for Jacob to have the complete birthright blessing. God would be vindicated when Esau came in from the fields. Sing Psalter 94:1-4.

August 6 Read Genesis 27:30-35

Isaac did not have to wait long for his sin to find him out. Soon after Jacob leaves his tent Esau comes in bearing the fruits of the day's hunting. When we read that Isaac "trembled exceedingly" we know that he was pricked in his heart for his sin. We must know that God will do that to us as well. No matter what our age we can hide nothing from our all-seeing God. Oh, sometimes it will not happen immediately, but it will happen! Of this we must be sure! Our sins will find us out and God will prick our hearts either gently or not so gently. Let us flee sin, people of God, and flee to the throne of grace for forgiveness from such sin. Sing Psalter 93.

August 7 Read Genesis 27:36-40; Hebrews 12:14-17

To know the true character of Esau we must turn to Hebrews 12. Esau's tears were not the tears of repentance. They are tears of a man who did not get what he wanted in this world. Esau had no concern for his soul; he only had concern for his belly. That was his

god; that is what he served. He did not care what happened after he died; he only cared for number one-himself. Are we any different? As we go to work each day, what motivates us in our work? Is it what we can gain for ourselves or what we can do to glorify God? Do we work for the food of this world or the meat that endureth? We know Esau's end. We know that he is the picture of the reprobate. But we must be careful not to live like him. We must carefully seek repentance for our sins that we commit against almighty God. Sing Psalter 23:1-5.

August 8 Read Genesis 27:41-46

We come to the end of this sad chapter of Holy Writ. We might be inclined to say, "Why?" But we know that it, like all things, work out for good to them who love God. In this chapter we see the anger the reprobate have for the elect. People of God, the wicked in this world do *not* want to help you; they hate you! We see that Rebekah was chastised for trying to run ahead of God. As far as we know she and her beloved son never see each other again. We also see further evidence of her weak spiritual character as she tries to save her son by claiming that she wants a better wife than the daughters of Heth. A noble thought but when used in deception not a correct thought. Once again we must see that we are no better than Rebekah. We try to cover for our faults with seeming noble reasons but inwardly they are evil. Let us pray God for deliverance from such sins. Sing Psalter 95.

August 9 Read Genesis 28:1-5

We see two important thoughts in this passage of Scripture. First of all, we see that Isaac gives to Jacob the covenant blessing. This, as you remember, was ordained by God even before Jacob was conceived and born. This was the blessing that Esau cared nothing about and is the blessing for which we should strive. Secondly, we see Isaac's concern that his son marry a godly woman. Fathers, is this your concern for your sons? Do you monitor their dating in such a way that they seek God-fearing young ladies? That is, young ladies who will be willing to take their places beside your sons in God's church. This is a matter which must not be taken lightly. This is a matter of prayer and meditation upon God's Word. Let us not neglect the covenant promise in this matter and rest assured that God will bless our actions. Sing Psalter 360.

August 10 Read Genesis 28:6-9

Once again we see the true characters of the nations Rebekah carried in her womb. Esau, whom God hated, already had two wives. He tried to cover his father's displeasure and married another. He tried to please his father by his works and not by obedience to God. Jacob, we read, obeyed his parents and left their house to seek a godly wife. Young men (and young women) what are you doing in this matter? What type of girl friend and boyfriend are you seeking? Whom do you associate with? Are you looking for a godly husband or wife? Are you seeking a mate who will love God's Word and His commandments with you all the days of your life? This is not a light matter. Before you give or accept a ring can you pray with and for the one who is giving or the one to whom the ring is given? Think of these things. They are important! Sing Psalter 148:1-4.

August 11 Read Genesis 28:10-15

Let us think about Jacob as he leaves his parents' house and goes to Haran. He does not know it yet but it will be a long time until he sees his father again. As far as we know, he will never see his beloved mother on this earth. He goes alone, with no one. What

must he have been feeling as it got dark in Luz that night? He had nothing but stones for his pillow and no one to talk to. But, he was not alone. For that night God came to him in a dream and in the words of the covenant promise told him that wherever he went, He would be with him. Is this your comfort, people of God? Do you believe that God is with you on this earth until death brings you into His presence? Lay hold upon the covenant promises which God has established in Abraham and carried out in Christ. Lay hold on those promises and rest assured that God will be with you each and every day and in any place that He leads you. Sing Psalter 241:1-5.

August 12 Read Genesis 28:16-22

When Jacob awakened that morning, he knew that he was not alone. He knew that wherever he went God would be with him. He renames the place where he lay that night Bethel-House of God. He then made a vow that when God brought him back to this place he would sacrifice. Jacob knew he belonged in Canaan not in Mesopotamia where he was going. People of God, do you know where you belong? Do you know that to leave the church is to live outside the promised land? There is much for us to learn from the lives of the Old Testament saints. Let us learn these lessons and apply them in our lives. Let us learn to live where God has placed us and how He has placed us. In doing so we will be walking in that blessed covenant of grace which He has established with us and with our children. Sing Psalter 241:6-9.

August 13 Read Genesis 29:1-14

Many years ago Abraham had sent his servant to Haran to find a goodly wife for Isaac. Now Isaac's son is making the same journey. Once again God shows that He is pleased with those who seek godly spouses. Jacob was a stranger in Haran. Strangers were often looked upon with suspicion. This did not happen here. He was welcomed with open arms into the house of Laban. God also began to show to Jacob his future wife. As strangers and pilgrims on this earth, we must trust that God will care for us. And He will as we walk in obedience to His Word. It is only when we stray from His path that He withholds His Spirit from us and we feel lost in this wicked world. Be pilgrims and strangers here, people of God, and look for your abiding place with the church in heaven. Sing Psalter 107.

August 14 Read Genesis 29:15-20

Things seemed to be working well for Jacob. He has found work in Haran in his uncle's Laban's house. He has found the woman that he wishes to marry. He seems to have everything he wishes. But this was not God's way for him. Jacob still had lessons to learn in God's schoolroom. Laban was not all that he seemed to be. As he watched Jacob work for him, he began to scheme a way to make this turn to his profit. God was chastising Jacob for the way in which he obtained the birthright. God did not want Jacob just to marry and to "live happily ever after." No, Jacob had to be tried like silver and had to have the dross removed from his life. Do we understand this, people of God? If we do, then we will understand our afflictions and how they work for our profit. Sing Psalter 329.

August 15 Read Genesis 29:21-30

As we read the pages of Holy Writ we may wonder why God ordained the details of today's reading. This seems anything but how a covenant marriage should go. But we know that all things work for the good of them that love God. Jacob, too, had to learn this lesson as the righteous God chastised him. We also see Jacob's

lack of contentment with Leah who God had obviously placed in his path. Was Jacob right to be angry? We might think so but this was God's way for him. Should he have married again? God does not seem to reprimand him for his sin of adultery in having more than one wife, or does He? Think of the trials that Jacob had in his family even beginning with the end of this chapter. To take our lives in our hands and to not say "if the Lord wills" can and will cause us grievous consequences. Let us not play God with our lives on this earth. Sing Psalter 383.

August 16 Read Genesis 29:31-35

The trouble that I spoke of yesterday was beginning in Jacob's life. His favoritism toward Rachel caused strife in his family. Can you imagine the bickering that went on in that household? Stop and think about it for a minute. And then decide if you want to play God with your life. But God used this situation for His church. God blesses Jacob and Leah with children. Covenant seed were born in his family including the one who would be the ancestor of Christ. Leah shows her godly heart as she names her children. Oh, she was not without sin either, as she looked upon her childbearing as a contest. But yet in the names of her children she shows herself as a true covenant mother in Israel. Let us give thanks for each covenant child that God gives to us. Let us long for children of the covenant so that our quivers may be full. Make this a matter of the heart, people of God, and make it a matter of your prayers. Sing Psalter 359.

August 17 Read Genesis 30:1-5

Once again we see God's chastisement of Jacob's sins. The contest between his wives continues, and more sins become evident. Jacob knows what is right. Even as he snaps at Rachel, he confesses that the giving of children is only in the hand of God. Yes, man in his sinfulness will either try to prevent children or plan for them, but it is in God's hands. This is a lesson that Rachel had to learn. This is a lesson for us as well. Children are gifts from God; not possessions that are made part of our lives to charm us. We must see that this is the idea of the covenant. Let us desire children and let us wait patiently for Him to give them to us when He withholds them. Sing Psalter 135.

August 18 Read Genesis 30:6-13

As each child was born, we see the church growing in Jacob's house. No, this does not put God's stamp of approval upon Jacob's sins, but it helps us to see that God will use our faults for the good of the church and for His glory. Jacob was receiving his quiver full from God. That quiver would eventually hold twelve sons and at least one daughter. As he looked over his growing family, Jacob must have remembered the promise that God had given to him at Bethel. Oh, he was not ready to leave Haran yet. This, of course, was because of his weaknesses and God's plans. But yet God's promise to Abraham that his seed would be as the stars of heaven and the sand by the sea was coming true. Do we confess and hold to those promises, people of God? Let us remember them every time we baptize another of God's gifts to us. Sing Psalter 425:4-6.

August 19 Read Genesis 30:14-21

It appears that Jacob was staying in Haran too long. The contest between Leah and Rachel now entered into the realm of the superstitions and supernatural. True, Leah uses God's name at least two times in this section, but they are the words of someone who does not place all his trust in Jehovah. Jacob is becoming less of a pilgrim and stranger in Haran. It will take more of his uncle's trickery

to convince him of that. On this Lord's Day, let us ponder our calling in this life. Are we becoming too comfortable in this world? Are we resorting to the world's ways in our daily lives? Let us use this day to prepare for the eternal Sabbath that will be ours in the heavenly Canaan. Sing Psalter 27.

