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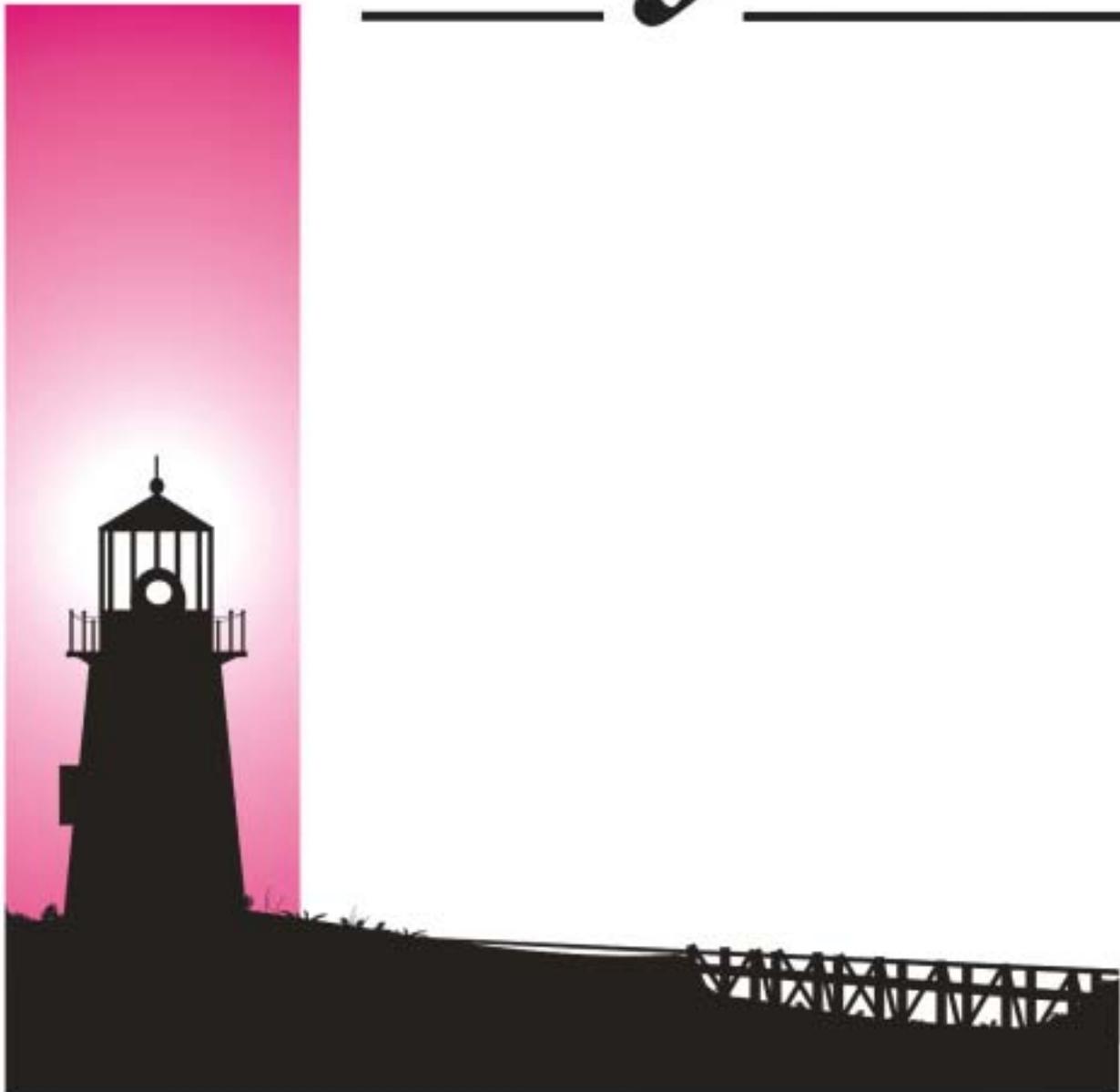
# Beacon

December  
2000

Volume LIX  
Number 11

# Lights

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# Our Father is Sovereign

by John Huizenga



Our God has created us and He has created the world in which we live. He created all things for His own glory. He created us so that we might know Him and enter into His eternal covenant fellowship. To this end, He has revealed Himself to us in His Word and He works within our hearts. “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). As we search the Scriptures to grow in our knowledge, we find another beautiful truth of God which we call God’s “sovereignty.”

The dictionary defines “sovereign” as “above or superior to all others.” Sometimes a king is called “sovereign,” because his word has the final authority over those whom he rules. We say that a state is sovereign if it is independent of all others. To be sovereign, then, is to hold all power within a specific realm, and also to have the authority to use that power as you will.

This definition is limited, however, to the realm of things created. God is not simply superior to the greatest king on earth; He stands apart as the creator of all men and the rest of creation. Even within the spiritual realm, He does not rank as the greatest among others. He stands alone. He does not sit as the greatest among other beings that are like God and have created other worlds. It is not the case that God is considered the most powerful angel among angels. He stands alone. No other being can be called “Creator.” Only God is sovereign in Himself.

Any sovereignty that a man has comes from God. In this world we all have some power. We have varying degrees of authority to use that power to do what we want. Some men have power over nations and throughout history kings have commanded millions to engage in bloody and destructive wars. Yet no man or any other created being has any power or authority of himself. What sovereignty man has is not his own, but comes from God. Every measure of power and authority exists eternally in God, and God gives this power and authority to men. Once in the hands of men, the power and authority does not become independent of God, but rather continues to accomplish the will of God even though it may appear to man to be accomplishing the will of men.

God himself reveals to us His sovereignty in the following passages: Psalm 115:3, “But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.” Psalm 135:5-6, “For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.” Isaiah 46:10, “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” Ephesians 1:11, “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”

The history recorded in the book of Daniel gives us a very graphic picture of God’s sovereignty. Nebuchadnezzar held tremendous power and authority. Daniel said of him, “Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory” (Daniel 2:37). Daniel then explained his dream and told him how he would become as a beast. After Nebuchadnezzar experienced the sovereign hand of God, he says in Daniel 4:34-35, “And at the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto

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him, What doest thou?" God here uses one of the most sovereign men on earth to confess that he was nothing and that God alone is sovereign.

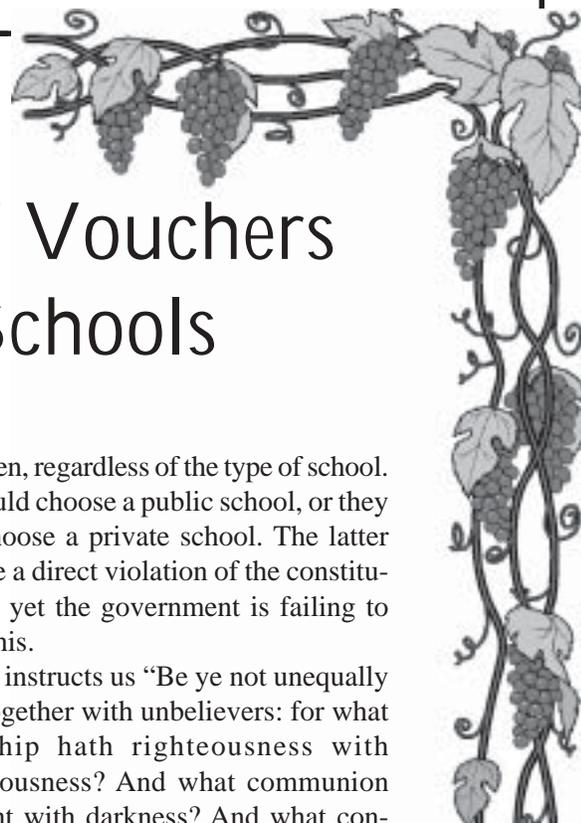
Man can never ignore the sovereignty of God. The most learned scientist who tries to stretch his brain to explain the origins of the earth is forced to confess that his mind is limited. Man crouches in fear when he faces the sovereign God and realizes that he does not know and even hates this God. Man tries to cover up the sovereignty of God with the language of fate and chance. Many who call themselves "religious" or even "Christian" do not confess the God of the Scriptures, but rather invent a god in their imaginations. They may cut and paste things from the Bible, but the unbeliever is afraid of an absolutely sovereign God.

The believer, on the other hand, finds no greater comfort than the comfort of knowing that God is sovereign. This is because the believer knows God as his or her Father. The believer knows that this God who is absolutely sovereign loves His people as His own children. We read in Psalm 149:4 "For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation." Our Father holds all power and He holds all authority to exercise that power. His will is subject to no laws or influence outside of Himself. He does what He wills, and we know that His will is to gather unto Himself a people to enter into His covenant fellowship for His glory.

