
Beacon Lights

*January
1998*

*Volume LVII
Number 1*



Those Old-Fashioned Parents

by John Huizenga



There was a young man who feared the Lord, living in covenant fellowship with his God. He had learned to wait patiently upon the Lord in all things. He knew the greatness of his salvation and sought to live in thankful obedience. His desire was to serve God with his life in the church until it pleased the Lord to take him to glory. He struggled with sin daily, but at the end of the week he found strength in the House of God. When he looked at the anxious and distressed faces of those who looked to the world for satisfaction, he gave thanks to God for his salvation and his place in the church.

In the course of time, God brought a young lady to him and they were happily married. He looked diligently to God's Word for instruction concerning his new role as husband. He worked at a marriage relationship that would reflect the love and fellowship between God and His church.

The Lord also gave them a baby boy. What joy he brought to their home! The man and his wife desired above all to see their son enjoy the same peace and happiness which they enjoyed as they lived in the fear of the Lord. Encouraged by God's covenant promise, they trained him up in the fear of the Lord. They told him the Bible stories of God's covenant faithfulness. They sang the songs of Zion. They taught him to pray. They took him to church. They sent him to catechism. They sent him to a Christian school. They taught him how to read and study God's Word. Through earthly poverty and prosperity they continued to fill their home with the peace and joy which the Lord had given to them for the boy to see and know. They warned the boy of the sorrow and destruction sure to come if he departed from the ways of God.

The boy listened intently to all the wonderful works of God. He sang with vigor the first song he learned in Kindergarten "All that I am I owe to Thee, Thy wisdom, Lord, hath fashioned me; I give my maker thankful praise, Whose wondrous works my soul amaze." And the boy and his parents were happy and content in the Lord.

One day when the boy grew older he went out into the world with his friends. When he came back he was no longer happy. He said to his mom and dad, "My friends do exciting things. They watch movies, they dance, and they have fun. I want to have fun with them. There are so many things in the world to see and do. May I borrow the car?" His parents were very sad for they knew that this was not the path of godliness and joy. They reminded him of God's Word, the path of obedience to Him that he must follow, the peace within their home, and the warning of sorrow that awaits those who stray.

But the boy wanted to enjoy the things of the world. He argued that things were now different from the days when they were young. They were old fashioned. He needed to learn the ways of this world and they just did not understand his needs. At last after strict instructions they gave him the keys. The boy started the car, and he was happy.

The boy was gone from home more now. His parents were sad. They prayed for their boy, and waited each night for him to come home. When he did come home, they were glad that he was safely in his warm

bed. They hoped he read the Bible which they had laid there on the covers for him to read. They made sure he was in church on the Lord's Day that he might taste of the living water which nourished their souls. In covenant hope they prayed that God would restore him to the fold.

But the boy was not happy in the world. He wanted more. He wanted more money to buy the things that he saw advertised in the magazines and stores. He wanted more freedom. He wanted his own car that would take him to the places he wanted to go. Then, he thought, he would be happy.

His parents reminded him that true freedom was found only in obedience to God and a life of covenant friendship with Him. He heard it from his parents. He heard it from the pulpit. He heard it in school. He heard it in catechism, but he did not hear. He said, "Yes, I know all that, but I want to have fun, I want a job and a car so I can buy the things I want."

His parents were very sad. "Why can't he see?" they wondered. "It is boring at home," he said, "I just want to have some fun now. I will settle down and get serious when I get a little older." "Your fun is like a vapor," his parents replied, "the fun you seek is a slippery slide to hell. Each moment of sinful fun today will only reap sorrow for tomorrow. Is there no godly fun to be had with your fellow young people in the church? You must walk in the fear of Jehovah." They waited patiently. They helped him find a job close to home. They helped him buy his first car. They continued to pray and made sure he went to church. He went to work in his new car, and he was happy.

Now his parents saw him even less. They worried when he came home late. They prayed to God that He would protect their son and open his eyes to see the foolishness of seeking happiness in the things of this world. They prayed to God that He would remember His covenant promises.

One day the boy drove on the yard with loud music booming in his car. He sat at the table with his mom and dad. His coat smelled of cigarette smoke. He looked tired and he was sad. The little fun he had in the world was spent and he had nothing left. "Come sit and talk with us, son, you look tired and sad. Let us sing some songs and be happy. Let us enjoy fellowship together in our Lord. You will find happiness here at home."