August 20 Read Genesis 30:22-24

God remembered Rachel. This tells us much. First of all it tells us that Rachel had finally learned that it was God who controls birth and not man. She had learned to go to the covenant God in prayer and ask for the desire of her heart. Oh, she may not have understood all for which she was praying, but God remembered her. She shows that she had learned her lessons well when she named Joseph. She confessed that God was her covenant Jehovah who alone holds our lives in his hand. Do you know about Jehovah, people of God? Do you know Him in faith? If we do, we can rest assured that He will remember us in whatever way we are in. Pray, people of God of all ages, and know that God will remember you. Sing Psalter 330.

August 21 Read Genesis 30:25-30

Jacob more and more knows that he must not stay in Haran any longer. But God is not ready for him to go yet. He is not ready to face his brother. His faith needs more strengthening yet and so when Laban offers him a job, he is inclined to take it. Jacob was a diligent worker. He knew shepherding well. Children and young people, as the school year comes closer and closer you need to be diligent like Jacob. You need to use the talents God has given to you each day at your desks. You are to do this not so that you get good grades or a good job. You need to do this in order to glorify God in the station and calling He has placed you. Consider this as you pack your school bag. Parents, consider this as well as you listen to your children's recounting of their day at school. Are they carrying out the covenant work that God has given to them? Sing Psalter 213:1-4.

August 22 Read Genesis 30:31-36

Jacob is not ready to stand up to his uncle Laban yet. But he realizes that to give his uncle a chance to say that he had helped Jacob would not be good. So, when asked what the wages would be, he chose the least desirable of the animals. You could almost hear the chuckle in Laban's mind when Jacob named his price. What does this teach us? First of all, we must not use our craft to make ourselves rich in this world. We may use our talent that God has given to us, but we must say "if the Lord will." Secondly, we must place all of our dependence upon God in earthy as well as spiritual matters. Yes, we know of Jacob's attempting to help God. But here we see him asking for God's help. Are we ready to do that? Sing Psalter 79.

August 23 Read Genesis 30:37-43

We intimated that Jacob's schooling was not yet finished. This we see in today's story. Jacob turns to a well-known superstition in order to make himself rich. Jacob always felt that he had to help God along. What about us? Are we willing to rely on God's goodness as we carry out our daily work whether it be on the farm, at the office, in the home, at the factory, or at school? What is our attitude as we do the work God has set before us? Do we trust in Him to bring all things to pass, or do we consider helping God out a little bit? Yes, we may use the talents He has given to us in our work. In fact, we must use those talents. But we must trust in God to "establish the work of our hands." Wait patiently upon Jehovah, people

of God, and He will give you what you need in this life and especially in the life to come. Sing Psalter 65.

August 24 Read Genesis 31:1-9

God blessed Jacob while he stayed in Haran. We may ask why did God do this seeing the many sins that Jacob committed. The answer is that God was caring for His church that was seen in Jacob's family. Jacob's riches also became the occasion for his needing to leave and to return to Canaan. His time of schooling in Haran was over. Jacob knew that it was God who had blessed him. Even though he had resorted to superstition, God made it known to Jacob that He was God alone. When God said return unto Canaan, Jacob was ready to listen. Are we listening to what God says to us? Do we have our ears prepared to listen? If we fill our ears with worldly philosophies, we will not listen. As we go to bed to night let us pray with Samuel, "Speak Lord for thy servant heareth." Sing Psalter 386:1-5.

August 25 Read Genesis 31:10-16

Jacob calls his wives to him and recounts the dream that he had in which God tells him to leave Canaan. In that dream God called upon Jacob to remember the vow he made while at Bethel. Jacob may wonder what his wives will say. Will they leave their home and go to a strange land? Will they leave behind their family? God has prepared them as well. Laban has no care for his own flesh and blood. In his monster like way he has shown his hatred toward them. God uses this hatred to make it easy for Rachel and Leah to leave Haran and travel to Canaan with Jacob. Jacob needed this help from God. He could not face Laban without the support of his wives. Jacob was learning that putting his trust in himself was a recipe for failure. Have we learned that lesson? Have we learned to "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding"? Let us make that a matter of prayer today and always. Sing Psalter 101.

August 26 Read Genesis 31:17-24

As we read Scripture we must be careful not to overlook seemingly insignificant verses. The first of these is that Jacob left Haran when Laban was occupied somewhere else. Now it is true that Laban would not have let Jacob go willingly of his own accord, but it is equally true that God would have provided a way for him to leave Haran. Secondly in the same verse we are told that Rachel took her father's idols. This tells you about the weak spiritual nature of both Rachel and Jacob. Jacob may not have known of this particular incident, but I am sure that he would have known about Rachel's love for the idols of Mesopotamia. Finally we have the verse which shows us that God came to Laban to warn him not to bother Jacob. This shows us that God's eye is on His people even as it is on the common sparrow. Read the Scriptures slowly and look for the meaning that will help us in our lives. Sing Psalter 100.

August 27 Read Genesis 31:25-30

Even though Laban was not going to physically harm Jacob, he did plan to try and scare him as much as possible. He starts out mildly by asking why Jacob had not allowed him to say goodbye to his daughters. He then said that I could have hurt Jacob and would have except God had told him to leave him alone. Finally he makes his accusation concerning his idols. Obviously these idols were important to him, even as Rachel's stealing them shows us that they were important to her. It was definitely time that Jacob took his family and children away from this idol worshiping place. What about us? Are there idols in our houses or in places we frequent

that we should leave alone? Will we obey God and put away these idols, or must we wait for Him to make His displeasure known to us in our life? Let us learn from Jacob's life to keep our family from evil. Sing Psalter 289:4-7.

August 28 Read Genesis 31:31-35

God continues His chastisement of Jacob in Laban's questions and accusations. Jacob becomes irritable and rashly says that whoever is found with the idols should be put to death. Instead of commanding his family to give up what did not belong to them, he leads Rachel into deceit. Lying is a sin which clings often to the child of God. Sometimes we lie in order not to suffer some consequences. Sometimes we cause our children to lie in order to cover our shortcomings. We must know that sins against the third and ninth commandments will not go unpunished by our righteous God. Let us put off this sin from us. Children and young people, make this your resolve as you begin a new school year. Parents, help your children by not lying for them or causing them to lie. Love the truth and speak the truth. Sing Psalter 204.

August 29 Read Genesis 31:36-42

After Laban was finished searching fruitlessly for his idols, it is now Jacob's turn to be angry. He tells his uncle things he has been wishing to tell him for twenty years. And then he makes a beautiful confession in verse 42. Jacob confesses that except God had been with him, Laban would have consumed him. Jacob is learning more and more to wait upon Jehovah. This he must do in order to face Esau in the confidence that God will protect him. No, Jacob was not sinless in this matter. We know that he had tried to take some things into his own hands. We, too, must learn to say except God be with us... Let us learn this lesson. Let us learn to wait upon Jehovah our covenant God knowing that He will help us in all of our cares and anxieties. Make the request to trust in Him a part of your daily prayers. Sing Psalter 422:1, 7.

August 30 Read Genesis 31:43-48

Laban is not ready to listen to the rebuke of his son-in-law. He tells Joseph that all that Joseph has really belongs to him. But Laban out of fear of God, not a righteous fear, wants to make a pact that they can leave each other without fear of retribution. Jacob and Laban gather stones together for a memorial. This was a usual thing in that area. The idea was that the stones being lasting would remind them to make their promises lasting. It is hard to know what to say about this ceremony. Does Laban mean what he says? Is Jacob just doing this in order that he can leave in safety? The answers to these questions are in God's hands. We can learn, however, to leave these sorts of things in God's hands. Vows and promises that we make will only come to pass if they are pleasing to God. Sing Psalter 422:5, 6.

August 31 Read Genesis 31:49-55

Mizpah! What a beautiful thought! It has hard to put this into perspective seeing it is Laban who says these words. But let us look at that word and its meaning. Mizpah! "The LORD watch between me and thee while we are apart." These are words that we need to take upon our lips, as we separate from loved ones. Parents, these would be good words to use as children marry and leave the area where you reside. They would be good words to use as children go off to college. We know that God will watch over our children when they are away from us. Children and others as you leave loved ones, do you take these words upon your lips? In our highly mobile society these would be good words to use in their full meaning. Sing Psalter 398.

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Rodney Kleyn

September 1 Read Genesis 32:1-8 & 28:10-22

In Genesis 32 we come to an important juncture in the life of Jacob. It is important because now Jacob is returning the land of Canaan, and because we see a changed Jacob in this chapter. In the verses for today's meditation we read, "And Jacob went on his way." This refers to the way to the land of Canaan, the land of promise. Jacob had been in exile for twenty years and now is returning to Canaan. As he returns, the angels of God meet him. When he was leaving twenty years earlier, God had showed to Jacob in the vision at Bethel, recorded in Genesis 28:12-15, that He was always with him. In his command to Jacob to return, God had said, "I will be with thee (Gen 31:3). And now, as he returns into the promised land, God shows in a concrete way that he is with Jacob. The angels of God are still watching over Jacob. Jacob needed to know this. Soon he would face his arch-enemy, Esau. The angels are sent to encourage him as he faces this trial. Jacob does not even know yet that Esau is coming to meet him, and the angels appear in order to encourage him. He needs this encouragement. We need such encouragement too. God knows what trials are coming our way and God sends us the help we need to face those trials. His angels watch over us. Sing Psalter 249:1-4.

September 2 Read Genesis 32:9-12 & Eph. 2:1-10

Before fleeing from his brother Esau, Jacob had obtained the birthright and the promise from his brother Esau. In both cases Jacob had showed that he had the right spiritual attitude towards the things of God — he had a zeal and love for the promises of God. In both cases, however, Jacob had also showed that he could not wait for God's time to give him these things, and so instead he had gone ahead of God and obtained these things in his own strength. The same was true of Jacob in his dealings with Laban. He used deceit to obtain God's blessings. Now, he returns to the land of Canaan a changed man. This is evident from these verses. Jacob is returning to Canaan with women and small children and Esau, his enemy, is coming to meet him with an army of men. Jacob is scared so he prays to God. In this prayer Jacob shows his faith in God. He confesses himself to be unworthy of any of God's blessings and he relies for all his help and salvation entirely on the promises of God. In doing this he shows that he now knows that he cannot obtain God's promises in his own strength, but that it is all of God's grace and strength. Only God can deliver him from his enemies, and only God can bring him to the land of promise. We see from this the sovereignty of God in salvation. He defeats our enemies, sin and the devil, and he fulfills his promises in bringing us to glory. It is all of God and none of us. Sing Psalter 397:1-4.