That God is sovereign means, then, that our salvation is certain. "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Thes. 5:9. God has from eternity known the names of His children. He sovereignly uses the nations, kings, families, and every aspect of the history of the world to bring forth His people and gather them out of death and into eternal life. He has sovereignly willed that His only begotten Son Jesus Christ would be the Way in which He would accomplish His purposes.

The sovereign God Who has so worked in and through Christ is our Father. He gives us a new heart and makes us His children. We hear His voice as sheep hear the voice of their shepherd. We follow and we grow in our knowledge and love for Him. May we daily strive to know our God and to express our gratitude in thankful obedience to His commands. ❖

Fruitful Branches



# The Potential Effect of Vouchers on Our Reformed Schools

by Amy Lenting

*2000 Protestant Reformed Scholarship essay.*

In society today, there is an increasing pressure upon parents to enable their children to receive the best education possible. They feel that the voucher system would help them, and maybe it would. But, as Christians, we must consider the possible effects of this system.

The voucher system would give parents money to choose a school for their children to attend; this is called school choice. Parents would be given the authority to choose a school that they feel would best suit their child

or children, regardless of the type of school. They could choose a public school, or they could choose a private school. The latter would be a direct violation of the constitution, but yet the government is failing to realize this.

God instructs us "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what con-

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cord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate..." (II Corinthians 6:14-17a).

As Reformed believers, we try to keep governmental control out of our schools as much as possible. We uphold the rules as far as medical requirements and curriculum requirements are concerned, and we take the required statewide tests. We do not, however, allow the government to have anything to say about the religious teachings in which we instruct our children. Our schools are parent, not government run.

We hold fast to the scripture passage that states "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). The Form for the Administration of Baptism asks of the parents to answer sincerely to three questions, the last of which relates to teaching their children in the doctrine of the church. "Whether you promise and intend to see these children, when come to the years of discretion (whereof you are either parent or witness), instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine, or help or cause them to be instructed therein, to the utmost of your power?"

The voucher system poses a threat to the training of our children in our schools. Consider this: a worldly parent decides that he or she wants to send his or her child to one of our schools. In order to pay for the tuition, the government is going to give this parent a tuition voucher. The school really doesn't want this, but has nothing to say about it. The child starts attending

our school, and is receiving a wonderful education; however, the parent doesn't like the religious practices that are taught in our school. They go to the state legislature and say that we are pressuring both them and their child or children to become Christians.

Does this sound familiar? It should, because it's the same thing that happened in the public schools. Some people decided that they and their children were being pressured into Christianity, and because of their petition, prayer and all other religious practices were abolished in the public school system.

Taking tuition vouchers from the government indirectly gives them a little say in what goes on in our schools. The more money the schools take, the more control the government is going to want to have over our administration, our religious curriculum, and our entrance requirements.

I personally believe that tuition vouchers could cause the downfall of our schools. We have always held to the idea of separation of church and state, but acceptance of the voucher system would, without question, violate this belief in every way.

As Christians, I feel that we have an obligation to instruct our covenant youth in the fear of the Lord. That is one of the main reasons I feel my calling is to become a Christian schoolteacher; however, I believe that the voucher system poses a threat to this obligation. We must hold fast to the teachings of our forefathers, and we must reject the idea of tuition vouchers with every ounce of our being. ❖

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*Amy is a member of South Holland Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois.*

## P.R.Y.P. Convention

Plan to  
attend!

**Theme:** Christ, Our Guiding Light on the Sea of Life  
**Dates:** August 13-17, 2001  
**Location:** Lake Ann Baptist Camp, near Traverse City, MI  
**Host:** First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland  
Young People's Society

# The Fourth Man

## A Story from the Time of the Afscheiding

by P. S. Kuiper  
translated by Rev. Cornelius Hanko

### Chapter 2

#### The Farm Behind The Linden Tree

In the meantime Maarten went on his way alone. Soon he left the Moleneind and turned left into the Looseind.

Slowly he trudged through the loose sand, his hands deep in his pockets, his cap indifferently on the back of his head. He felt humiliated and unjustly treated. It was true that he had not watched out at that corner, but Botje hadn't either. And when he had wanted to make amends for his mistake and offered Botje a helping hand, the fish peddler had given him a slap in his face that still caused his head to spin. Inwardly he was seething with anger, first only at Botje, but then at Toon, who in the last analysis was to blame for all his trouble.

Suddenly it struck Maarten that Fatty could be on his heels! He looked hastily around, but it was already too late. "Hello, Boelhouwer!" Toon shouted from a distance. "Wait a minute, man!" Maarten grimly submitted to the inevitable and slowed his step. He quickly brushed aside the evidences of his tears. That fellow certainly must not see them. He forgot the blood stains under his nose.

"Man, oh man. I laughed myself sick at Botje!" Toon shouted. "Did you run him down? I heard something like that."

"Yes," answered Maarten briefly. "Where are the other guys?" he added in an unfriendly tone.

"O, those dullards are helping Botje," answered Toon contemptuously.

"Didn't you have to help?"

"What? I help? Come on now! Every man to his own task, my father always says."

"You are certainly a friendly person," Martin remarked sarcastically.

"You had better keep still," answered Toon, becoming a bit angry. "It was actually all your fault!"

Maarten was silent, holding his rage. Finally Toon realized that he was not very welcome.

"Why did you rush away so fast a while ago?" he asked suspiciously.

"Because I was hungry," muttered Maarten, surprised at his own resourcefulness. That was an argument that appealed strongly to Toon.

"My stomach is also rattling," he said, and eagerly added, "This noon we are going to have brown beans. Man, o man!"

Fatty sighed so pleasantly that, in spite of all that had happened, Maarten burst into laughter.

"Be sure you do not eat too many beans!" boasted Toon. "I could eat ten plates full, maybe twelve!"

Maarten had his own opinion about that but decided to change the subject. He was happy to see that they were already approaching the Kleine Krakebeen.<sup>1</sup> Just in front of that stood the big farm of Jacob Bollebakker, Toon's father.

"I have heard that in a few years our Looseind will also be paved, just as the Moleneind is now."

"I know that," was Toon's answer. "My father says that then they can also pave our driveway."

"Do you think they will do that for nothing? Do you know how much that would cost?"

"What of it? My father will manage that ok. Money is the key that fits in any lock," he always says.

"Your father seems to say quite a bit," Maarten said sarcastically, although he realized that he had said too much. However, Toon apparently thought the remark was a compliment.

"That's true, my father has a lot to say in the town. At home he has the say-so over a large number of servants. Before long we are getting another one. The new one comes from Nieuwer-ter-Aa. Do you know where that is?"

"No, and I could care less," growled Maarten, feeling offended by the overbearing tone of his companion.

"The others came all the way from beyond Loenen and Breukelen to our farm," he went on undisturbed. "Can you imagine that?"

"You can say that again," sneered Maarten.

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“What do you mean by that?” Toon asked suspiciously.

“Can you figure out what a big boaster you are?” Maarten sharply snapped back at him. They now stood before the driveway of Bollebakker.

“Ha, the small farmer is jealous!” shouted Toon, “you cannot even support one servant on that manure pile. Only your crazy grandpa with his white beard walks around there, a regular Santa Claus.... Ow! What now?” Toon had received a sharp blow of Maarten’s fist on his empty stomach.

“You keep off from my grandpa, you ugly blown up fat ball,” snarled Maarten. Toon made off, partly because he feared another blow and partly because he was afraid the family had already started with dinner.

With a satisfied feeling Maarten continued on his way. He felt that he had given that windbag of a Toon what he had coming. For the time being he would be free of this bothersome companion.

Maarten neared the edge of his village. All it amounted to was a few small farms on both sides of the Looseind, and then followed the land which was commonly called the Narrows. From there the moor reached out. The Looseind continued as a winding sandy trail that finally ended in Loosdrecht, the small village on the peat bog.

In front of one of the last farms stood a large Linden tree. Originally this was a “church-tree.” Years ago the Hervormde Kerk<sup>2</sup> had urged the entire town to plant linden and elm trees, having in mind to let these be dug up in due time. The profit would be for the church fund. But six years ago the church officers had sold all the “church-trees” to the town or to the farmers. Thus, this linden tree now belonged to the lowly, though neatly kept farm of Ko Boelhouwer, the father of Maarten.

Having arrived at home, the boy quickly ran up the bumpy driveway, took off his wooden shoes by the door, and went without delay to the front part of the lot, where the simple living quarters were located. He did not allow himself time to pay attention to the friendly barking of Bas, his dog.

Father and Mother were already at the table. Grandfather hung his pipe on the rack before he took his seat, while Maarten quickly went his corner. Embarrassed that he was late, he avoided the sharp look of his father. “Let us pray,” Father said briefly. All folded their hands. Father and Grandfather held their caps before their eyes, while Maarten took his off. After a few quiet moments, Grandfather’s “Enjoy your meal,” was the signal to eat. It was not surprising that everyone agreed.