"No, Mom; no, Dad, you just don't understand" said the boy. "Today is different, life is not so easy, not black and white like you think. The songs you sing are too old, the preaching is too deep, and the church people are stuffy. The religion for me needs to have more excitement. There are so many other good people in churches that are much more exciting than ours."

Just then he heard the soft wavering voice of his mother singing "Ere into being I was bro't, Thy eye did see, and in Thy tho't My life in all its perfect plan Was ordered ere my days began." The tune brought back memories of happy contentment. The words which he never fully understood now seemed to answer all his questions. He went to his room with the words of the last verse in his head "Search me, O God, my heart discern, Try me, my inmost tho't to learn; And lead me, if in sin I stray, To choose the everlasting way."

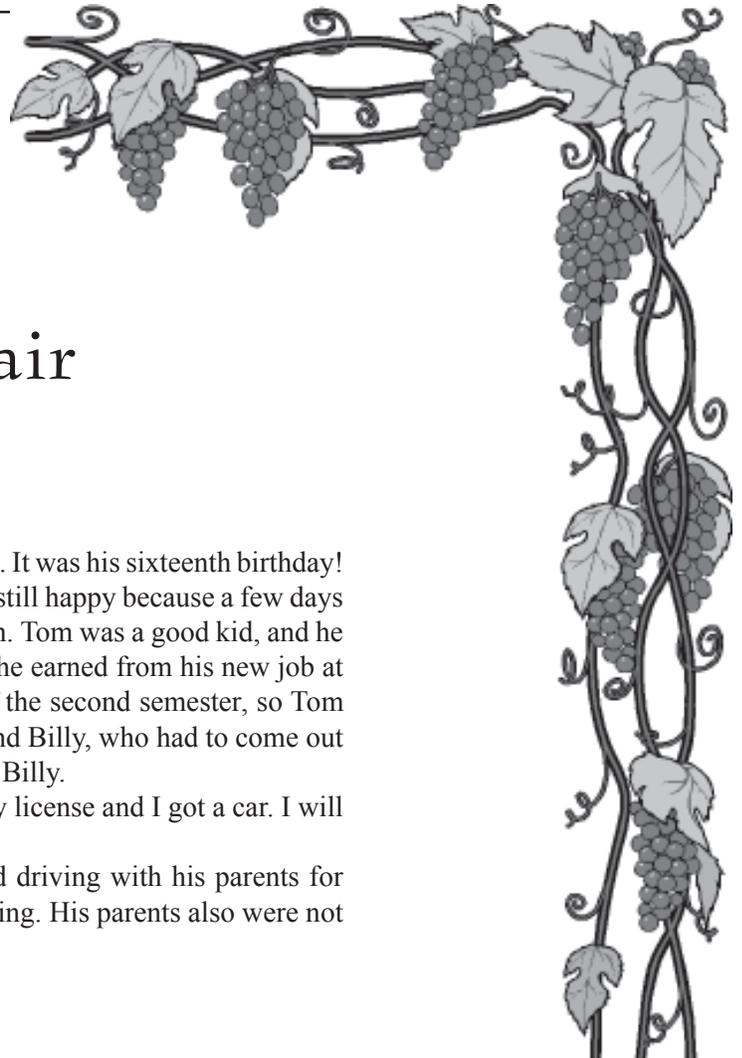
As the days went by, the preaching, his reading of Scripture, and prayers began to unlock the doors of the treasure boxes of knowledge in his heart which had been filled in his younger years but ignored heretofore. How thankful now, he was, for godly parents who feared the Lord; for a faithful church that preached God's word. Now the things of this world were of minor importance as he searched for his place of service in the church. He wished he had not wasted those years in the world. The reckless behavior had weakened his body, the temple of the Lord, and he could never quite shake the guilt. Some of his friends who grew up in the church, still wallowed in the foolish ways of the world. How glad he was that he was a child of God, that the Lord had found him wandering, and had brought him back to the fold of peace. His parents were right. God's Word is true. This was true happiness.

The Lord blessed him further with a godly wife and a joyful marriage. They prayed for covenant children and he gave to them a baby boy. What joy he brought to their home!