September 3 Read Genesis 32:13-23 and Psalm 37

In these verses Jacob sends a gift to his brother Esau. He does this in order to appease Esau's wrath. Jacob knows Esau's heart. Esau is carnal, loving earthly things. Jacob will let these earthly things go, will give them to Esau, just as long as he can come peaceably into the promised land. Seeing these gifts, Esau will realize that God has blessed Jacob, that Jacob did not come back into Canaan in order to take it by force, and that Jacob's interest is not earthly wealth. Jacob is no threat to Esau in his quest to attain the pleasures of this earth. Jacob has spiritual, not carnal interests. We do not see, as some suggest, the old Jacob here, a Jacob who relies on the arm of the flesh to defeat the enemies of God, but instead we have here a Jacob who knows the heart of wicked men, is not interested in physical warfare, and who shows that his interests are spiritual. Is that the attitude we display to the ungodly? Sing Psalter 366.

September 4 Read Genesis 32:24-32 & Luke 18:1-8

This passage is most important. First, it shows the old Jacob. He wrestles all night in his own strength with the Angel of Jehovah. All night long, Jacob does not know with whom he is wrestling. In this struggle, he cannot prevail. When the angel touches the hollow of his thigh, he knows that he does not wrestle with a mere man. At the divine touch of the angel, Jacob's physical ability to fight disappears and Jacob is shown that he cannot fight in his own strength. Knowing that he cannot go on in his own strength, Jacob clings to the Angel and pleads with him for a blessing. He will not let the angel go till he blesses him. Here is the life of the believer. He sees that nothing can be obtained in his own strength and so his life is a continual pleading with God for deliverance and blessing. Sing Psalter 362.

September 5 Read Genesis 33:1-11 & Proverbs 21:1

The main point of this passage is that God has made all things well for Jacob. In this passage we see the enemy of Jacob coming peaceably to him. The heart of the reprobate Esau is in the hand of the Lord, and Esau can do nothing to hurt Jacob without God's directing him to do it. The enemies of God's people are at God's disposal. God uses them for the sake of his church in the world. We can look around and see this today. Why is there so much technology in the world today? Why are there so many cures for diseases? For the sake of wicked men? No, in the end these things do not serve wicked men at all, except to increase their judgment and bring them down to destruction. All these things are for the sake of the church and God's people. Sing Psalter 353.

September 6 Read Genesis 33:12-16

In these verses Esau leaves Jacob and returns to Seir. Seir is not the promised land of Canaan. Instead, it was a largely uninhabited land in which Esau could easily find a home by befriend- ing the wicked men of Seir who lived there. Esau could not wait for the Lord to give Canaan into the hand of his people, and so went off and found some of his own land. He was not interested in Canaan or the land of promise. Here, he invites Jacob to come to Seir with him, to join with him in his sin. Jacob does not go. So Esau departs on his own to Seir, and Jacob continues his jour- ney to Canaan. We have here an expression of the antithesis be- tween the church and the world. Esau leaves the church and all the promises of God for worldly interests. Jacob and those with him, the church of God, wait for the fulfillment of God's prom- ises in the land of Canaan. Sing Psalter 354.

September 7 Read Genesis 33:17-20

In these verses we see both the strength of Jacob against the temptations of the world and his weakness in not following the command of God because it required too much sacrifice. Esau had requested Jacob to come to Seir. Jacob, in verse 14, had said that he would follow Esau to Seir. Now, in these verses, we see that Jacob does not go to Seir. He knows that he must go to Canaan and so, he goes to Canaan. As he returns to Canaan and settles there he buys land and builds an altar naming it El-e-lo-he-Is- rael. This means "Jehovah, the mighty God of Israel," and in this Jacob shows that he separates from Esau and the world in order to serve and live with God. In this separation, Jehovah is his mighty strength and shield. However, Jacob does show his weak- ness here again. In Genesis 28, Jacob had vowed to return to Bethel, and in these verses he does not. Instead, he settles first at Succoth for a while, and then in Shechem. He remains here for at least 15 years while his daughter Dinah grows up. Jacob should have continued on to Bethel. His disobedience in this regard will bring him trouble in the land of Shechem as is clear in the next chapter. How often is it not this way in the life of a child of God. We reach the pinnacles of faith, and then we settle down and become content and even complacent towards what we have, rather than pursuing and obeying the commands of God with vigor. We need to trust and obey God in all our life. Sing Psalter 347.

September 8 Read Genesis 34:1-5

Here we have the beginning of Jacob's troubles at Shechem. Dinah, who was six years old when Jacob left Laban, has now grown up in Shechem into a young woman. Jacob allows her to mix and make friends with the other young people of the land when he should not have even been here in Shechem, but should have been in Bethel. The result of her mixing with the ungodly is that she commits fornication with an unbelieving young man. Jacob's response to this is also weak. He is silent about the mat- ter and waits for his sons to return from their work of shepherding. This passage shows that once we let down our guard on one mat- ter, we open the gates to all kinds of sin and apostasy in our lives, and we become weak in our fight against sin. Jacob's disobe- dience in not going to Bethel meant that he was also lax in his oversight of his household. Sing Psalter 393.

September 9 Read Genesis 34:6-12

Hamor presents a proposal to the sons of Jacob. It is an attrac- tive proposal with much earthly gain attached. They will be able

to marry the daughters of Hamor. They will be able to possess the land, not as strangers, but as though the land is their own. They will be able to trade and get possessions. And, besides this, Shechem will do whatever they ask of him, just as long as they will let him marry their sister. The sons of Jacob, however, are not tempted by this proposal. They are very angry because this man has dared to lie with their sister and do that which ought not be done. Their anger is a righteous anger against sin, and they will not succumb to the temptations of the wicked. Is this our reaction to sin? Is this our reaction to temptations that seem as though they would be very profitable to us? Sing Psalter 396.

September 10 Read Genesis 34:13-24

Jacob's sons deal deceitfully here with Hamor and his son Shechem. This they ought not to have done. However, despite their deceit, we see that God uses this occasion to set his people apart from the inhabitants of the land. We see in verse 21-24 the real motive of Hamor in all this. He wants more riches for him- self. He wants the sons of Jacob to become one with him so that he can take possession of all that belongs to Jacob. To this the wicked men of the city agree, showing that they, just like Hamor, are concerned only with getting more for themselves. Here we get a glimpse into the heart of the unregenerate. They are self- ishly motivated and wholly earthly minded. The antithesis for us means living in exactly the opposite way of the wicked. We should be motivated by a selfless and sacrificial love for God and the neighbor, and our minds should be set on heavenly things. Sing Psalter 246.

September 11 Read Genesis 34:25-31

Here Jacob's sons follow through with their deceitful plan. When the men of the city are weak and sickly because of their circumcisions, the sons of Jacob come upon them and kill them. Jacob's evaluation of this is that his sons have made him to stink among the inhabitants of the land, and he is afraid that the Canaanites will now band together against him. This may have been true, and what his sons did may have been deceitful and wicked, but one good thing comes out of this. The antithesis be- tween Jacob and the Canaanites is re-established. God uses this event in Jacob's life to bring him to see that he should live sepa- rately from the world of the ungodly. It also makes him ready to leave Shechem for Bethel. Our sin often leads to trouble in our lives but in the end God uses it for our good. Sing Psalter 289:1- 5.

September 12 Read Genesis 35:1-8

Now Jacob obeys God. He obeys not only by keeping his prom- ise and returning to Bethel, but also by commanding that all strange gods be put away from his household. While in Shechem his family had been influenced by those around them and Jacob, because he himself was not obeying God's command to go to Bethel, did not rebuke them. His sin and his seared conscience gave way to more sin in his family. Now, as he again obeys God, he is renewed in all of his walk before God and demands of his household that they also obey God by putting away the strange gods. God blesses him in this by putting fear in the hearts of all the inhabitants of Canaan so that they dare not touch Jacob and his household. In the way of obedience we experience God's bless- ings. Sing Psalter 309.

September 13 Read Genesis 35:9-15

For the 15 or so years that Jacob dwelled in Shechem, he did not experience the blessings of God. Now, as he obeys and comes to Bethel, God blesses him again by reiterating the promises of the covenant to him. He is called Israel, a Prince with God. He is told that the land promised to Abraham and Isaac will be his — a land which pictured heaven. He is told also that “a nation” and “a company of nations” will be born of him. This describes Israel as a particular people, “a nation,” the elect of God, but also as a great people, “a company of nations,” a great nation comprised of twelve tribes. Further, God promises that “kings” shall come out of his loins. This speaks of his seed, a seed which will ultimately lead to the promised Messiah, the King. God’s love and favor as expressed in these promises is particularly for Jacob and Israel. Of all the nations of the earth, God chooses this man and his little band for himself. This shows that election is all of grace and that God’s promises are never conditioned on something we do. Sing Psalter 261.

September 14 Read Genesis 35:16-20

Rachel calls the son of her death “Benoni,” “the Son of my Sorrow.” The scriptures throughout picture Rachel as a woman who weeps and is in sorrow, but can never be comforted (Jer. 31:15, Matt. 2:17). If we reflect on the life of Rachel we see this. Her life was characterized by a covetous heart which meant that she was never happy with what she had from God. In her bareness she cries to Jacob, “Give me children or else I die.” When Leah’s son picks some mandrakes, small apples, she wants them. When Jacob flees from Laban, she takes the idols. So also as she bares her last son, she calls him the son of her sorrows. Rachel gives us an example of warning. She dies in misery because of her lack of contentment in God’s way for her. Sing Psalter 426:1-3.