“You were not exactly early,” Father remarked, while Mother dished out the steaming potatoes and cabbage. “Didn’t you come straight home?”

“At first I did, later not,” the boy answered vaguely. But Father was not readily side-tracked, and knew at once that something was wrong.

With a sharp look at his son he asked, “Is that all Maarten?” “Son,” his mother suddenly called out, “Did your nose bleed? Did you maybe have a fight?” Maarten felt trapped. He decided it was best to tell them the whole story.

“No, I ran home fast, but then, at the corner of Moleneind and Dieperweg, I ran into Botje, whom you know.”

Father’s eyebrows raised somewhat. “I do not know him,” he answered sternly. Maarten colored because he knew how his father hated the practice of giving nicknames to every one. “I mean, Aalt Boor,” he said humbly. “O, now I know whom you mean,” his father responded.

Now Maarten told piece-meal the whole story of his collision with the fish peddler, making sure that he called him by his right name. Father did not seem to be too concerned about the slap in the face that Maarten had received. “Naturally, that was unjust of Boor,” he remarked. “But just imagine yourself sitting there before the eyes of the whole world. In that situation you say or do things that you are sorry for later. Controlling yourself, Maarten, that is one of the hardest things to do!” After a bit he added in a softer tone, “We cannot do that by our own strength.”

For a while nothing could be heard but the clicking of the spoons.

Grandfather picked up the thread where the conversation had stopped. “After that you came home all alone?”

“Yes, the other boys stayed by Aalt Boor. Only that boring Toon Bollebakker followed me.”

“Toon Bollebakker?” said father reflectively, “O, that must be a son of Father Jacob.” But now it was Father who had said the wrong thing, for he used Toon’s father’s nickname. He was called that because of the fatherly tone he used when he thought he had to admonish people.

“I don’t know him,” Maarten said, imitating his father in a naughty tone. For a moment all was quiet, then everyone burst out into laughter.

“You sassy monkey!” his father shouted, “Now you really got me. I fouled up on that one.” He affectionately rubbed his son’s ears generously.

“Is that Toon boring?” he added when the laughter ceased.

“Terrible,” the boy answered, “He can talk about nothing except boasting about their riches. This noon he called our farm a manure pile and called Grandfather Santa Claus. I hit him in his stomach!”

“Now, now,” both Father and Mother said at the same time. Grandfather smiled mischievously. “It is a good thing that I am not Santa Claus,” he remarked winking, “otherwise neither your father nor you would be here.”

Maarten looked at the old man without understanding what he meant. “Well,” he explained, “Bishops may not marry.”<sup>3</sup> Again every one burst into hearty laughter.

Maarten was relieved that Grandfather did not take what had happened too seriously.

But when the boy told about the poem that he had been allowed to recite that morning in school, both Grandfather and his parents looked critical.

“Striving after virtue?” Grandfather said slowly. “God’s Word teaches us differently, my boy. It is not a question of whether we live good and noble lives, but whether we know that we are hidden in our Savior.”

“Exactly,” Mother said, “We cannot do anything good of ourselves!”

“Yes, but,” Maarten objected, “the teacher thought it was a fine poem.”

“What the teacher says is important,” Father’s voice rang out, but what God’s Word says is still more important. Never forget that, Maarten.” He got up and took the old Staten Bible.<sup>4</sup> Carefully the callused fingers paged through it until he had found Romans 7, from which he reverently read a section: “For the good that I would I do not, but the evil that I would not that I do.”

After these words his eyes looked sharply for a moment into those of his son.

Then Grandfather led in thanksgiving.

A few moments later, when Maarten returned to school, his anger had completely gone. His thoughts turned quite naturally to the splendid days that were coming.

Because it was Good Friday, school would be dismissed this afternoon at three o’clock, an hour earlier than on other days.

Tomorrow,—“Silent Saturday,” the Catholic boys called it—there was no school. Then followed two Easter days. On Tuesday, the semi-annual cow market was held, and on Wednesday the usual weekly market. Only on Thursday would school begin again.

At school very little was said about Maarten’s adventure with Botje. Everyone’s thoughts were eagerly

on the coming days. They looked forward especially to the cow market.

When the tower clock struck half past two, all talk and chatter ended. Immediately all the children silently took their places and stood in line.

The school doors opened with their usual creaks. Both teachers came outside to supervise the ranks of children with their sharp eyes.

Behind them a small group of children also came out of the school. They were all poorly dressed and most of them had thin and pale faces.

They were the children who worked from early morning until late at night in the weaving factories. During their mealtime they could still go to school, but only for an hour, although most of their miserable companions politely excused themselves from that. The “meal-time” school for these poor children was held from twelve thirty to one thirty.<sup>5</sup>

The last “meal-timer” who sauntered out of the school was a long, dark chap. He brushed past Maarten. The two boys looked at each other without interest. They hardly knew each other.

They lived in different worlds.

Neither the one nor the other realized at that moment that some day they would be life-long friends.

<sup>1</sup> The name is difficult to translate. It must refer to a certain place along which the boys were walking. Literally the term refers to the cartilage in a knee, and means, Small Cartilage.

<sup>2</sup> The literal translation of “Hervormde Kerk” is “Reformed Church.” It was the name of the State Church, the old church of the Synod of Dordt. But it had become apostate.

<sup>3</sup> We probably cannot appreciate the humor of this remark. But it will be clear if we remember that our words Santa Claus are really a corruption of St. Nicholas. St. Nicholas is a 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century saint who was recognized as a saint on Christmas day as one who had given gifts to children. We are probably more familiar with the expression “St. Nick.” But already then, monks did not marry. And so, grandfather is saying that if he were Santa Claus, he would have been St. Nicholas and would never have married.

<sup>4</sup> This was the Bible used in the Netherlands before more modern translations took over. It is, in Dutch, much like our King James Version. It is called the “States Bible” because the translation was authorized by the Synod of Dordt and the costs were paid by the government.

<sup>5</sup> The practice described in these paragraphs was a very sad, but all too common practice in the Netherlands—as well as elsewhere in Europe during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The poor families, even in the church, could not earn enough to support themselves unless the children worked as well. These children were taken out of school early, sometimes as early as 8 or 9 years old, and sent to work. The work was hard and the hours were long. My own grandmother worked as a maid for a rich man and earned almost nothing for 12 to 15 hour days. She started working at about 10 years old and permanently injured her back carrying buckets of water from the village well up several flights of stairs in the rich man’s house. She spoke of going to bed so hungry that the ache in her stomach kept her awake. Sometimes children, especially who worked in “factories,” were given the option of going to school for an hour a day during the “lunch time.” This is the reference to these “meal-timer” students.



# The Song of Zion

A Psalter-Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign, Covenant God  
by Cornelius Jonker

December 1 Read John 15:16-19

**James 1:1** We begin this series of meditations on the general epistle of James, with the prayer that we may better understand what the Spirit is saying to the church of Jesus Christ, of which we are living members, and how we are to behave accordingly. The author is James, most likely the brother of Christ, who apparently did not believe in Christ until Jesus appeared to him after His resurrection. He refers to himself as a “servant of Jesus Christ” meaning “slave;” not a forced servitude, but a willing one. The recipients of this epistle are the twelve tribes of the dispersion, namely, the church. They are pilgrims and strangers, spiritually separated from the world and persecuted for righteousness sake. Does this description fit you? Or do you feel completely at home in this evil world? If so, self examination is in order, for Jesus states in John 15:19, “I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” Walk then today as children of the light and ask God to keep you unspotted from the world. Sing Psalter 201:5, 6.

December 2 Read II Corinthians 6:1-10

**James 1:2** The author immediately begins with an admonition that sounds almost impossible to understand. He says, “Count it all joy when ye fall into divers (or a variety of) temptations.” He makes it very emphatic by describing it as *all* joy. How do you and I react when events happen to us that we consider unpleasant or even very grievous to bear? Must we succumb to despair or bitterness? Not at all. Must we really rejoice? Difficult as it may seem, the answer is yes because God’s Word tells us so. We can’t escape temptations because they surround us. Some may allure us, such as worldly pleasures or riches, but most are the opposite such as financial problems, depression, illness, or even death. Even in these situations we must realize that this is under God’s sovereign control and He will use it to our advantage. Pray for grace to be always submissive to God’s will. Sing Psalter 34:1, 2.

December 3 Read II Peter 1:1-8

**James 1:3** We learned yesterday to count it all joy when temptations befall us, and our verse today gives the reason. The reason is that the trying of our faith works patience. From our point of view these events appear as temptations, but actually they are trials from the hand of God. They serve a very good purpose, namely, that our faith is tried. When true faith is tried, it emerges stronger and produces patience. Patience means to persevere, to bear up under severe trials and is really faith in action. We can’t possibly accomplish this by ourselves. It is the work of the Spirit within us, a gift of God’s grace. As you are privileged to worship and hear the Word of God today, may the Holy Spirit use this means of grace to strengthen your faith to the end that patience may be much in evidence. Sing Psalter 100:1, 2.