The man and his wife desired above all to see their son enjoy the same peace and happiness which they enjoyed as they lived in the fear of the Lord. They wondered how to preserve him from the foolish paths that they had taken in their younger days. "Let us trust in the Lord and obey Him," said they. "May the fear of the Lord be always in our home, for God is faithful in His covenant promises." So they trained him up in the fear of the Lord. They told him the Bible stories of God's covenant faithfulness. They sang the songs of Zion. They taught him to pray. They took him to church. They sent him to catechism. They sent him to a Christian school. They taught him how to read and study God's Word. Through earthly poverty and prosperity they continued to fill their home with the peace and joy which the Lord had given to them for the boy to see and know. They warned the boy of the sorrow and destruction sure to come if he departed from the ways of God.

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Fruitful Branches



It's Just Not Fair

by Kevin Gritters

Tom Wilson was the most excited he had ever been. It was his sixteenth birthday! Even though his family was quite poor, Tom was still happy because a few days ago he and his dad had bought a cheap car for him. Tom was a good kid, and he had every intention of paying his dad back with the money he earned from his new job at the paint shop. His birthday was the day before the start of the second semester, so Tom was relieved that he didn't have to catch a ride with his friend Billy, who had to come out of his way everyday to pick Tom up. That night Tom called Billy.

"Billy, I don't need rides any more because I just got my license and I got a car. I will pay you back tomorrow for what I already owed you."

"OK, see ya' tomorrow," said Billy. Tom had practiced driving with his parents for almost a year so he was quite comfortable with himself driving. His parents also were not worried.

The following morning, Tom ate a quick breakfast, and after he was on the road for a few minutes by himself for the first time, the butterflies in his stomach disappeared. When he got to school, he parked his car in his parking space, locked the doors, and walked up to a group of guys who were standing on the sidewalk in front of school.

“What kind of car is that?” asked Pete sarcastically. Tom bit his tongue in anguish.

“Where did you buy that, the junk yard?” asked another boy.

Tears welled up in Tom’s eyes, and he quickly turned around, not wanting to be called a baby by his “friends.” The bell rang, to Tom’s relief, and he hurried inside as fast as he could. Grabbing his books, he hurried to his first hour class and sat down, putting his forehead in his hands. Tom felt horrible all that day. When his day of miseries at school was over, Tom drove home, parked his car in the driveway, and went inside. Not even saying “Hi” to his mom, Tom went down stairs and slammed his door. It seems like everyone hates me just because we’re poor. How can I help it that Dad can’t hold a steady job because of his disease? No matter how hard we work, there’s never enough money. It’s just not fair! This incident brought back bad memories of third grade. Tom had just gotten new jeans from a neighbor in place of his old pair. When he got to school, everyone had mocked him about his jeans just like they had mocked him about his car today. And once he started thinking, Tom could remember all kinds of times when he had been the object of cruel mocking. He slammed his fist into his pillow.

Mrs. Wilson wondered where Tom had disappeared to so quickly. He usually had one thing on his mind to do after school and that was to raid the cupboards for something to eat. About fifteen minutes later, she went down to Tom’s room. Tom was laying on his bed crying, and his pillow was wet.

“Tom, what happened?” Mrs. Wilson asked worriedly.

“Pete and another boy were mocking me about my car,” stuttered Tom.

“It’s all right, just because some other people don’t like your car, doesn’t mean it’s bad,” reassured Mom.

“I know but it’s more than that. They don’t like my car, but they mock me. Why do I have to take all this ridicule?”

“Just remember what it says in Matthew 27:29. ‘And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it on his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocking him, saying, Hail King of the Jews.’ The soldiers hated and mocked Jesus just like some of the kids at school mocked you. And Jesus did not even say a word,” said Mom.

“Thank you Mom,” said Tom, “and tomorrow when I go to school I will just ignore them if they mock me or say anything mean. It doesn’t make things easy, but it helps knowing that Christ went through the same things.” Tom felt much better when he started on his homework that night because he still had Mom’s comforting words in his mind and heart. They were God’s comforting words. ❖

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Creation Through the Spectacles of Scripture

The Doctrine of Creation (1)

Aaron J. Cleveland

This article is the first in a short series of articles on the subject of the doctrine of creation and the lie that stands in opposition to it, evolution. This subject is very relevant today for the Reformed young person for a number of reasons. First,

the doctrine of creation is under attack today like never before. What once was only under attack at worldly universities and in liberal churches, is now under attack at so-called Christian colleges and Reformed churches. Second, because of this hatred for the truth, most, if not

all of us, will be personally confronted with this attack on the truth of creation. Whether the confrontation is in a college classroom, on the pages of a book or magazine, or in a discussion with a co-worker, we can be certain that at some point our convictions will be put to the test. Third, the denial of creation is only a symptom of a much more grave illness. The deadly sickness of which we are speaking is a denial of the doctrine of Scripture; the doctrine of the infallibility and inerrancy of God's Word as found in II Peter 1:20, 21 and II Timothy 3:16.