September 15 Read Genesis 35:21-29

Here we have the ending of the history or “generations” of Isaac. This began in Genesis 25:19 when it is reported that Rebekah, Isaac’s wife, is barren. The history of Isaac’s generations from then till this point has consisted mostly in a record of the birth and life of Jacob. This is important to note. The blessing to Isaac is finally realized when Jacob and his twelve sons return to the land of Canaan and take up their residence there. Now the promised seed is in the promised land and Isaac dies seeing God’s covenant promises to him being fulfilled. What a change from the beginning of Isaac’s generations when, as far as Isaac and Rebekah were concerned, it was physically impossible for the promise to be fulfilled. In this we see that what is impossible with man is never impossible with God, and that God, despite our weakness, carries out his covenant promises. Sing Psalter 278.

September 16 Read Genesis 36:1-14

Before the Scripture turns to the positive treatment of Jacob’s generations, the continuation of the covenant line, it tells us of the generations of Esau. In the Scriptures Esau and his generations are a picture of the reprobate element of created humanity. This is clear from several points of view. First, both in the announcement of Esau’s birth, as well as in the passages which comment on this (Malachi 1 and Romans 9), we find that Esau is said to be the one eternally hated and reprobated by God. Sec-

ond, there are specific passages in Scripture which identify the descendants of Esau, the Edomites, as those who are wicked and profane (Genesis 36:8 & 43, Malachi 1:2-4 and Jeremiah 49:17 ff.). Third, there is no continuation of God’s covenant line mentioned in any of the descendants of Esau in this chapter. At times in his life, Esau may appear to be sorry for his wickedness and even to have a right spirit and attitude toward the promises of God. He weeps that he has sold his birthright. He cries with tears of joy when Jacob returns to Canaan. He buries Isaac with Jacob. However, we must remember in all this that he is, by the express teaching of Scripture, a reprobate. This means that his works are never good works, done from a true heart and for the glory of God. His good works are hypocritical. Sing Psalter 420:1-2.

September 17 Read Genesis 36:15-43

Because Esau and his offspring are pictured in Scripture as the reprobate portion of mankind, we can say that they are a type of the wicked kingdom of Antichrist which always seeks to set itself up as greater and mightier than God’s church so that it might come against that church to destroy it. This must be our analysis of Esau’s separation from Jacob in his going to Seir, and also of the generations of Esau that are listed. He becomes a great civil power on earth so that he may destroy the line of the elect seed, Jacob. In this, however, we must remember always the necessity of the reprobate and the kingdom of Antichrist in this world for the church. Just as the chaff serves the wheat, so also the wicked always serve the preservation of the church. This is true even when it seems otherwise, when it seems as though God blesses the wicked—as it must have seemed here to Jacob with respect to Esau—and when it seems as though God does not bless his own people—as it must have also seemed to Jacob who dwelled as a stranger in a strange land (Genesis 37:1). Sing Psalter 414:1-2.

September 18 Read Genesis 37:1-11

Joseph was a godly lad, hated by his wicked living brothers. Several things brought this hatred. The favoritism showed to Joseph by their father was one cause, the dreams of Joseph were another, and Joseph’s godly example and reporting of their wickedness was the third. Joseph was obedient to God’s will for him in all his life though it brought him scorn and persecution. Joseph is an example for young people to follow. He was already strong in faith as a teenager, and he refused any fellowship with the sin of his brothers. The dreams of Joseph were sent by God and demonstrated that God is sovereign over all that would come to Joseph in his life. Through these dreams, and also his upbringing, Joseph, as a young boy, was strong in faith. This faith would be necessary in the trials ahead. It would seem to Joseph, as it will to us too when we read Genesis 37ff., that God was far off and that the wicked seem to triumph over the righteous. But, this was not the case. God worked all things in Joseph’s life for the salvation of his church, and Joseph, in the darkest of times, put his faith in this promise of God. Sing Psalter 192:1-3.

September 19 Read Genesis 37:12-22

The brothers of Joseph grow in their hatred of him to the point that they want to murder him. The chief reason is that he is distinguished by the Lord from his brothers. God sets Joseph apart as righteous by giving him the dreams. This becomes the one main reason for the brothers’ hatred of him. They call him, “This

dreamer.” Because Joseph is a friend of God he is hated. Are we hated by the ungodly? Is it because of who we are and what we do with regard to those ungodly? Because we act in hatred toward them? Let it never be!! Rather, let the ungodly hate and despise us because we love God and because our lives show forth the glory of God. Let us not give occasion to the wicked to hate us and sin against God because of our hateful conduct towards them, but rather because we love and serve God and will not walk with them in their sin. Sing Psalter 192:4-6.

September 20 Read Genesis 37:23-28

How is it that Joseph’s brothers can come to hate him so much that they would kill him, or that they at least, in the end, sell him as a slave? The answer is that all hatred is in the end murder, a breaking of commandment which says, “Thou shalt not kill.” Hatred is where it begins. Hatred expressed itself in the brothers in that they could not say anything nice to or about Joseph. They could not even give him a decent greeting, but instead would just grunt to acknowledge his polite, “Good morning.” This hatred stewed in their hearts and became envy so that they not only could not speak well to him but also begrudged him for all that he had. This envy led them to a complete despising of his person so that they preferred, in the end, to see him dead than to see him at all. So, their hatred bred murder. How do we do keeping the commandment that forbids murder? In our thoughts about others, especially those in authority? In our actions towards others, especially the little brother or sister or the class runt? In our words behind the backs of others? Sing Psalter 298:7-9.

September 21 Read Genesis 37:29-36

In essence Joseph’s brothers were guilty of his murder. Jacob believed Joseph was dead, and Joseph had been cut off from any communion with his family. It was as if he were murdered. The brothers meant this for evil (Gen 50:20). But there is a wonderful truth behind all this narrative. It doesn’t matter whose actions they were, good or bad, that brought Joseph to Egypt, God sovereignly directed all these events for the good of his people. He decreed the folly of Jacob in favoring Joseph. He directed the movement of the sons of Jacob so that they were in Dothan when Joseph came to them, right by the highway to Egypt. God determined that the Midianitish train of camels came past at just the right moment. God saw to it that Potiphar needed a slave and that Joseph would thus end up in the royal prison. All things were directed for the good of his Israel. And so it always is with our salvation. When it seems that God is far off and the wicked triumph, we must remember that God is near, that he is in control, and so we should trust in him and not be afraid. Sing Psalter 281.

September 22 Read Genesis 38:1-11

In this chapter we have an example of how Jacob’s family failed in their living as pilgrims and strangers in the land of Canaan. Judah leaves his home, his brothers, and his father’s house to see how he can fare in the world on his own. The result is that he makes acquaintance with the ungodly Hirah. Having this man for his friend, they go out on the town at night and Judah sees a Canaanitish girl, takes her, has extra-marital sex with her, and hence is forced to marry her. The result of this marriage is three sons, the first two of whom are extremely wicked men as is obvious from their death at the hands of God. We might ask, what has

happened to the covenant promises of God? How will they ever be fulfilled when Judah, the one from whom the Messiah will come, mixes himself and his generations with the world in this way? The answer is God’s redeeming grace in the heart of a Canaanitish woman, Tamar, who loves the covenant promises and is concerned that the covenant seed be born. Sing Psalter 206.

September 23 Read Genesis 38:12-23

Here we see two of God’s children committing awful sins. The motive of Judah is selfish. His wife has died. He burns in lust for a woman, and so goes in to one whom he thinks is a whore. This is a terrible sin. The motive of the other, Tamar, is more just, though her sin of adultery should not be endorsed. She, a Canaanitish woman, loves the promises of God, sees that they can only be fulfilled in the continuation of the lines of the covenant from which Christ will be born, and so wants to bring forth that covenant seed. Her first husband was killed for some sin related to their marriage. Her second husband despised the covenant seed and, for selfish reasons, would not bring it forth. Her father-in-law does not seem to care about the covenant seed either in his forgetting, so to speak, to give his son Shelah to Tamar for a husband. So, Tamar takes it into her own hands. Her motive is good, her deed evil. In this light we can explain the words of Judah in verse 26, “She hath been more righteous than I.” We should be concerned for the carrying out and fulfillment of God’s promises too. We do this by being faithful young people in our walk, in our dating, in whom we marry, and in our long term desires for life. We do not covet and seek earthly things, but covet God’s blessing on ourselves and his church which comes from us and our children. Sing Psalter 253:1, 4, 5.

September 24 Read Genesis 38:24-30

There are two lessons in this passage concerning the sin of Judah. Both are taught elsewhere in Scripture. The first is found in Numbers 32:23, “And be sure, your sin will find you out.” So it was with Judah’s sin. He thought that he had covered his sin of adultery over well, that it had been done in secret, and that no one would ever find out about it. Here, that sin comes back to haunt him and Judah must confess that he has sinned. The second lesson is taught by Jesus in Matthew 7:3-5, “And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam *is* in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.” Such was Judah’s sin. He could see the sin in the life of Tamar, but he seemed to be able to look past his own similar sin without a feeling of guilt. How prone we are to the same fault. Pray that God might give you the grace to see your own faults before those of another. Sing Psalter 24.

September 25 Read Genesis 39:1-6

Joseph is one of the most outstanding examples of a godly youth in Scripture. In this passage the example he sets is of one who honors and obeys his employer, doing his work to the utmost of his power and for the glory of God. Imagine the first days of Joseph’s slavery. He would have been the lowliest of the slaves in the household. He would have been among the youngest also.

He would have been given the most menial of duties. His heart must have cried out for his home, his father and his brother Benjamin. The temptation would have been there to run away from his master. But Joseph submits to his master and in that submits to the will of God for him. He realizes that he has been placed under the mastery of Potiphar in this foreign land according to God's plan for him. He submits to that and does his best work. What an example for godly youths employed and working in an ungodly world! God gives the job. God gives the boss. God gives the menial work. God gives the low wages. Our calling is to submit and to bear testimony to God in the workplace. In that way we will be blessed as Joseph was. Employers will profit from our labors, and we, in turn, may even be promoted or paid more as a result. But whatever the situation, we must submit to God's and the employer's will where that does not contradict God's. Sing Psalter 235.