December 4 Read Philipians 2:12-16

**James 1:4** How do you behave under pressure? Do you flinch and retreat when troubles come your way, or do you stand firm? A new

soldier or untrained recruit may turn and run when a powerful enemy appears, but the proven soldier stands firm. So it is in the battle of faith. The believer, who has patience made perfect by faith, strengthened in trials and fed by the Word of God, can face any situation, and so we are exhorted to let patience work. How do we do that? By means of prayer, by feeding on and studying God’s Word. By God working in us both to will and to do according to His good pleasure. May you truly experience that godly patience. Sing Psalter 100:3, 4.

December 5 Read Proverbs 8:1-11

**James 1:5** The author in this verse seems to presuppose that an objection might be raised in light of the previous admonition to let patience have her perfect work. We are so weak and foolish in and of ourselves. Who is wise enough and able to accomplish this? God gives the answer to our impatience—ask for the gift of wisdom. What is wisdom? Good judgment or prudence. We ask for wisdom in the same manner we ask for patience. In the way of communion with God. Solomon asked for a wise and understanding heart, and God not only gave him wisdom, but great riches and honor besides. So pour out your soul to God. Ask for wisdom, children and young people, in your studies and search for your life’s mate. Pray for wisdom, mothers and fathers and elderly persons, in your daily calling. And pray for wisdom, officebearers, as you perform your duties in the midst of the Church. Sing Psalter 336:2.

December 6 Read Philipians 4:4-7

**James 1:6** In this verse James instructs us in the manner in which we should pray for wisdom. We must ask in faith. We all know what faith is, don’t we? Faith is a living bond which unites us with Christ. It is a certain knowledge and a hearty confidence. True prayer then proceeds from a heart that is confident that God will hear and answer. Does that characterize your prayers? Do you ask in faith, without doubting? Doubting brings instability like the waves of the sea tossed by the wind. Then if our prayers are not answered we must realize that it is because of us. In humble penitence, turn to Christ, Who said to the father of the son possessed with an evil spirit “all things are possible to him that believeth.” And his response, which must be ours also: “Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.” Sing Psalter 185:1, 3.

December 7 Read Matthew 6:5-8

**James 1:7** We learned in our previous verse that only the child of God who prays in faith will be heard of God, for when we pray in faith, we pray according to God’s will. In today’s verse we are told that whoever prays without faith must not even think that he will receive anything of the Lord. The wicked may utter prayers, but they are an abomination to the Lord. A well known columnist recently wrote a newspaper article entitled “Football game prayer is in-your-face faith.” He said that “Public praying at football games is as compatible as playing football inside a church” and it is an in-your-face-faith rather than an

in-your-heart variety.” He then quoted Jesus’ words, “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues (football stadiums?) and on the street corners to be seen of men... But when you pray go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father” (Matt. 6:5-6). May we, led by the Spirit, pray to God with faith unfeigned. Sing Psalter 72:1, 4.

### December 8 Read Proverbs 15:1-7

**James 1:8** James points out to us today a picture of a man who cannot make up his mind one way or the other. Could this possibly be a picture of you? In your prayers do your lips utter a petition for forgiveness of sins without having a godly sorrow because of them? In your speech do you ever say one thing but mean something else? Do you love the world and its pleasures, but also profess to be a faithful church member? We are reminded of apostate Israel in II Kings 17:33 where we read, “They feared the Lord and served their own gods.” This is an abomination to the Lord. We are exhorted later in this same epistle that our yea must be yea, and our nay must be nay. That principle we must cultivate and ask for grace to be stableminded not only in the context of our prayers as we are reminded in this passage, but in all our words and walk. Sing Psalter 333:3, 4.

### December 9 Read Psalm 27:1-6

**James 1:9-11** In this passage we have a contrast which James sets up to show how God comforts us in affliction. There is a poor man and a rich man. The poor man is told to rejoice because he will be exalted and the rich man will perish. You may say, “Is that just? Is having riches wrong?” We answer that certainly there are instances of godly rich men in Scripture. But James elaborates further and calls the poor man a brother, obviously a sincere child of God, while implying that the rich man is an unbeliever. Do you possess few worldly goods but have the assurance that you are a child of God? Then you have everything! Don’t envy the rich. Asaph in Psalm 73 faced this problem until he went into the sanctuary of God and understood their end. Young people, don’t set your affections on this world and its riches. Choose a vocation where you can be of service to God and His people. Then you too will experience His blessing. Sing Psalter 204:1, 2.

### December 10 Read Ephesians 6:10-17

**James 1:12** What temptations have you faced this past week? How did you handle them? Did you succumb to peer pressure perhaps, or other situations that affected your dress, speech, conduct and places you attended that did not befit a Christian? How can we bear up under these temptations? By patient endurance and by loving the Lord as the last part of the verse states, our incentive is the crown of life. Our love is not first, but we love God because He first loved us. I John 4:19. Then we are blessed and happy. Being friends with God, we are enemies of Satan and recognize sin for what it is. As you attend worship services today, thank God for His covenant faithfulness. Listen attentively to the preaching of the Gospel, and by faith put on the whole armor of God so that you can stand firm against the wiles of the devil. Sing Psalter 202:1.

### December 11 Read Psalm 37:7-11

**James 1:13** Yesterday we read of the blessedness of the one who endures temptation. Now we see a man who succumbs to it. Temptation implies a wicked motive, and all too often we give in to sin, enticed by our mortal enemies, the devil, the world and our own flesh. Remember what Adam said after he fell into sin by eating the forbidden fruit? “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat,” thereby obliquely placing the blame upon God. We may never say “I am tempted of God.” God is holy, perfectly righteous and pure, and it follows that He cannot sin nor be tempted to sin. What is our calling then today? Pray for patience to endure any temptations that may come our way, and that the Holy Spirit may pre-

serve and strengthen us in our daily walk of faith. Sing Psalter 103:1, 2.

### December 12 Read Galatians 5:19-25

**James 1:14** This verse really brings home how sinful we are and how deeply it lies within our nature. None of us likes to hear this. We much prefer to listen to the world’s philosophy of how much good there is in every person and how to practice self esteem. God’s Word tells us how sinful and lustful we are. The word lust refers to every sort of covetousness whether that be wicked sexual desires, or material goods, or pleasure or anything that entices us to sin. How do we cope with this? How can we fight this sin? We can begin by saying “Get thee behind me Satan.” We can deliberately suppress evil thoughts instead of taking pleasure in them. We can refuse to attend events which entice us into sin, and turn off the television programs which promote all sorts of evil. We must not walk with the world but choose godly companions. Above all, pray sincerely for God’s grace to resist temptations. Sing Psalter 21:1, 4.

### December 13 Read Romans 7:18-25

**James 1:15-16** These verses elaborate on yesterday’s passage and use a figure to show the consequences of being drawn into sin. Just as an earthly child is conceived and brought forth and grows to full development, so it is with lust. An evil desire gives place to evil thoughts which conceive sinful deeds. These sinful deeds multiply into more wickedness, and except for the grace of God, the result is death, spiritual, physical, and eternal. Therefore, James warns us in verse 16 not to be deceived, and in I Peter 1:3 we read “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” We have a constant battle to fight, don’t we? But take comfort, people of God, the victory is ours through faith. Cultivate that faith, stand firmly upon God’s Word and fervently pray that the Spirit may guide you in the paths of righteousness. Sing Psalter 99:1, 5.

### December 14 Read Titus 2:11-15

**James 1:17-18** James turns our attention in these verses to a great comfort. As we look back on some of the preceding verses, we realize how easily and hopelessly we can fall into depths of sin. The question naturally arises, “What is the possibility of escape?” Our text gives the answer. Our God is sovereign and He bestows upon us good and perfect gifts. Oh, we could mention a great many, but our text speaks of one of the greatest gifts of all—that of regeneration. Our natural birth is a marvelous wonder, but our rebirth, where God calls life from the dead, is even more wonderful. Do you experience that new life? Does it show in your desires, actions and words? We are described as firstfruit of His creatures. This is not only interesting, but very comforting. It means we are dedicated to God as His personal possession and a part of His family. What a wonderful comfort! What a calling is ours to be set apart from the wicked world and live for God. Focus anew on this calling today. Sing Psalter 141:1.