For these reasons the Reformed young person ought to be very interested in the truth of creation, know it, and be able to defend it. In this short series, we will first take a look at the theory of evolution, its history, and give a short explanation of the theory itself. Next we will move on to an explanation of the most dangerous form of this error, and the one with which we ought to be the most concerned, theistic evolution. Then, we will see how a belief in theistic evolution results in a denial of every truth found in Scripture and a denial of Christ and His saving work. Finally, we will put this ugly lie aside, look at the truth of creation, and see how all of the truths of Scripture stand on the truth of creation.

Right from the start, it ought to be mentioned, that the theory of evolution is a concoction by evil man to deny God. This is not a secret. The most ardent defenders of evolution readily admit this and are not ashamed of it. In the August 13, 1996 issue of *Christianity Today*, Francisco Ayala of the University of California is quoted as saying that natural selection "exclude[s] God as the explanation accounting for the obvious design of organisms." In the same issue, in an article entitled "Planet Of The Apes", Oxford biologist Richard Dawkins says that Charles Darwin "made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist." Indeed, "the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." (Psalm 53:1)

And it is with Charles Darwin that we begin to look at the history of evolution. While many others proposed various theories of evolution before Darwin, he generally receives the credit because of the book he wrote outlining the theory, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*. Born in England in 1809, young Charles earned a B.A. in theology from Cambridge in 1831. It was his intention to become a naturalist and it was customary for the naturalists of his day to have a degree in theology. At age 22, Darwin set sail on the *HMS Beagle* to chart sections of the South American coastline.

While doing this work, Darwin began working a theory in his mind while observing finches on the Galapagos Islands. By the 1840's, after many observations and the collection of many fossils, Darwin had worked out the major features of his theory of natural selection as a mechanism for evolution. At the same time, a man by the name of Alfred Russel Wallace was working on a similar theory. At the prompting of a couple of his friends, Darwin published an abstract of his theory in order to beat Wallace to the punch. Shortly thereafter, in 1859, Darwin published his book.

Much of Darwin's theory was drawn from the ideas of other men of Darwin's time including James Hutton and Charles Lyell. Hutton was responsible for the theory of gradualism, the speculation that features on earth can be explained by slow processes over time. Lyell was the originator of the theory of uniformitarianism, the supposition that geological processes are uniform throughout time. The two theories can be found in Darwin's writings.

The theory of evolution which we have today is basically the same as Darwin proposed 140 years ago. At the heart of the theory is the notion that higher life forms develop from lower life forms. Complex living organisms ascend from less complex living organisms. In fact, the evolutionist says, the diversity of life which we presently have can be traced back to one or a few very simple living organisms which spontaneously appeared on the face of the earth billions of years ago.

This ascendancy from simple to complex is the result of accumulated genetic mutations, says the evolutionist. Genetic mutations are sudden inheritable changes in a characteristic of an organism. An example of a likely evolutionary mutation would be the formation of camouflaging stripes on the body of a moth. These stripes, say the evolutionist, would enable the moth to better survive in his environment because he would not be as visible to predators as others moths. (This example depends on the assumption that stripes would be advantageous to the moth.) This moth could then pass this characteristic on to his offspring. This passing on of beneficial characteristics is Darwin's theory of natural selection. His principle termed "the survival of the fittest" can be explained by the speculation that the striped moths would be more likely to survive in their present environment than their non-striped relatives. If we use our imaginations and play this process out over billions of years, we can see how we have arrived at the great diversity we have on earth today, says the evolutionist.

In order for this theory to work, the evolutionist needs an extremely old earth. The most recent estimate is 15 billion years. However, it is important to note, that this estimate is subject to radical change. There are two things that the evolutionist likes to point out when he is arguing for an old earth. The first is the size of the universe and the distance from the earth of the stars. If these stars are many millions of light-years away and their light is reaching earth, it stands to reason that these stars must have been in existence for millions of years. Second, the evolutionist points to various structures on the face of the earth, such as canyons, which take many years to form. These canyons, they say, are the result of millions of years of erosion by the rivers which flow through them.