September 26 Read Genesis 39:7-20

Hereagain Joseph is a good example for us. Joseph is somewhere between 17 and 19 years old. At this age, separated from other young people, Joseph is faced with a powerful temptation and in it remains faithful. The sin to which he is tempted is fornication. The seductress is the beautiful and flirty wife of Potiphar. Added to the temptation was great opportunity for Joseph in Potiphar's house. We must not think this temptation was no temptation for Joseph. He had seen the sin before in his brothers. As a young man, he likely struggled with the same youthful lusts as any other young man would. Added to this is the fact that the temptation was continual in the woman's attempting to seduce him day after day. Joseph remains a faithful youth in temptation. His one answer is, "I cannot do this great wickedness and sin against God." Joseph is the friend of God and so the enemy of sin. For this he is persecuted in his imprisonment of more than ten years — and we think the scoffing of the world is hard to bear. Sing Psalter 327.

September 27 Read Genesis 39:21-40:4

The prison house was not a bed of roses for Joseph. We read in Psalm 105:18 that they hurt his feet with fetters and that he was laid in iron. Imagine Joseph's thoughts now. He had been righteous. He had rebuked his brothers for their sin and called them to repentance. He had loved and served God. He had submitted to God's will in remaining Potiphar's slave and doing his best there. He had remained faithful to God's command against fornication when no one would ever have found out about the sin anyway. He loved and served God, and yet he ends up in the dark prison tied in chains. Still, however, Joseph's faith prevails. He submits again to the will of God and the virtue of God shines through him so that the prison keeper puts all the prisoners under the care of Joseph. In obedience to God's will, Joseph is blessed. Sing Psalter 328.

September 28 Read Genesis 40:5-23

The Lord sends the butler and the baker to the prison so that Joseph might be released from that dungeon. Joseph, it is sure, still remembers his dreams and in faith believes that God sent them and that God will fulfill them. He seems to understand also that he is near the end of his training for the great task that God showed him in those dreams. Hence Joseph tells the butler to

remember him before Pharaoh. And all this is almost true. Soon Joseph will be released. But not yet. First he must wait another two years in prison, wondering if the butler ever remembered him. When he is done with his imprisonment his affliction has lasted as long as 13 years. That affliction has prepared him for his place of work in God's kingdom. If we look at Joseph's telling of his dreams to his brothers and father we can conclude that Joseph would probably have been proud of being governor in the land of Egypt and over his brothers. His affliction prepared him to take up that work in humility. With the Psalmist, we can say the same concerning our affliction: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes" (Psalm 119:71). Sing Psalter 329.

September 29 Read Genesis 41:1-13

Israel could never have become a great nation in the land of Canaan. It was too small of a country. Israel was too tempted to join with the Canaanites. That is why God sends them to the land of Egypt. There, for some 400 years they, according to God's promise in Genesis 15:13-14, will increase and become a great nation. This God works by sending a famine in the land of Canaan and making Egypt the only place where food can be found. The dreams of Pharaoh mark a turning point in the history of Joseph and of Israel. The dreams bring about the release of the righteous Joseph and bring him to a state of glory in Egypt. The dreams also predict the famine that will bring the family of Jacob together again and so bring the wicked brothers to repentance for their sin of murder. And further, the coming of Jacob and the Israelites to Egypt will be used by God to save much people alive (Gen. 50:20), not only during the famine, but also during the 400 years that will follow the famine. God will bring his nation from conception to birth as a nation in the womb of the land of Egypt, and when they are finally constituted as an individual nation, God will use them to bring judgment on the wicked Pharaoh and Egypt and also on the apostate Canaanitish nations. Sing Psalter 289:8-10.

September 30 Read Genesis 41:14-24

The example of Joseph is clear in this passage again. If Joseph was ever a little proud, that is all gone now. Pharaoh asks Joseph if he is able to interpret his dream and Joseph's answer is, "It is not in me, God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." Joseph's confession is that whatever we do that is good comes from God. Joseph recognizes that his wisdom and ability to interpret dreams comes solely from God. In the same way we ought to be humble about the gifts that we have from God. In humility we should use them in his service. We should avoid pride and praising ourselves for what we can do which others cannot. We should see that we are able to do what we do only because God gives us the strength and ability to do it. We should give all praise to God for the gifts we have in our pressing of them in his service. Sing Psalter 203

The Origins of Music

by Melissa Van Baren

In my last article, we considered the dominate affect of music on our culture. Did you notice where music is? It's everywhere! How has this come to be and who is to be credited for a good portion of this? Where does music originate? These are some of the things I would like to consider in this article.

Music is a beautiful gift of God: but, as many things, can be used for either good or evil. Music can be either in singing or in the use of musical instruments. Music is a part of our nature. Although it isn't mentioned in the Bible, singing, I believe, has been from the beginning. Instruments, on the other hand, were invented. Who created these instruments? A wicked man—from a very wicked race. This man is Jubal, the descendant of Cain, a son of Lamech and Adah (Gen. 4:21). Does this mean that we are not to use musical instruments for the glory of God? Of course not, the bible is packed full of instances where God's people sing and use instruments for the glory of God. For instance, in Exodus 15, Moses sang to God, and Miriam (the sister of Aaron) and all the women of the tribe of Israel "went out after her with timbrels and with dances" (vs. 20). Also, the Levites were in charge of the music to be used in the temple, and David wrote a book of songs in which he proclaims "Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery" (Ps. 81:1, 2). Music must be a part of our worship of God.

Why then does God use such a wicked man to create such a beautiful thing as instruments? Calvin in his commentary on Genesis notes "Moses, however, expressly celebrates the remaining benediction of God on that race, which otherwise would have been deemed void and barren of all good" (pg. 218). It's amazing to think that God, through a wicked man, created something to praise and glorify himself. If we look around, its amaz-

ing to note that God does that in many instances! Thinking about that, and reading through that passage in Genesis, makes you wonder—does that mean that Adam and Seth's race were ingenious? No, "but that there were, among the sons of Adam, industrious and skillful men, who exercised their diligence in the invention and cultivation of arts" (*Calvin's Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, pg. 218). I think it is important to note, that even though Moses didn't find it important to write on their development in this area, he did, on the other hand, show how these people "called upon the name of Jehovah, and walked with God, and preached righteousness" (*Unfolding of Covenant History*, pg 248). They created the songs, chants, and the psalms to go with the instruments. They took these instruments and turned them from man's glory and used them for the honor and praise of God.

The turning of things for man's glory and using them for God's glory is done throughout history. What I would like to do in my next articles is follow the worship of God in music through the church and then compare it to the music of the world in the same era. What makes certain music the music of the "world?" and what music is God glorifying? How are the two different? and can they be compared? What are some interesting things that can be noted about both as they stand the test of time? These are just a few of the questions I would like to expound upon in the next few articles. Please consider them and how you answer them. ❖

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

Godly Conversation

by Adam Bol

We often think of ourselves (as individuals or groups) as being better than others. We do this subconsciously but the bad effects can be seen in real life. We need to first realize that this is a problem and then we can try to fix it.

If you are clearly proud and exalt of yourself, then you will be perceived to have problems because of your attitude. One of the results of this attitude is that people begin to not respect you. This can lead to many other problems, because people can't get along with each other without respect. People will avoid or ignore you. People will try to argue with any side you take, just because you think you're right and don't show that you respect them or their opinion. Another problem is that even if you were right all the time, nobody would like it but you. Everybody wants to be right and be appreciated some of the time. The way to get on people's good side is by showing respect and humility.

Besides losing people's respect, we should also realize that this proud attitude is unbiblical and wicked. The Bible clearly says not to rank people. It says this in Proverbs 28:21, "To have respect of persons is not good." Hitler brought this idea to an extreme and believed the Aryans were much better than Jews. It's easy to see a problem in something, or some attitude, when it's brought to the extreme, but we don't always realize the potential problems when we do the same things on a smaller level. The problems are still there, only smaller. That's why we must get rid of the cause—our pride.

The first step to solving a problem is to understand it. We now understand that most of these problems come from our desire to put ourselves above others. We also realize that to continue in and nourish this idea will just cause more problems. To overcome this we must constantly fight against it. We can do that by searching in God's Word, which will tell us exactly how to fight and

will encourage us. Proverbs 8:13 tells us what not to do when it says, "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate." Also Psalm 59:12, says, "For the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips let them even be taken in their pride: and for cursing and lying which they speak." Both of these verses teach us what to do by telling about the evils of pride. A verse which gives encouragement is Matthew 23:12, "He that shall humble himself shall be exalted." All these verses help us to fight against our pride.

We must begin to strive to be humble right now. We cannot wait until some other time. Striving to be humble is not an activity that you wait until a convenient time to start. You must start to be humble right now. Being humble isn't always going to be easy and sometimes won't be possible because of our sinful and totally depraved nature, but we must always try.

People who try to be humble gain many, many benefits. Other people will have a friendlier attitude and will like you. You may not realize how important this really is. Keep in mind that you come in contact with people daily, so you want to get along with them and have effectiveness with them. Being humble will give you greater influence in your connections with people. It will also cause you to have more quality friends. Being humble also shows others that you are imitating Christ and you are being a subtle witness. A subtle witness is very effective just like Satan's subtle witness to Eve in the garden. This subtly is a good thing when being an imitator of humble Christ.

Imitating Christ is not only good for our physical lives with getting what we want, but also is good for the soul. It is written in Matthew 16:24, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." We are called to be like Christ,

and when we do, we will be rewarded. Matthew 16:27: "...He shall reward every man according to his works." When we remember to be humble like Christ, we will be rewarded in this life and the next. ❖

Adam is a member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan. This essay was written in Mr. Scott Van Uffelen's Church History class at Covenant Christian High School.

Where We Stand

The Necessity of Christian Discipline

by Rev. Ronald Hanko

Reprinted from the mission newsletter circulated in the UK by Covenant PRC.