### December 15 Read Proverbs 10:16-20

**James 1:19-20** The first word in our passage today is “Wherefore.” This is meaningful. We are to remember the rich blessings that were spoken of in the previous verses. Since we are born again creatures in Christ, we are now called upon to be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. Do these commendable traits describe you? How often in our daily lives the opposite is true, but we believe this admonition refers to our hearing the Word of truth spoken of in the previous verse. We may not question the inerrancy of that Word but rather be silent and listen. The Word is the chief means of grace and is powerful, like a two-edged sword. Sometimes the Word steps on our toes, so to speak, and we become offended and angry. We resent criticism and dislike being told what to do and in sinful wrath we become angry at the preacher and others. This wrath does not work the righteousness of God. Pray for

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grace to willingly practice these necessary virtues. Sing Psalter 162:1, 2.

### December 16 Read Hebrews 2:1-4

**James 1:21** Once again our verse starts with the word “Wherefore.” We were told, you remember, in yesterday’s meditation to be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. In the way of practicing this, we are now exhorted to put off all filthiness and overflowing of malice, so that with meekness we receive the engrafted Word. Tomorrow is the Lord’s Day. Will you be ready to receive that Word in the way of confessing your sins and asking God to make your heart receptive to it? The “engrafted word” implies that this Word has been planted and has taken root in our hearts. Just as seed requires prepared soil to bring forth fruit, so our hearts must be prepared by the Spirit to produce fruit. This doesn’t mean that we sit back and relax, as if the only real effort must be made by the minister. No, we concentrate on that message, for Christ speaks to us personally through that Word. And the wonderful fruit is that God is pleased to save our souls through this means. Sing Psalter 349:1, 2.

### December 17 Read Psalm 19:7-14

**James 1:22-25** We are looking at a passage today which deals with an important theme which runs through the whole epistle of James, namely, that we must not only be hearers of the Word, but doers as well. What is your reaction when the Word is preached? Do you listen, but the contents are soon forgotten and produce no evidence of fruit in your life? James states that you deceive yourself and only see your natural face in a mirror, blotting out that reflection of yourself and the sermon as well. Or are you one who looks in the mirror of God’s Word, seeing yourself as a sinner convicted by the Spirit, and who considers the law or the Word, not as an oppressive burden, but as true freedom in Christ? Then you will be blessed. As you hear the Word preached today, pray for grace that your hearing may be mixed with saving, active faith. Sing Psalter 41:1, 4.

### December 18 Read I John 2:13-17

**James 1:26, 27** There are a great many religious people in the world, but their religion is really a sham, and they show this by their lives and by their words. Then there are those in the church whom James addresses who think they are very religious, but with their tongue they commit every imaginable sin, deceiving themselves and showing that their religion is vain and empty. Then, in keeping with the underlying thought expressed in the context, the author describes the life of the true believer. He is a doer of the Word, and not only shows mercy to those in need, but keeps himself unspotted from the world. That’s not always easy for any of us to do, but especially for you, young people. Worldly pleasures are so attractive, and the devil lures us in so many ways. He tempts us to copy the world’s speech, dress, hairdos and actions. Don’t give in! Fight the battle of faith by prayer and supplication to the Captain of your faith. Sing Psalter 352:1, 4.

### December 19 Read Leviticus 19:11-15

**James 2:1** In chapter two James begins by addressing us as brethren, so we immediately see that he is speaking to us as members of the Church. He points out a certain indwelling trait or inclination that is certainly no stranger to any of us, and that is, that upon meeting or seeing a person perhaps for the first time, we make a judgment; we form an opinion of that individual most likely based on his or her appearance. How easily we fall into this sin. The world will readily have respect for the rich and famous, and look with disdain upon the uneducated and poor, but we, as hearers and doers of the Word, must be guided according to that Word. That Word tells us that we who possess faith in Christ must not show partiality with respect of persons. True faith reveals itself in how we love our neighbor. Pray for grace to practice that faith today. Sing Psalter 62:1, 2.

### December 20 Read John 7:21-24

**James 2:2-4** Yesterday we spoke about the sin of respect of persons. In our passage today, James gives us an example of this practice. Two persons, both members of the same church, are mentioned. One is presented as obviously rich who flaunts his expensive apparel, but is not rich towards God. The other is a poor man whose attire speaks of worldly poverty, but he is a sincere child of God. The former receives and welcomes much attention. The latter stands alone and neglected. You wouldn’t act like that to these persons, would you? What effort did you make last Sunday after church to speak kindly to a fellow member who may have stood alone and in your opinion was a bit “different?” In school yesterday, did you try to make a lonely and unpopular classmate happy? Or did you stick with your own little circle of friends to the exclusion of others? A living faith reveals itself in many ways. Being no respecter of persons is an aspect of that faith. Sing Psalter 113:1, 4.

### December 21 Read I Corinthians 1:26-29

**James 2:5** In this verse James addresses us as his beloved brethren and does so in the form of a question. This question has the obvious answer that God honors the poor. Not simply because they are poor as such, but because God is pleased to save all classes of people in His sovereign election. But history repeatedly reveals that not the men of renown in the world are heirs of the kingdom, but rather the poor and insignificant. Look at the history of the church from Abel to the present. Most were poor, persecuted, and despised, but they are the ones who possess true riches. Our text speaks of the first of these riches and that is *faith*. Faith wrought alone by God, whereby we are ingrafted into Christ and made heirs of His kingdom. Are you poor in material possessions but have faith in your heart? Then you have everything! Are you rich in worldly goods and possess that living faith as well? Be good stewards before God and set your affections on the things above. Sing Psalter 186:1, 2.

### December 22 Read Jeremiah 9:23-24

**James 2:6-7** We saw yesterday that God has chosen the poor of this world but who are rich in faith to be the heirs of His kingdom. Now the author takes us to task for those who honor the rich for his riches and disdain the poor because of his poverty. He goes on to say it is usually the rich who oppress you and drag you into court. All they care about is their riches and will go to any means to gain more and more. They scorn the law of God and slander the name of Christ to Whom we belong and by Whose name we are called. We must note here that the text does not speak of rich Christians, but the wicked rich whether they are nominal church members or not. So what does this all mean to you and me? Don’t be guilty of wicked partiality. Don’t become judges with evil thoughts and don’t give an occasion for someone to blaspheme the holy name of God which we love and hold in reverence. Sing Psalter 99:1, 2.

### December 23 Read Galatians 5:13-16

**James 2:8-11** We saw how easily we can show partiality with respect to persons. Now our attention is directed to the principle of the royal law, particularly as it pertains to the second table “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” How do we love our neighbor? We love him by reflecting to him the love that God places in our hearts. We do this in word, deed, and reproof if necessary. Who is our neighbor? First and foremost it is our own family. It is our fellow saints. It is any person whom God places in our path. But we are sinful, aren’t we? Without realizing it, we don’t apply this principle of love as we should. Then we break a commandment of God. And if we break one commandment we are guilty of all. Pray earnestly that we may love our neighbor as ourselves and enjoy the blessed approval of the royal law. Sing Psalter 305:1, 3.

## December 24 Read Matthew 1:18-25

We digress from our study of the epistle of James in recognition of the celebration of the birth of Christ on the morrow. How do you view this blessed event? We know how the world views it—with tinsel and trees, with frenzied shopping and parties, with Santa Clauses and crass commercialism; and to varying degrees the church goes along with it. What has all this really to do with the birth of our Savior? What a blessing to gather in God's house today. What a blessing to set ourselves apart to rest a while under the preaching of the Gospel. There we find rest for our souls. There we experience the peace which passeth all understanding, all of this made possible because of the birth, death and resurrection of the Babe in Bethlehem's manger. May you truly experience this blessedness today with God's people. Sing Psalter 243:1, 5.

## December 25 Read Luke 2:1-14

Today is Christmas! It is the day in which we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ our Savior. We ask again, how do you celebrate Christmas? Not as the world, we hope. The world really hates Christ. They want nothing to do with a Christ Whose kingdom is not of this world, Who died only for His elect church, Who hates the wicked and Who will return one day as a righteous judge. How would He have us celebrate His birth? By going to Him in prayer; to meet with His people in His house of worship; to hear what He has to say to us and to sing praises to Him. He calls us to live for Him, love Him, and make all our celebration subservient to it. He calls us to believe what He says of Himself. He calls us to bow in reverence before Him in loving adoration. Are you listening to His call? Keep Christ in Christmas and keep Him there all day. Sing Psalter 399:1, 4.

## December 26 Read II Corinthians 5:8-10

**James 2:12-13** Bearing in mind the previous verses of this chapter in which we were instructed to show no wicked partiality but fulfill the royal law to love our neighbor, James now tells us the consequences of never showing kindness and concern for others. That is, that they themselves will receive no mercy in the day of judgment. What a terrible indictment! But what a powerful incentive for those who have the love of God in their hearts and show that love for others. There are many who believe that their so called good works will merit them favor with God, but God's Word tells us that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Is. 64:6). In contrast, we must speak and act as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. That means that God will see us only as we are in Christ, and will judge us only on the basis of His redemptive death. People of God, judge impartially and show Godly kindness to your neighbor only because He has showed you His mercy in Christ. Sing Psalter 94:1, 6.