One problem which the evolutionist has no explanation for is the origin of the universe and all the matter and energy in it. Just where did it all come from? Did existence spring up spontaneously from nonexistence?

I can remember very well the words of an arrogant evolutionist professor when he said, “We don’t know how it got here, but once it did, we sure know what happened to it!”

From my own personal experience in a college class, I can remember very well the words of an arrogant evolutionist professor when he said, “We don’t know how it got here, but once it did, we sure know what happened to it!” The evolutionist has no answer for this, but is working tirelessly to explain how matter and energy can appear spontaneously from nothing.

It is readily apparent that the theory of evolution has no room for God. It is a deliberate attempt to deny God at every point. Man has pressed his reason and so-called “science” into a denial of the Creator.

It is with this in mind that we turn our attention to the form of this theory with which we ought to be the most concerned, theistic evolution. Theistic evolution is an attempt to synthesize evolutionary theory with a belief in God’s Word. Theistic evolution is an attempted

synthesis of a denial of God with a belief in His Word. Theistic evolution tries to reconcile God’s Word and “scientific” discovery and progress.

How does theistic evolution do this? The argument goes something like this. First, we must understand that God reveals Himself both generally, in creation, and specially, in Scripture. Both of these revelations must agree because both are from God, and God is a truthful God. If these two do not agree, our understanding of one must be wrong. Science has shown us that the earth is very old, and that higher life forms have developed from lower life forms. Because this contradicts what the Bible says, our interpretation of it must be wrong, and we must change our interpretation in order to reconcile it with what science has discovered. Thus, we have theistic evolutionary reasoning. It is important to note that one variation on the theory of theistic evolution has been labeled “progressive creationism.” We must not be deceived by this inventive term.

To conclude our discussion of evolution, let us recognize a few things about this theory. First, even though it is spoken of as fact, it is nothing more than theory, or speculation. Second, evolution has not one shred of empirical proof. In other words, it cannot be proved by observation and experimentation. That which claims to be a scientific theory cannot be verified by scientific means! Third, evolution cannot stand up to even the most shallow scrutiny. One example of this scrutiny can be found in the same issue of *Christianity Today* as referred to earlier in the article. What follows is a paragraph pulled from page 64 of the August 13, 1996 issue:

Molecular biology is likewise creating headaches for Darwinists. As Michael Behe explains in *Darwin’s Black Box*, molecular systems in the cell are irreducibly complex—which means they cannot have originated by a gradual, step-by-step process. Think of a mousetrap: You can’t start with only a wooden base and catch a few mice, then add a spring and catch a few more mice. All the parts must be assembled simultaneously or the mousetrap does not work. In the same way, the complex systems in our cells must have originated all at once in order to function at all.

With this we end our discussion of the theory itself. In the next issue, Lord willing, we will see how a belief in theistic evolution results in a denial of Biblical truths and ultimately in a denial of God’s Word altogether. ❖

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How Do We Say “No”?

By J.P. de Klerk



Arthur Kaye had a busy day again in his office, as the manager of a company who sold building materials. It was five o'clock and he was signing some letters his secretary had given to him before she left. But someone pressed the bell, and the gateman came in and told him that there were three girls who wanted to speak with him. With a sigh Arthur said “All right.”

He had been for several years president of a youth organization of the church and still now and then a boy or girl came to ask him something. His wife called them his “extended family.”

He was surprised to see Jessica, Rebecca and Patricia coming in, each belonging to another age group. He asked them to sit down and tell him what the matter was.

Jessica stroked her short hair and said, “We will not ask much of your time, sir, but we have one question, and we have the same problem that nobody gives us a clear practical answer. We want to know how do we say ‘No’ to a boy who is obtrusive, you know, who wants more than being a friend or just good company. My par-

ents laugh at me. Rebecca’s mother has two jobs, her father is traveling and seldom home, Patricia has some nasty boys at school, but her teacher says only that boys are boys and she becomes more and more afraid. So, what do *you* think about this?”