One thing almost completely missing in the church today is Biblical church discipline. It is almost unheard of for anyone to be excommunicated from the church, except for committing a gross sin (and they are not always disciplined even for that). People who live unchristian lives are allowed to remain in the church as members. Unbelievers serve in church offices. Ministers are allowed to preach anything and everything, no matter how unbiblical it may be. Sin, unbelief, backsliding, and disobedience are rarely even rebuked.

This is especially true of many things which are counted "little" sins, but are especially destructive when allowed to remain unrebuked and unchecked in the church. It would be an unusual thing for sins such as speaking evil of others and gossiping to be rebuked, or for sins such as envy, hatred, or strife to be named as sin, yet they are destructive both of the church and of the service of God (Prov. 26:17-28; Matt. 5:21-24). They are like the little foxes that spoil the vines (Song 2:15).

The result of this lack of discipline is that sin in all its ruinous power flourishes and grows in the church, so that eventually the church is ruined. As the Word reminds us when speaking of sin in the Church of Corinth: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (I Cor. 5:6). Indeed, even the lack of first love, though everything else was in place, brought on the Church of Ephesus the threat of having its candlestick removed (Rev. 2:1-7).

Christian discipline reaches its conclusion in censure and excommunication. In spite of the fact that such action is not pleasant, it is of the utmost importance for the safety and well-being of the church, and so Scripture

speaks of it often (Matt. 18:15-17; I Cor. 5:1-13; I Tim. 1:19, 20; II Thess. 3:14-15; Rev. 2:2).

In Scripture this aspect of Christian discipline is described in terms of delivering a person to Satan (I Cor. 5:5; I Tim. 1:20), of excluding him or her from fellowship (Matt. 18:17; II Thess. 3:14), especially from the fellowship of the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 5:11, 13). In some cases, at least, it involves an actual trial of those who have sinned (Rev. 2:2).

That Christian discipline involves such extreme measures is probably the chief reason it is seldom carried out. Nevertheless, it is important not only for the well-being of the church, but for the salvation of the sinner. I Cor. 5:5 (cf. also I Thess. 3:14), having described discipline in the strongest possible terms, insists that its main purpose is "the destruction of the flesh" and the "salvation of the spirit" in the day of the Lord Jesus. One of our church's confessions, therefore, refers to it as "the last remedy."

Discipline does not, however, just mean excommunication. It involves *watchfulness and rebuke* on the part of *all* the members. Matt. 18 teaches that the church as a whole is not even brought into the matter unless the sinner, when confronted with his sin, refuses to repent. We are convinced, then, that there would be little need for formal discipline and exclusion from the church if the members faithfully fulfilled these responsibilities. Would God it were so. ❖

Rev. Hanko was missionary/pastor of Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland.

Where Grandfather Came From

by J.P. deKlerk

It was her first night in The Netherlands.

Wilhelmina van Duin had been very tired and slept like a guinea pig, after her long journey from Aruba (in the West Indies) to Amsterdam. She had not even taken the time to look around in the modern hotelroom of the Airport Schiphol Hilton. But she knew that it was many times more expensive than the one she knew in Oranjestad, where she lived with her parents.

Through a gap between the curtains she saw a gold-colored sunbeam coming in her direction, but the double-glazed windows prevented the noise of the descending and departing planes from reaching her.

In the other bed her girlfriend Loes van Maanen was still sleeping. Before she went to bed, she had first been busy with unpacking her suitcase, hanging up dresses, cleaning a skirt which was stained, and finally taking a shower. She was used to traveling, working for an airline. Wilhelmina had never before left Oranjestad. If her father had not been so helpful to lend her the money, it would have taken years before she would have been able to undertake a journey like this one.

“Dad, I would like to see where grandfather came from, where my roots are. There are many people here, in a multi-racial society; different languages, different tastes and habits. I was born here, but I feel I am missing something. It seems that I am still a stranger.”

Dad did not get a fright, and he was not amazed either, but he did stare for a while at the ships skirting the coast, before he said “Wilhelmina, darling, I expected this to happen. I know the feeling. I got it also at about your age. Somehow in your mind you start searching for the roots of your family. Well, I have told you once already that my father came from a small island in the Netherlands, in fact a fishing-village with a harbor, a shipyard and some warehouses. It is named Urk. They have nowadays a famous choir...”

“Do you sometimes think about the past, at Urk? I mean a kind of nostalgia perhaps?”

“No, not really... Besides, the Netherlands has changed, probably more than at Aruba. Here we still have the old church and friends, your mother and I, a nice house, our garden...”

This was the truth. Like his father he had earned his bread on the water, around Aruba, instead of near Urk. But since he had a serious accident that made walking difficult for him, he got a couple of young men interested to work with his ship. They paid him for that.

“Now, Wilhelmina, if you want to see what Urk looked like, that is possible, because they have preserved it well for the tourists. When I was yet a boy, I had some pleasant years there. That was before the Zuider-zee became the IJsselmeer. When I came here, I met your mother

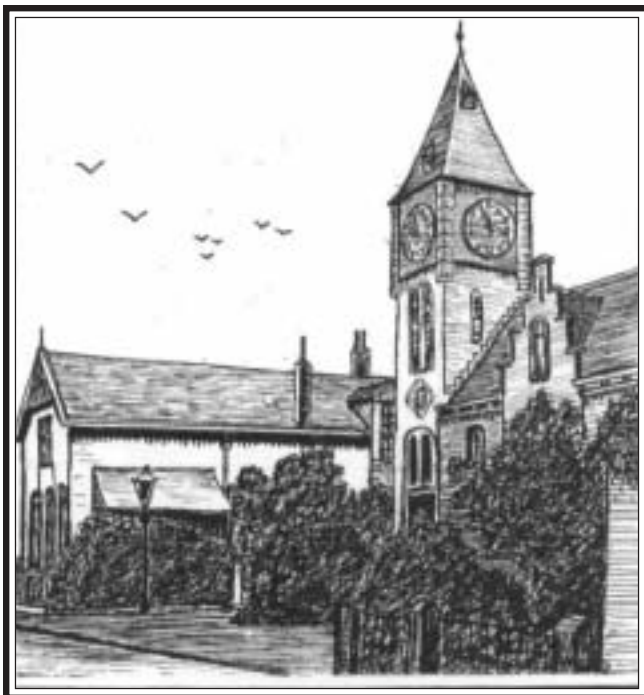


and we married at once. I never went back to Urk. Your journey will be expensive and you don't have that much money. I will lend it to you. Go to the travel-agency and ask them to give you all the particulars. I don't know how it is nowadays."

That was how it started.

In the agency they gave her maps and showed her what she had to do and where to go. Some things sounded complicated, but as a whole it was a lot easier than she had expected. However, they warned her for drugs couriers who sometimes tried to put small parcels in your luggage, to get them through customs. Therefore Wilhelmina bought a small metallic suitcase, without pockets with zippers on the outside. Her passport she would carry in a pocket she made herself inside her skirt so that it could not be stolen.

Dad gave her the address where his father and mother had lived and where he was born. There were no other relatives, but the Reformed Church was there yet, where they went every Lord's Day. How the situation was there now, he did not know. She had to find that out herself when she was at Urk, if she wanted to. He explained to her that there were many different Protestant Churches, split up and going in different directions, which was confusing when you came from another country. Modernism and a false ecumenism had often undermined those of Calvinist origin.



Wilhelmina, in the hotel room, regretted that she had forgotten to take a travel alarm clock with her, but her wristwatch told her that it was seven o'clock in the morning, local time. She jumped out of bed, took a dress out of her suitcase, together with some clean undies, and disappeared into the bathroom.

She threw a glance at the mirror and looked in her big dark eyes. She felt yet a bit drowsy, but happy that she had reached The Netherlands. How often she had wondered how it would be, and she still had only seen yet a flash and barely touched the soil. Around her it was silent. The shower was exactly the same one as she had at home. That was not surprising, because Aruba was still in close contact with the mother-country, just like Curacao.

She pushed her hair in a shower-cap, because she did not like to walk around with wet hair, though she hoped to have her breakfast in the sun on the balcony. She whistled a melody she knew from home, from her mother.

It was warm and very busy in the train. Wilhelmina sat clamped between two corpulent vacationers with unhappy faces. They grumbled about the fact that they had landed in a part of the train where it is not allowed to smoke. Opposite her three ladies of middle age were eating wedges of cake out of a big box. Two little boys played with a ball, which Wilhelmina got twice against her face, but nobody paid attention to them. It seemed that their parents did not care.

However, nothing could take away the joy of the day. There was a happy smile on her face. She did not care that she had to make a rather long journey, first in the train and later in a bus, that would bring her to Urk, like a conductor in the railway-station in Amsterdam had kindly explained to her.

She wanted to make the most of it, looking at what was to be seen outside, passing the windows like a film, each time something else, and it was all new to her. She regretted that there were many high apartment buildings, but she understood that in a small country millions of people had to find a place where they could live. A vendor with ice cream, lemonade in small bottles, bread with cheese wrapped in plastic, coffee and tea came, and she bought tomato juice and a straw, which was not expensive. The men next to her wanted to have beer, but the vendor told them that he had not any left. She noticed that they spoke Dutch with an accent.

In the bus to Urk, Wilhelmina saw for the first time pieces of the famous Noordoostpolder and machines busy with harvesting grain.

She arrived at the former island at lunchtime.

She looked at the map she had and saw how she had to walk to reach the quay alongside the harbor. She tried to imagine how it would have liked a century ago with fishermen all over the place.

She sauntered over the worn off cobblestones and gradually a long row of old houses in different sizes, materials and colors appeared before her. She slowed down and gazed at each one of them, moved, mollified, a lump in her throat. Some had lowered sun-blinds, some had awnings against the glaring sunbeams. It was like it inspired confidence. Here were her roots. Here had been the footsteps of her ancestors, the van Duin family. Would her grandfather have been the first one? How old would all these houses be already?

She went to the house her father had shown her at a photograph. The door stood open. She called, but nobody answered. She looked inside and saw a spotless little kitchen at the end of a small corridor. Suddenly she heard someone producing a cough, so she turned and looked at a young man with a beard.

"Miss, if you are searching Mieke van de Stoel, she sits next door drinking coffee with my married sister," he said.