## December 21 Read Ephessians 2:8-10

**James 2:14-17** Have you ever asked yourself the question, do I possess faith? You may answer, of course I possess faith; I read my Bible, say my prayers, go to church and lead a decent life. But have you really searched your soul to make sure that your faith is a living faith rather than a historic or dead faith? The important point that James makes in these verses are the words "though a man may say that he hath faith." This really points to a dead faith that shows no fruit in his life, and the question naturally follows, "Can faith save him?" Does James teach that faith does not save and that salvation is by works? Certainly not, but he shows the difference of a living faith from a dead faith, that is, a faith professed with the lips but not in the heart, and which shows no evidence in works. And so the important question that you and I must answer is, does my faith unite me in a living bond with Christ and show itself as a working and active faith? Sing Psalter 7:1, 2.

## December 28 Read Matthew 11:1-6

**James 2:18** It appears in this verse that a dialogue takes place. A voice perhaps from someone in the church turns to the professed believer and says "Thou hast faith," even though this faith hasn't shown evidence of good works. Then to James he exclaims "Thou hast works," meaning that his faith manifested itself in good works. So both of you claim you are saved by faith. James, in reply, says to the man who only has faith, "show me thy faith without thy works and I will show thee my faith by my works." The professed believer is an example of what we might term historic faith. He knows what Scripture teaches and is thoroughly acquainted with all its doctrines, miracles, etc., but doubts its infallibility. It is a dead, impotent faith. Over against that, James testifies that his faith produces the fruits of the Spirit for all to see. You've heard the adage "actions speak louder than words." Show your faith, people of God, by actions which prove your faith and thereby glorify your Creator. Sing Psalter 230:4, 5.

## December 29 Read Romans 5:1-5

**James 2:19-20** What a terrible thing to have one's faith compared to that of a devil. A devil, as you know, is one who hates God, who scoffs at His law and despises His people. But that is exactly what James is doing in today's passage. He speaks to the person who only outwardly confesses his faith and says "Thou believest that there is one God." Surely a basic and fundamental truth, but he adds that the devils also believe this and it causes them to tremble. He calls this person a vain man whose faith is dead. How about your faith, dear reader? Does it show to yourself and others that it is a living faith? How can you tell? By a sorrow for sins, by a sincere prayer life, by a desire for God's Word, by works of mercy. When you see evidences of these fruits of the Spirit in your heart, humbly thank God, "being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Phil. 1:6 Sing Psalter 109:1, 3.

## December 30 Read Hebrews 11:17-19

**James 2:21-24** We have seen that faith which does not result in good deeds is not real faith. Now James proceeds to prove this by giving us the example of Abraham, who was commanded by God to offer up his son Isaac upon the altar. What a test of faith! Isaac, the promised seed, who was born even though Abraham's wife was too old to bear; Isaac, in whose covenant line the Messiah was to be born in Whom was Abraham's and the entire church's salvation. Yet Abraham implicitly and actively obeyed. Another version of vs. 22 reads "you see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by works." Was Abraham justified by the works of the law? No, but by the activity of a saving and living faith, shown by complete obedience. We may never have our faith put to the test in the measure that was demanded of Abraham, but we must constantly pray that God will strengthen and increase our faith, confessing that it is not of us, but all of Him. Sing Psalter 210:1, 5.

## December 31 Read Joshua 2:1-11

**James 2:25-26** In this passage we have a very different example of a person who possessed active saving faith from the example of Abraham in the preceding verse. This person is Rahab. What a contrast between these two, yet James uses the word "Likewise" to show that both were declared righteous. Rahab was a Gentile prostitute, leading a debasing life in a wicked city, yet God in His mercy so worked in her heart that her faith showed itself in receiving and protecting the spies. She did this in peril of her own life, and made a beautiful confession of her faith in God to the spies. Two completely different characters and origins, yet both saved the same way by faith that displayed itself in acts of righteousness. Examine yourselves as you sit under the preaching of the Word today. What is your reaction? Conviction of sin and a godly resolve to fight against and forsake it? Then be assured that the Spirit is working a living faith in your heart. Sing Psalter 390:3.

**DECEMBER 2000**

# Psalter 106— Chastened Submission

by Beth DeVries

**W**e return this month to Psalm 39 and look at verses 7-13. We remember how last month we looked at the frailty of life and the importance of not focusing on earthly things. We proceed then to learning submission to the will of God. The Psalm returns to a discussion of prayer to God. There is also emphasis on the idea that we are strangers in this earth. The Psalm then closes with a prayer for strength from God.

We turn to Psalter 106 this month and see that it picks up where we left off in Psalm 39. “What wait I for but Thee?” This is the opening line of this Psalter versification. That stops us short and makes us consider that idea. What other hope do we have in this life but God? He is our strength and He alone knows what is best for us. We are frequently called to wait on the Lord, accepting His will for us. We read of this in Hosea 12:6, “Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.” Isaiah 40:31 also speaks of waiting, along with the benefits received by waiting on God. It reads as follows, “But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they

shall walk, and not faint.” These things are to be remembered when we get anxious about this earthly life. We turn back to the Psalter versification and see that what follows trust is hoping in God. It is nearly impossible to have this hope without waiting on the Lord. May we find patience and contentment as we wait on the Lord and trust in Him.

The second stanza of this versification speaks of David keeping his mouth silent. We reflect back to last month’s meditation about keeping silent. We will remember that David attempted to be silent and not complain to God in his distresses. In this verse David gives the reason for silence that it was the Lord’s will. He recognizes that God put this affliction on him and therefore, rather than speak out against God,

he must look within himself for a reason for this affliction. David goes on to request sincerely from God relief from the stroke of affliction placed on him. It appears that David is so consumed with the stroke of God that he can focus on nothing else. There are times in our own lives when God so afflicts us that we cannot see our way out of the affliction. At times like this we follow David’s example and plead with God for relief. In this pleading

**106 Chastened Submission**  
 PSALM 39 S. M.      DULCE DOMUM      Robert S. Ambrose

1. What wait I for but Thee? My hope is in Thy Name;  
 2. I suf-fered si-lent-ly, Be-cause Thy will is best;  
 3. When sin Thou dost re-pay And chas-ten and re-strain,  
 4. O Lord, re-gard my fears, And an-swer my re-quest;  
 5. I am a stran-ger here, De-pend-ent on Thy grace,  
 6. O spare me and re-store My fail-ing strength, I pray;

From all my sins de-liv-er me, Nor put my soul to shame.  
 Re-move Thy heav-y stroke from me, For I am sore dis-tressed.  
 Man's beau-ty quick-ly fades a-way; Yea, hu-man life is vain.  
 Turn not in si-lence from my tears, But give the mourn-er rest.  
 A pil-grim, as my fa-thers were, With no a-bid-ing place.  
 Ere I go hence and be no more, The hand of judg-ment stay.

[Stanzas 7-12]

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we acknowledge that the suffering we are under is from God and for our good, according to His will. God hears these prayers and answers us when we need Him most.

We turn in stanza three to see that God repays sin with chastisement. That chastisement may well be the affliction of which we were just speaking. David here acknowledges that the reason for his affliction is likely unrepentant sin. The Psalm speaks of man's beauty quickly fading away when sin overcomes us. This would not be the outer beauty but rather the beauty of our inner new man. Our new man gives us a love for God but when we become overwhelmed with sin we begin to kill that new man and our beauty fades away. The Psalm itself in verse 11 speaks of this as being consumed like a moth. This would show that except for God's grace we would be eaten up within. What a comfort that God will not allow the moth to completely destroy His people but that He will redeem them.

The next thought of the Psalmist is that God will hear his cry. David has been reduced to tears and utter distress. David asks God earnestly to hear his pleadings. We know that when we bring the same requests to God, He hears us. God is ever faithful to his people. As we have seen earlier in this reflection, God sometimes allows us to sink into utter depths before He brings us back up. This is because God knows that this is what is best for us and makes us reflect on our inner selves.

Stanza five speaks about our being a stranger in this earth. God uses this figure repeatedly in the Bible. We think about God bringing Abraham out of the land of Ur of the Chaldees. Abraham was made to wander his entire life never really having a home. The people of God did not have their own land until after the return from Egypt when God gave them the land of Canaan. It was during these times of wandering that God really demonstrated to His people that He would care for them wherever they were. Even when the people murmured against God, He was faithful to them. God has given us a place on this earth but we remember from last month that we are not to be attached to this earth and our possessions. We are just passing through this earth on our way to a better land, Heaven. We look forward to that day when we are in our heavenly, eternal home.