“Well,” said Arthur. “Suppose a young man invites you to go with him to a concert, and somewhere during the evening he asks you bluntly to have intimate contact with him, you have in fact no choice. You’ll say *no*, because you are not a *married* couple. Does he not change his attitude, ask him to bring you home, and if you do not feel comfortable with him at all, call a taxi. You must have money with you, of course. If he is aggressive, you better call for help. Often in these cases there have been warning signs in advance, because of his behavior. Then it is wise to ask him straight away what he is up to, and if you discover that his intentions are wrong, tell him that the whole outing is off. If he is someone you can reason with, remind him of the facts about love and a Christian marriage. You can avoid all that usually if you



suggest beforehand already that you take a girlfriend with you, or even if you go with four, so that means two couples. Building up a fine friendship is the normal way to go, trusting each other, respecting, getting to know each other's interests. Never force anything in one direction or another, and let him not do that either. Perhaps an uncle, cousin or aunt can be involved, to pick you up. I know that will not always be possible. Anyhow, ask yourself always 'Would this be the person I would like to marry in the future?' Tell him, that you need time to think about ev-



everything. I do not need to spell it out. I know that you know that we always have to ask the Lord for guidance and wisdom. *Never* play with fire. Your question shows you have talked about this subject already with each other, I think. It is not bound to a particular age.

Send me an invitation and I'll come to kiss the bride." ❖

J.P. de Klerk is an author and journalist from the Protestant Reformed Church in New Zealand.

Prodigal Son

A headstrong son had left his father's home—
The world he'd see.
The confines of his home were limiting—
"Too dull for me!"
"While I am young and healthy I will roam
And make my way."
Soon he was living high, with friends galore
Both night and day.
But after he had wasted all his funds
He must take stock;
His "friends" no longer meet him at the door,
They only mock.
So he would work; but jobs are hard to find.
What can he do?
The only task he found was feeding swine
He's hungry too.
He finally decides to seek his father's face
Repentantly.
Prepared to be a servant at his father's place,
Contrite was he.
Yet, long before he reached there, father ran
His son to meet.
Forgiveness granted, and he welcomed him
To the best seat.
Was that son worthy to be greeted thus?
No, not at all!
But so our heav'nly Father deals with us
When we too fall.

Thelma Westra



The Song of Zion

by the *Beacon Lights* Staff

A Psalter-Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God

January 1-6 by Beth De Vries

January 1 Read Psalm 41

Do we sometimes think of ourselves as the poor on the earth? As we start a new year may we remember that God has blessed us with many blessings on earth and more importantly spiritual blessings. The Lord speaks in this Psalm of blessing those who remember the poor. We are called to assist the poor as we are able and this may be through prayer or our gifts. May we remember this as we begin and think on the year to come. The Psalm then speaks of how the Lord will bless and care for those who assist the poor during time of trouble. Jehovah will be at our side to assist in whatever difficult situations He sends to us in the coming year. Sing Psalter 113:1.

January 2 Read Psalm 41:2; Psalm 18:30-50

God will protect His people and preserve them from the enemy. The foe may attack us with many evil things and attempt to take us from God's hand; however, he will never succeed. Even on this earth we receive the blessings of God when we do His will and care for the poor. This does not mean that the Lord will never give us trials or allow the devil to attack us, but He will not allow us to be overcome by these attacks. This is the preservation which is promised to all of God's people and is emphasized even more to those who take care of those in need in Psalm 41. May we remember that all we have is not ours but God's gifts to us and may we use them to glorify His name. Sing Psalter 113:2.

January 3 Read Psalm 41:3; II Corinthians 4:8-18

God gives much suffering and sickness to some of His people. When we are in these times, we are not to question God but know that He will care for us and sustain us. Those who are strong are called to help and care for these who are in need. II Cor. 4:16 reminds us that as the body may fail outwardly, God renews our inward man. We often learn to wait patiently on God and to live day by day. As we fulfill our calling to care for those in need, so God will also care for us in our times of need. The people of God must constantly encourage each other, not for any earthly reward, but because it is what God demands of us. We should remember that helping the needy is not always their

physical needs but often times also spiritually. A kind and encouraging word can be a far greater gift than thousands of dollars. Sing Psalter 113:3.