"O, I don't want to intrude, but if I am well informed, my grandfather has once lived here, and my grandmother. His name was Dries van Duin," Wilhelmina told him.

"Van Duin? That must have been long ago. I don't know anybody with that name here, Miss. But in the townhall where I work, we have a book with all the names, addresses, dates of birth and several particulars going with it. If you want to see that."

She looked pleasantly surprised at his round healthy face and a pair of laughing eyes. She introduced herself. "I am Wilhelmina van Duin, from Oranjestad, at Aruba."

"And I am Jan Zoutelande," he said. "Come on."

He walked quickly in front of her to the center of Urk, where she saw a beautiful ancient house, a tower with clockwork and a wall with step gable.

"Come on," he said again and opened the front door for her.

At an antic oak table she saw a thick book with a cover of brown leather Jan glanced quickly through it and stopped at letter D.

"Well, let us see, Miss. The first van Duin we have mentioned is a Joost van Duin and he arrived here in 1802. It does not say where he came from."

The letters on the paper had become light brown.

In a column at the right side some particulars were mentioned indeed. When Joost van Duin was forty years old, he drowned with his ship during a hurricane at the North Sea. His son, Fedde, was forty-two when his ship had ran aground in a rainstorm at the beach of the island of Terschelling in the Dutch Shallows. He had a brother, Bertie, who became a minister of the Reformed Church of Genemuiden He married and received five children from the Lord. His eldest son, Douwe, went back to Urk and became a teacher and also sexton of the Church. The next generations were all fishermen, in the homeport of Urk.

One of them, with the name Gerben, was an active member of the "Kristlik Frysk Selskip" (United Christian Authors). He was a trader of smoked eel. He had once written a book of poems, but Jan had never seen it. When Wilhelmina had finished reading it all, she closed the book, and he asked inquisitively.

"Have you come to The Netherlands all alone? I mean, nowadays you hear so much about girls who have been held up, molested, robbed, and so on."

"Well, I traveled alone to Urk, but all the way from Aruba a girlfriend traveled with me. She has gone this morning to her uncle and aunt in the city of Alkmaar and she expects me to join her there."

"And don't you have any luggage with you?"

"No, my friend wanted to make it easy for me today, so she took my small suitcase with her. There was not much in it."

She smiled and asked "Are you Reformed?" He nodded and went to the door. He said, "I'll show you the Church. I have the key."

"What do you think, does a whole family usually remain in a particular church, as I saw in my case, by that book?"

"Yes, it seems that here at Urk it has often happened. Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that we feel like being one big family."

When they were inside the Church she asked Jan, "Were you also born and raised here?"

She looked around and observed "You have the same Bibles like at home. By the way, do you have many family members living at Urk?"

"No, only my sister. My mother died. My father works at a platform of an oil company in the North Sea.

They need him there, solving all kinds of problems, so he can not come home very often.”

He stopped halfway through the church and pointed at a wooden board with names. “Look, I had an ancestor who was a minister in this Church. His name was Abraham Rudolf Zoutelande.”

She went to stand next to him, a hand on his shoulder, impressed by the long list of servants of the Lord. She could not help it, that somehow she got tears in her eyes. She asked herself in silence, why did she go to Urk to meet at once a young man with so much tenderness in his voice? Only God knew that.

When they were back in the street, Wilhelmina thought “I must not let my feelings run away with me. Don’t be obtrusive.” Jan was an enthusiastic guide and showed her every interesting place of Urk, for which he seemed to have a keen eye. Every house seemed to have a history, and every family too. He showed her how the fishing-nets were repaired, and how a carpenter made a new rowboat, which was obviously an art. She enjoyed listening to him.

She would have stayed perhaps a week at Urk, if she had not promised Loes van Maanen to come to Alkmaar; they would go from there to see as much of The Netherlands as possible. Perhaps she could come back once. Perhaps they could start a correspondence with each other. Or did she have to draw back into herself quickly. Did God want her only to be friends with Jan? She did not know what to do, and what to say. In silence they watched together the sun going down at the Western horizon, like a red ball.

Then she asked him. “Jan, do you have a girlfriend?”

“Yes,” he laughed. “Her name is Gerda. She helps me every Saturday with cleaning the Church. She is good with a vacuum cleaner, and the carpet beater. She is a darling.”

Wilhelmina would have liked to ask him, how old she was and if he was in love with her, but she felt strangely shy.

She saw many people around her, who looked happy. They enjoyed their holidays, without worries, content, or perhaps not completely. She felt young and full of life, but clumsy. She would like to make Jan happy, in love, but she realized that they had only met some hours ago for the first time. It was not possible, was it?

They walked in a circle, and suddenly Wilhelmina recognized the open space in front of them. She looked at her watch and was shocked.

“Oh, Jan, the time! The bus! I forgot all about it! I have to step in, or else I will miss the connection with the train to Alkmaar!” Together they ran hand in hand over the street.

“I still have to give you my address, so that you can write me. Yes, and I need to have yours. I always have a small agenda with me, with a small pencil.”

Wilhelmina felt that her eyes became moist again. She saw the bus and people boarding. They stopped at the entrance, to write the addresses. Jan tore a piece of paper out of his agenda. They scribbled. The driver started the engine. They gave each other quickly a kiss.

“Have a safe journey,” mumbled Jan.

“God bless you,” whispered Wilhelmina in his ear.

While the door closed, she blew him a kiss.

From her seat she saw him standing on the footpath waving with both arms, laughing, jumping up and down. The bus turned to the motorway.

How was this possible, was it real, was it all over? Wilhelmina suppressed a sob. She felt how empty her stomach was. She had not thought about eating the whole afternoon. She looked what she saw yet of Urk. Slowly she came back to the real world.

A small girl with a doll came to her and started to tell her about her visit to her grandparents. Wilhelmina tried to listen with interest, but her thoughts were unwilling.

“She is a darling,” he had said. Good, she was that, too. ❖

J.P. de Klerk is an author and journalist from Ashhurst, New Zealand.

A Church at Urk

by J.P. deKlerk

Urk is a former island, known since 966 A.D., in the Dutch Zuiderzee (later called IJsselmeer), but after 1950 part of the North-East-polder. The majority of the inhabitants belong to Reformed Churches.

The picture on the next page shows you the church building of the “Oud Gereformeerde Kerk” (the Old Reformed Church) of Urk. The people stick to the traditions of the church, including slow singing of the Psalms.

❖

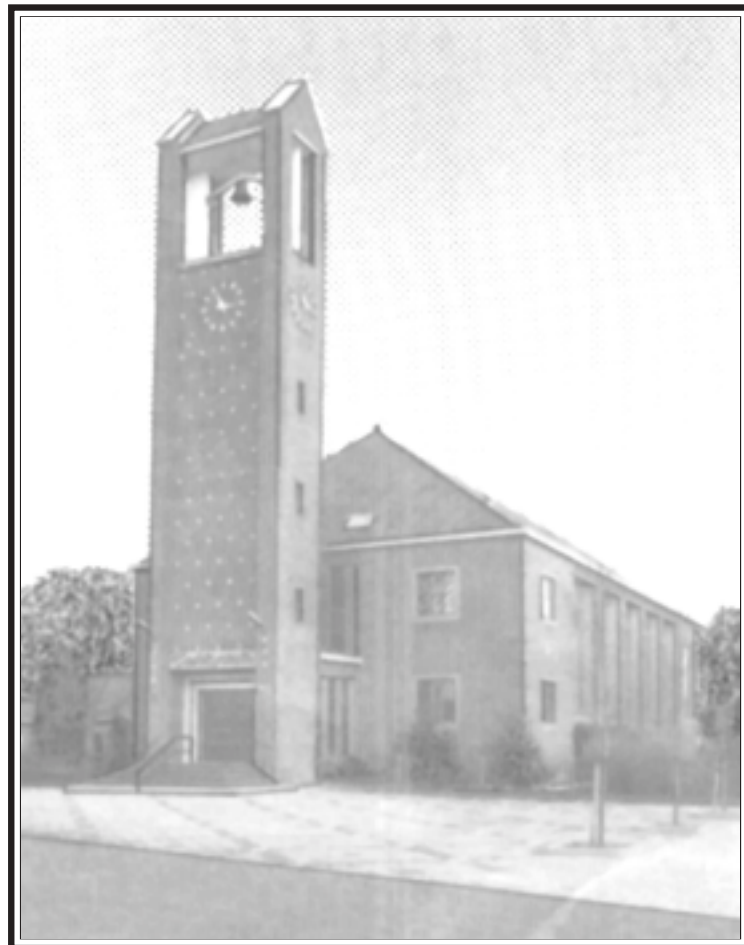
The Churches in The Netherlands

by J.P. deKlerk

Once a year the Churches in The Netherlands await with much interest the latest figures about the welfare of the various Churches in the country, their growth or otherwise.

The State Reformed Churches, in a period of 150 years (beginning in 1849) have gone down from 55% of the Dutch population to only 14%. Again further in 1999 with 1.81%.

The Synodale Reformed Churches in that year decreased 1.79%; now totaling 12,315 members.



Also, the Christian Reformed Churches lost more members in 1999, the Roman Catholics went from 38% of the population to 31%. Only the Liberated Reformed Churches continue to grow at a constant rate since 1995, reaching 125,783 members. They still build new Churches, and buy empty buildings from the Synodale Reformed Churches. The conclusion in general is that The Netherlands is loosing and that the anti-Christian movements are gaining in every respect. The socialist government, which calls itself “violet” because it is not yet “red” (communist), listens politely to opinions and comments from the Churches, but goes its own way, destroying the remnants of a Christian society. What was forbidden fifty years ago and could bring people to prison, is now allowed, for anybody from twelve years old onward. “Frontiers” and “rules” are taken away. Christians become isolated. No God, no Commandments. Severely ill people can be killed. Marriages are “old-fashioned,” unless they are of the “new” kind, abnormal, sick, pleasing Satan. The Bible-believing Christians and Organizations warn in vain (in English they would be called “those who stick to the King James Version), but they do their utmost and are not looking on silently. Even so, young people are very active in a number of places; also abroad. They are not afraid to show the world to Whom they belong, and they receive much support from parents and friends. They remember that saving even one sheep is important for God. Well known are the Dutch Evangelization ships “Logos” and “Doulos” which already have traveled around the world for several years, with lectures and literature; all with young Christian volunteers. ❖

J.P. de Klerk is an author and journalist from Ashhurst, New Zealand.