David closes this psalm by asking God to spare him and restore him to strength. This reminds us of the passage we looked at earlier from Isaiah 40:31. There we learned that if we trust in God, He will spare us and bless us. I think that is the lesson we can most learn from this Psalm: Trust in the Lord, knowing that His will is best, and God will then bless us. ❖

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*Beth is a member of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Standale, Michigan.*

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## Pastor Profiles

# Reverend George Lanting

edited by Kris Moelker

Lammert and Minke (Boersma) Lanting were blessed with the birth of Rev. George Lanting at their home in Lansing, Illinois on July 28, 1922. Rev. Lanting attended Munster Christian School in Munster, Indiana. He spent his high school years at the regional Thornton Fractional Township High School.

Rev. Lanting grew up during the Great Depression so his hobbies were inexpensive activities. He read, played sandlot softball and made model airplanes. For seven years he had a paper route.

When Rev. Lanting was nine years old, his family joined South Holland Protestant Reformed Church. In



Rev. Lanting still enjoys reading as one of his hobbies. He also enjoys tinkering around his yard and flowers and doing the necessary odds and ends required for the upkeep of his home. He and his wife still enjoy camping out in their trailer each summer. Because he grew up during the Great Depression, Rev. Lanting did not experience much peer pressure as a teenager. "Most teens accepted the equality that existed among them. There is little or no comparison to be made between then and now." ❖

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

his early teens, the Lord gave him a deep appreciation and love for the Reformed faith. At this time he thought about the possibility of entering the ministry. When it became evident through the spoken Word and various articles in the periodicals that there was a need for ministers, Rev. Lanting felt the call of the Lord and decided to enter the seminary. Many of his friends and family approved and encouraged him in his pursuit of the ministry but there were some who seemed to be a bit skeptical. He did not attend college but he acquired two years of college credits before entering the seminary. On May 15, 1945, Rev. Lanting married Wilmina Rutgers. The Lord gave them seven sons and three daughters. They also have thirty-two grandchildren.

The schism of 1953, overshadowed Rev. Lanting's years in seminary. "For a time, two students from the Liberated Churches in the Netherlands and one from our churches, who had attended Kampen University, caused dissension between them and the professors as well as among the student body."

Rev. Lanting was ordained in 1953, and began his labors in Grand Haven, Michigan. In 1959, the Lord called him to labor in Holland, Michigan. He was called to Edgerton, Minnesota in 1966. He labored there until the Lord called him to Loveland, Colorado in 1974. His last charge was in Pella, Iowa where he labored from 1981, until he retired in 1986, and became a minister emeritus.



*Rev. Breen. This picture was inadvertently omitted from the biography of Rev. Breen in the November issue of Beacon Lights.*

# Avoid It, Pass Not By It, Turn From It, And Pass Away (2)

by Aaron J. Cleveland

Last time we ended with a description of the “path of the wicked” and why we must not enter that path. Now we intend to examine the “path of the just” and why the child of God walks this path.

This text (Proverbs 4:14-19), as well as many other passages, describes for us the “path of the just.” In verse 19 of this text, we read that the “path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” This is in sharp contrast to the “way of the wicked” which is “as darkness” (vs. 20). In Psalm 1:6 we read, “For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous.” This is in contrast to the “way of the ungodly” which shall perish. Proverbs 12:28 tells us that “in the way of righteousness is life.” In this pathway, says the verse, “there is no death.”

What does it mean that the path of the just is as the shining light? In order to understand what this means we must understand the righteousness of those who walk that path and the source of their righteousness. In the Bible, righteousness is associated with light. We read in Isaiah 62:1, “For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.” Who is the source of all righteousness and light? The answer is Christ. In the latter half of Article 22 (Of Faith in Jesus Christ) of the Belgic Confession, we read that faith “is only an instrument with which we embrace Christ our Righteousness. But Jesus Christ, imputing to us all his merits, and so many holy works which he has done for us, and in our stead, is our Righteousness.” Christ, our Righteousness, is the source of all light upon the path that we walk. He is that Light in the sense that He illuminates our hearts and minds. He illuminates our hearts and minds by His Word and Spirit. We read in Psalm 119:105, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” Christ is that Word, written upon our hearts to guide our footsteps and to illuminate our path.

But there is also a sense in which we ourselves brightly shine as we walk that pathway. Not only is that pathway itself illuminated, but those who walk that path shine as well. Once again, we must find the origins of this shining light. The source of this brightness is not man himself who walks this path. We know this to be impossible, because natural man is found stumbling upon the path of darkness: and of that man it is written that he delights in his own death. He cannot emit any light. Once again, the source of this shining light is Christ. All those in Christ shine as the light as they perform good works. Matthew 5:16 makes this connection, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

We read in the text (vs. 18), that this light shines “more and more unto the perfect day.” One can picture the sun after it first rises in the morning, and appears on the horizon as a soft orange sphere through the misty haze. But the presence of the sun is much more apparent after God moves it along its circuit into the sky above and all of the misty haze of the morning has been burned away. One cannot even look into the sun. This is how we must understand the light that shines “more and more.” This light is not to be compared to the light of a fire which burns brightly for a short time and then soon grows dim. Rather, it is a light which grows in intensity as time goes on. The “perfect day” refers to that final day when all of the elect are finally gathered into the heavenly kingdom. Of this we read in Matthew 13:43, which reads in part: “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” We shine now as lights in the midst of this world of sin and darkness, but very dimly in comparison to the brightness with which we will shine in the kingdom of our Father.

One cannot read this passage and not be struck by the sharp distinctions that are drawn between these two opposing ways. The doctrine of the antithesis is plain to see. One cannot and does not walk both paths. These are not two paths which run parallel to each other, so that a person can occasionally switch between the two and still

get to the same destination. It is clear, that in a spiritual sense, there are two distinct paths with two distinctly different groups of people walking them going in the opposite direction.

Further, it must be emphasized that the walking of the path of the just is a spiritual exercise. The child of God painfully feels the struggle of the antithesis within himself. Sometimes, probably most of the time, the battle of the child of God is not so much with the devil and the world as it is with his own flesh. The old man of sin is constantly giving occasion to leave that good path and to go the way of darkness. We are constantly battling against covetous thoughts, murderous inclinations against the brother, and all of the world's gods appeal to our old man. When we go out into the world, the devil puts various lies and temptations before us and dresses them up with the clothing of innocence. He puts money before us if we only sacrifice one principle. He will give us the praise of men if we will only soften some of our distinct beliefs. All the worldly pleasures we could want are ours, if only we are willing to go slightly off of that good path. The devil uses the world to put these temptations before us, and they appeal to our old man. This is the battle that we fight every day.

We must see the way of the just for what it is in comparison to the way of the wicked. It is light verses darkness. It is life verses death. It is righteousness verses wickedness. Yes, the path of the just is walked by some of the most weak and miserable people imaginable. From an earthly point of view, they seem to be quite foolish and ignorant concerning the way life ought to be lived here below. They are mocked and ridiculed. But, a certain hope burns within them. They walk on despite the assaults of the world. Their hope is not the perishing hope of those who stumble in darkness. They shine brighter and brighter in anticipation of that perfect day. They long for that day when the struggle with sin will be over, the assaults of the three-fold enemy will cease, and they will walk in the full enjoyment of the victory. We pray in the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer that God will preserve us in the walking of that good path when we pray, "and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." The Catechism explains this petition in the following manner:

that is, since we are so weak in ourselves, that we cannot stand a moment; and besides this, since our mortal enemies, the devil, the world, and our own flesh, cease not to assault us, do thou therefore preserve and strengthen us by the power of thy Holy

Spirit, that we may not be overcome in this spiritual warfare, but constantly and strenuously may resist our foes, till at last we obtain a complete victory.

We sing in the fifth verse of Psalter # 428:

O teach me, Lord, the way that I should go;  
Then shall Thy servant walk therein forever.  
Give understanding all Thy paths to know;  
Then shall I keep Thy law with zealous fervor.  
Instruct me in Thy perfect will, and, lo,  
I shall observe it with my whole endeavor. ❖

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

Gem of the Month

## Thankfulness to God

by Cheri Rutgers

*Many things in abundance, we must be thankful for  
His beauty in creation, we hear the oceans roar  
Each flower in its splendor, each bird up in the tree  
Show our Maker's majesty, How thankful we must be.*

*The rain in the springtime allows the crops to grow  
The sun up in the sky, and the wintry winds that blow  
Many stars at night and the moon so we can see  
Show our Maker's majesty, How thankful we must be.*

*Each day our tables are filled with more than daily bread  
All our needs are met before we go to bed  
Our clothes and our shelter and the way He cares for me  
Show our Maker's majesty, how thankful we must be.*

*The heavens declare Thy majesty, the earth Thy might  
displays  
All creation sings Thy praise in many different ways  
So teach us Lord to pray, Thy will alone be done  
That we may thank and worship Thee, The Holy One.*

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

# The Office of Elder

by Rev. Ronald Hanko

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

Scripture uses two different words for elder. One word, translated “elder” (Acts 14:23, 15:2, 4, 6, etc., I Tim. 5:1, 17, 19, Tit. 1:5, Jas. 5:14, I Pet. 5:1) is the Greek word “presbyter,” and means “older person.” The other word, translated “bishop” or “overseer” (Phil. 1:1, I Tim. 3:1, 2, Tit. 1:7, Acts 20:28) refers to a person who has authority and rule over others.