January 4 Read Psalm 41:4 Psalm 61

When in distress, we are to call upon the name of our God for He hears our prayers and answers them. He is always available when we earnestly seek Him, and he will show mercy to us. Many times we are overwhelmed in our sins and find ourselves far from God. Yet He is ever faithful. It is an amazing thing that He hears our prayers and cries for help because we offend Him constantly and are so undeserving. God's grace forever upholds and encourages us in the way we are to go. God does promise to give an extra measure of His grace to those who help and care for the poor. We may not help the poor to make us feel good or to earn something from God, but rather we must help out of gratitude to God for what He has done for us. Sing Psalter 113:4.

January 5 Read Psalm 41:5; Luke 6:20-26

David in Psalm 41 now turns to the attacks of his enemies and their attempts to harm him. We are often ridiculed by those in the world as they attempt to separate us from God. When we are faithful witnesses of the truth, the wicked will hate us and use all manner of evil to destroy us. Luke 6:22 speaks of the blessedness that is promised to those that are taunted by the wicked. We should be grateful that the wicked separate us from themselves. The devil seeks in every way to pull us from God and His care but he is not able because of God's faithfulness. May we not become discouraged when the world attacks us, but may we turn our hearts to God for He will strengthen us according to our needs. Sing Psalter 113:5.

January 6 Read Psalm 41:6; Psalm 12

Many times we are led to speak evil against God and our neighbor. This is our ever-present old man of sin. We convince ourselves that it is harmless, and it makes us feel better about ourselves because it is not we who have done the evil which we spread. God reminds us in Psalm 12:4 that our lips are not our own, and we must guard them from speaking evil. The sins of the tongue afflict God's people greatly and we must fight against it. Our enemies seek to be our friends that they may find evil to

spread about us and bring our ruin. This should encourage us to make friends in the church and not in the world that we may build each other up and glorify God. Sing Psalter 113:6.

Devotions on Psalm 41 by Mike Feenstra

January 7 Read Psalm 41:7-13; Psalm 41:7

James writes that the tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Oh, how we can see this truth in David's enemies! While David was laid low with sickness, his own friends jumped at the opportunity to destroy him with their evil words. Their deception obviously grieved David deeply because they had been trusted as fellow believers. When he was in the time of need, instead of helping him, they hurt him. Yet, in that time of great difficulty David thanked God for not allowing his enemies to triumph over him. How could David have said that when it was clear that he did not have the physical victory? The answer is that David was saved in the cross of the promised Messiah. His salvation was his victory! And that salvation was due alone to God. This was David's confession in verse 12 when he gratefully sang, "Thou settest me before Thy face forever." As New Testament believers, we must join in David's song of praise for God alone has also given us the victory through the finished work of Jesus Christ. Sing Psalter #113:7.

January 8 Read Proverbs 26:20-28; Psalm 41:7-8

David recounts the penetrating whispers of his enemies, "...He shall rise up no more." Although these enemies do not say it explicitly, their words are filled with pernicious thoughts of murder that pierce deep into the innermost parts of David (See Prov. 26:22). We can easily follow in the footsteps of these enemies of David by slandering, backbiting and insulting our neighbor. We all have been doing this all our lives, beginning in childhood. We all have included ourselves in the mockery of an unsuspecting classmate. But at the same time, we all know by experience the pain of ridicule by former friends. These vivid memories of childhood should motivate us to love our neighbor as our Lord commands in Luke 6:31 which is, "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." Sing Psalter #113:7-8.

January 9 Read John 13:1-30; Psalm 41:9

"Yea, mine own familiar friend, ...hath lifted up his heel against me." Here David cries on his bed of suffering that even his own trusted friend with whom he may have had "sweet counsel" has now turned to crush him in the dust (See Psalm 55:14). What a traitorous act this was! It only can remind us of the ultimate betrayal, that of our Lord Jesus Christ by Judas Iscariot (See John 13:18). Yet, Christ wasn't only betrayed by Judas and the wicked world, but also by us! Only by the grace of God are we forgiven of this sin. Praise Jehovah for His forgiving grace through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! Sing Psalter #113:8.

January 10 Read II Samuel 15:31-37; Psalm 41:10

Today's verse records for us a prayer of David that he might be raised up so that he could "requite" his enemies. Was it right for David to pray this prayer? To answer this question we must remember that in this passage David typifies Christ as the King

of Israel. Like Christ, David desired to execute righteous judgment on the wicked so that Israel would be purged of sin. This is our desire too, although we must not requite our enemies but overcome their evil with good as Paul states in Romans 12:21. Our desire then must be that our King, the Lord Jesus Christ, will judge them because in their judgment we are saved. Sing Psalter #113:9.