Church News

BAPTISMS

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

Mark 16:16

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Brianna Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Gunnink—Byron Center, MI

Megan Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Gunnink—Edgerton, MN

Quenton James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Shon Griess—Hope, MI

Trevor Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mark Langerak—Hope, MI

Mason Carl, son of Mr. & Mrs. Russ VanderMolen—Hull, IA

Ivan Ephriam, son of Mr. & Mrs. Darrell DeVries—Randolph, WI

Thaddeus, son of Mr. & Mrs. Philip VanBaren—South Holland, IL

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

"...and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Romans 10:10

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

John Cleveland—Hope, MI

Kevin Kuiper—Hope, MI

Tom Huizinga—Hope, MI

Dan Bergman—Hudsonville, MI

Amy Vedder—Hudsonville, MI

Mitch Zuverink—Hudsonville, MI

Greg Musch—Peace, IL

Philip Postma—South Holland, IL

Erin Bykerk—Trinity (Hudsonville), MI

MARRIAGES

"...and they twain shall be one flesh."

Matthew 19:5

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Jason Gunnink and Miss Jodi Nyenhuis—Byron Center, MI

Mr. Mike Fennema and Miss Jell Gunnink—Edgerton, MN

Mr. Trevor Kalsbeek and Miss Sara Westra—Hull, IA

Mr. Mark Kooima and Miss Nancy Bleyenberg—Hull, IA

For those who have been sending bulletins to Melinda DeMeester in Grand Rapids or to the *Beacon Lights* Post Office Box, please send them now to:

Melinda Bleyenberg

821 Greenway St.

Hull, IA 51239

You can also e-mail them or the pertinent information to her at

dmb41101@hickorytech.net

Thank you!

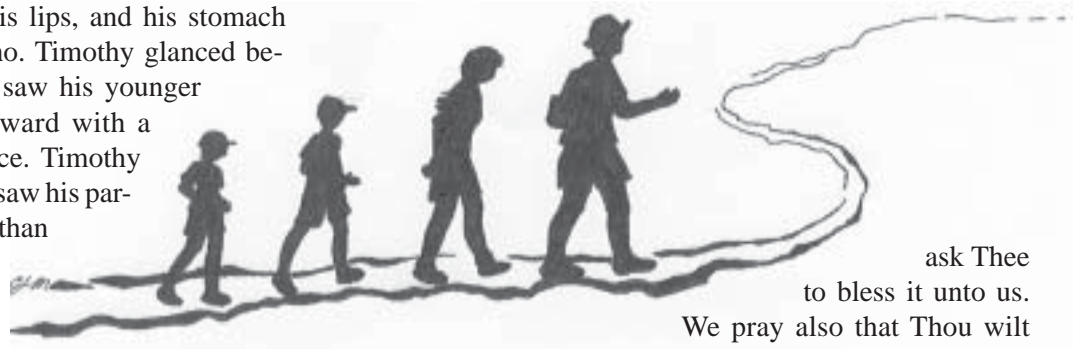
"LITTLE LIGHTS"

On the Trail

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

The hiking trail went on and on, tree after tree and rock after rock, while the sun burned brightly overhead. Timothy's feet ached and blistered with every step. His tongue could no longer wet his lips, and his stomach grumbled with a cave-like echo. Timothy glanced behind himself on the path and saw his younger brother Nathan marching forward with a sweaty and determined grimace. Timothy glanced in front of himself and saw his parents plodding on ahead, slower than before. The scenery they were traveling through was beginning to lose its appeal.



"Dad," Timothy could no longer keep from saying in a parched voice, "can we stop and rest? I'm so hot and hungry!"

Father wiped the sweat from his brow. "Yes, we better take a break. We still have a long way to go."

The family settled down in the shade of the nearest tree and Father unloaded his backpack. Timothy thought bottled water and sandwiches never looked so good! But when Father began to hand out the sandwiches, he tossed a small rock to Timothy instead.

Timothy looked up in surprise. Mother raised her eyebrows. Nathan looked from Father, to Timothy, and to Father again.

Father looked at Timothy. "Don't you like stones, Timothy?"

Timothy was so perplexed, he was speechless.

Finally Father searched in his backpack and found one more sandwich. "Here. Did you really think I would give you a stone to eat?"

"Well, yes. I-I mean, no. I don't know. You usually don't tease us like that."

"You're right, I don't." Father grinned. "But do you remember what we read this morning for devotions?" Now Mother smiled too. "I would never give you a stone for bread, and our heavenly Father certainly never would. How much more faithful He is! We should never doubt that He will give us what we need."

"And don't forget," added Mother, "that we need the Holy Spirit."

In the cool of the shade they folded their hands and closed their eyes, and Father led his family in prayer. "Our Father in heaven, we thank Thee for this food and

ask Thee to bless it unto us.

We pray also that Thou wilt grant unto us Thy Holy Spirit, that He may be upon us to strengthen us and lead us, and guide us into all truth..." ❖

Connie is the mother of 5 children and a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Timothy's family read from Luke 11 for their morning devotions. Find the underlined words out of part of that text in the puzzle below:

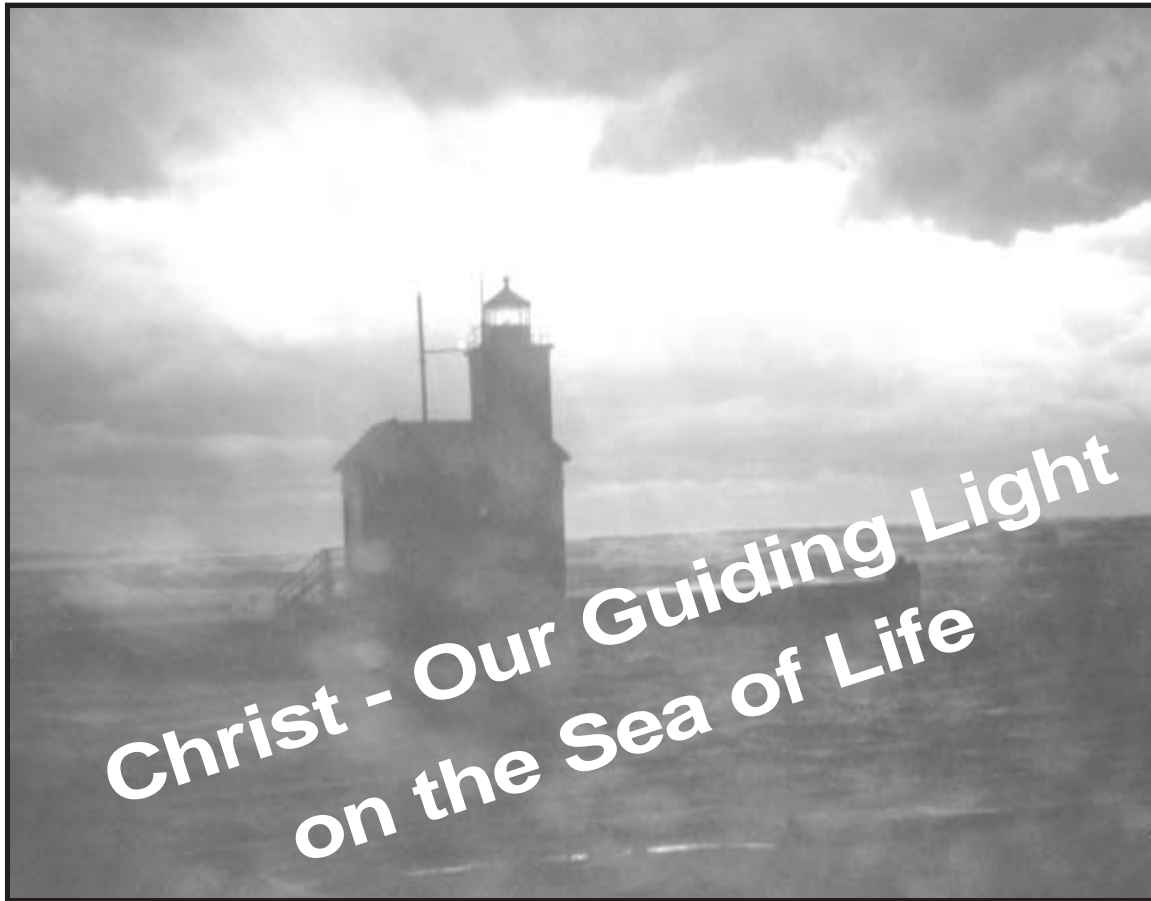
"If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will ye give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Luke 11:11-13

G	K	S	A	R	E	F	V	C	H
I	L	B	T	G	D	A	E	R	B
E	V	I	G	O	I	T	O	T	S
A	F	O	F	L	N	H	N	E	A
C	H	I	L	D	R	E	N	K	P
D	S	N	O	I	P	R	O	C	S
V	I	Y	G	R	V	F	T	R	T
O	F	F	E	R	G	E	V	H	F
N	O	S	H	I	K	G	L	D	I
H	E	A	V	E	N	L	Y	G	G

BEACON LIGHTS

P.O. BOX 375
Jenison, MI 49428

Periodical
Postage
paid at
Jenison, MI
(UPSS046-840)



2001 YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONVENTION

AUGUST 13-17, 2001
LAKE ANN BAPTIST CAMP
NEAR TRAVERSE CITY, MI

Hosted by First Protestant Reformed Church
of Holland, Michigan Young People's Society

SPEAKERS: Revs. Bekkering, Eriks, & Van Overloop

See You There!

*Check out the **2001 Convention** link on our church website for
a printable registration form, pictures, & more details: www.hollandprc.org*