That these two words refer to the same office is clear from Scripture. In Acts 20:28, Paul calls the *elders* (vs. 17) of the Church of Ephesus “overseers” or “bishops.” In Titus 1:5-7, Paul also uses both words to apply to the same persons. This is contrary to the teaching of Roman Catholicism and Episcopalianism (Prelacy) which teach that the office of bishop is a separate and higher office.

Nevertheless, when speaking of the office of elder, a distinction is often made between *ruling* elders (I Tim. 3:4-5, 5:17) and *teaching* elders (I Tim. 5:17, I Pet. 5:1). As these passages show, however, there is not an absolute distinction between these offices. I Timothy 3 makes it clear that so-called ruling elders also must be able to teach (vs. 2) and I Timothy 5:17 shows us that so-called teaching elders also rule.

The difference, therefore, is more a difference of function than anything else. *Teaching* elders labour *especially*, though not exclusively, in Word and doctrine in contrast to the other elders. Ephesians 4:11 also refers, then, to those elders as pastors and teachers.

It is the office of ruling elder that we are concerned with here, and we must make several points. These points

are very important if the office of elder is to be a blessing and not a curse in God’s church.

First, there must be a plurality of elders. Scripture never speaks of one elder ruling alone, whether he is a minister or otherwise. Rule by one is tyranny and does not harmonize with the Word of God in Proverbs 11:14, 15:22 and 24:6.

Second, the elders are servants of God’s people (Matt. 23:11, I Cor. 9:19, II Cor. 4:5). This is especially clear from Colossians 4:17 where Paul tells the church to admonish its minister to take heed to and fulfill his ministry. An understanding of this, too, is necessary to avoid tyranny and lording in the church.

Third, that the elders rule, means that they rule all aspects of church’s life including the preaching and conduct of the other officers and of the ministers (Acts 20:28-31—it is the duty of all the elders to keep from the church hirelings and wolves). *No one* is a law unto himself in the church.

Fourth, the ruling authority that elders have in the church is given them by Christ (Acts 20:28), belongs to Christ (Matt. 28:18), and must be exercised in obedience to him (I Pet. 5:4). In practice that means that their authority must be that of the Word of God in Scripture. They must rule with it, bring it, admonish by it, and teach it alone—not their own notions.

Such elders will be a blessing in Christ’s church. ❖

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

# "LITTLE LIGHTS"

## Tulip (5)

*... let it shine!*

by Connie Meyer

The pleasant clink of ice cubes in glasses of lemonade added to the refreshing break that Krystal and her family enjoyed together. Much work around the house and yard had been done, but much work was still left to do.

"Another letter?" Father asked.

"Yes," said Mother, "we're up to the *I* in TULIP—irresistible grace."

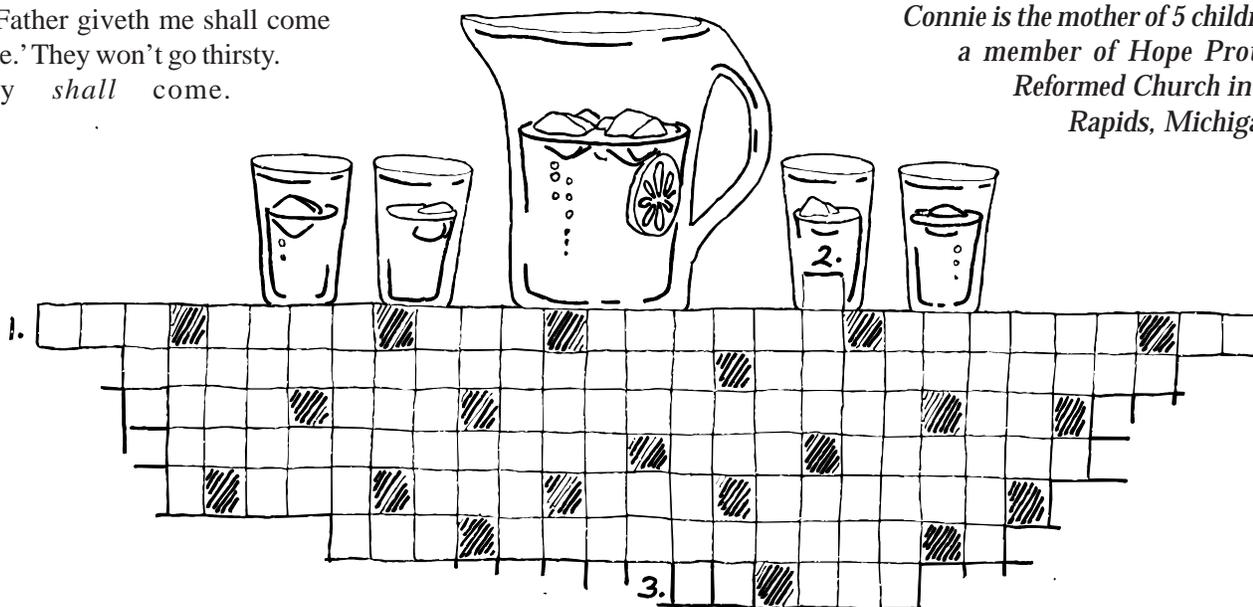
"Hm," he took another sip, "this lemonade sure quenches the thirst, doesn't it?"

"Yea," Jamie fervently agreed. He was almost finished with his glass and was eyeing some more.

Father continued, "Jesus said, 'he that believeth on me shall never thirst.' And, 'all that the Father giveth me shall come to me.' They won't go thirsty. They *shall* come."

"There are no offers of salvation to be accepted or rejected," added Father. "God doesn't offer life to a dead man. That would be a worthless offer, wouldn't it? No, He just plain gives it. That's grace—real grace." *(to be continued)* ♦

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



Remember that by nature we are totally depraved and dead in sin? Well, a dead man can't do anything. He can't drink or eat, and he can't come or go. But God makes us spiritually alive so that we *will* come to Him and we *will* drink. Can a little baby, newly born and thirsty for milk, resist going to his mother? When God makes us to be born spiritually, we can't resist going to our Heavenly Father for spiritual food, either. We're thirsty for His Word and Spirit, His grace. It's irresistible."

Krystal nodded. It was becoming more clear.

### Puzzle

Jesus teaches us that He is the Bread of Life in John 6. Look up John 6 and answer these questions.

- 1 (across): In verse 37, who "shall come to me" (to Jesus)?
- 2 (down): In verse 44, what does the Father do in order for a man to come to Jesus?
- 3 (across): In verse 65, how many men can come to Jesus by themselves?

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# Church News

### BAPTISMS

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

*Mark 16:16*

**The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:**

Jordan Matthew, son of Mr. & Mrs. Bert Mulder—  
Alberta, Canada  
Samantha Paige, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mike  
Velthouse—Byron Center, MI  
Joshua Chase, son of Mr. & Mrs. Todd Overbeek—First,  
MI  
Savannah Mae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Todd Feenstra—  
Georgetown, MI  
Jordan David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jordan Engelsma—  
Georgetown, MI  
Timothy Daniel II, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Bartelds—  
Holland, MI  
Caleb Matthew, son of Mr. & Mrs. Irwin Tolsma—  
Lacombe, Canada  
Bethanne Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Howerzyl—  
Redlands, CA  
Steven Jay, son of Rev. & Mrs. Allen Brummel—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:**

Nathan Yonker—Holland, MI  
Mark Elzinga—Hope, MI  
Sara Kamps—Hope, MI  
Amanda Dykstra—Hudsonville, MI  
Keith Feenstra—Hudsonville, MI  
Heidi VanOverloop—Hudsonville, MI  
Shelby Holleman—South Holland, IL  
Brianna Looyenga—South Holland, IL  
Valerie Wories—South Holland, IL  
Craig Wories—South Holland, IL  
Chuck Cammenga—Southwest, MI

### MARRIAGES

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

*Matthew 19:5*

**United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:**

Mr. Tim Draft and Miss Melanie VanderWaal—  
Georgetown, MI  
Mr. Thomas Mazeikis and Miss Dawn Wassink—  
Holland, MI  
Mr. Steven Kleyn and Miss Sarah DeJong—South  
Holland, IL  
Mr. Robert Holleman and Miss Shelby Scanlan—South  
Holland, IL  
Mr. Ryan Regnerus and Miss Stephanie Van Der  
Noord—South Holland, IL