January 11 Read Exodus 15:1-13; Psalm 41:11

As God's people on our pilgrimage in this world below we encounter much persecution by the wicked world. This was also the case with Israel as they began their journey to Canaan. Their mighty enemy from Egypt boasted against them saying, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil" (Exodus 15:9). But God would not allow Egypt to triumph over His people. He saved Israel by drowning the Egyptians in the Red Sea so that they, "sank as lead in the mighty waters" (v. 10). God saved David from his enemies too by not allowing them to destroy him spiritually. This spiritual preservation was proof to David of God's love and mercy. And that assurance of God's favor brought great joy to David in the midst of his enemies' jeers that God was not for him. When we are persecuted now and in the latter days, let us also be assured of God's love because in the cross He has given us the victory over our enemies. Sing Psalter #113:10.

January 12 Read Exodus 15:14-19; Psalm 41:12

Exodus 15 records for us the joyful Song of Moses following the deliverance at the Red Sea. Here Moses exultantly praises God: "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O LORD, which Thy hands have established." Notice that Moses praises God for the covenant that He alone established. David echoes this truth in Psalm 41:12 when he says, "Thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before Thy face forever." It is God alone who set David in covenant communion with Himself, and the same is true for us. God has delivered us from the forces of darkness and has set us before His face. And soon He will take us to the final reality of that friendship, the eternal bliss of heaven. Soli Deo Gloria. Sing Psalter #113:11.

January 13 Read Heid. Catechism Q & A 129; Psalm 41:13

"Amen!" What does this word mean? Is it just to tell us that the congregational prayer or the sermon is over? Or is there a richer meaning to this word? Certainly, the practice of placing "Amen" at the end of prayers, sermons, or epistles is biblical. Psalm 41 illustrates this practice well because it is the end of the first of book of the Hebrew Psalter. The concluding Psalms to the other 5 books are Psalms 72, 89, 106 and 150. All of these concluding Psalms end with "Amen", except Psalm 150. Although this is true, we must see that we do this because by saying "Amen", we express our faith in the promises of Jehovah. In fact, we are really saying to God, "Thy promises will truly and certainly be!" What better way is there to end our prayers than to boldly express our faith in the I AM, Who will more certainly hear our prayers than we feel in our hearts that we desire our petitions of Him. Sing Psalter #113:12

January 14–31 by John Huizenga

January 14 Read Psalm 42 & 43

In the Psalms before Psalm 42 the most frequent name for God is “Jehovah / LORD.” Psalm 42 begins a new section of Psalms which uses the name “Elohim” which is translated as “God.” The name “Jehovah” emphasizes the covenant faithfulness of God and the name “Elohim” emphasizes the majesty and greatness of God over all. It is a name which distinguishes Him from man and all other creatures. He is the One who upholds all things every moment of the day and supplies the child of God with spiritual life. In this Psalm David gives expression to a life in which he is cut off from the source of spiritual life found in the house of God. Pray for our churches and ministers. Pray that God never deprive us of faithful preaching. Sing one of the Psalters 116 - 118.

January 15 Read Ps. 42:1 Psalter 116:1-4; Is. 35:1-10

Why was David cut off from worship in the house of God? Saul was chasing him through the mountains as a lion stalks a deer and prevents the deer from drinking at the watering hole. Every child of God needs to drink regularly of the Word preached. After a week of work in the world, we are ready for the refreshing word of God. Do you thirst for God’s Word or would you rather drink of the pleasures of this world? Spiritual thirst is a gift of God. We give thanks to God when we and fellow members of the church hunger and thirst, but that hunger and thirst turns to pangs when we are unable to drink. Pray that God give us thirst and continue to bring us the faithful preaching of His Word. Sing Psalter 116:1.

January 16 Read Psalm 42:2; Psalter 114:1;115:1;116:2; 117:1;118:1; Amos 8:11-14

The land may burst with an abundance of crops, your garage may house two new cars, your house may be large and luxurious, but a spiritual famine may be ravaging your life. Nothing is more terrifying to the child of God than a famine of God’s Word. Five Psalter numbers are devoted to the expression of this fear and the comfort of God’s promises. We easily take it for granted that we have an abundance of spiritual food and drink each week. Pray that God never take away His Word to chastise us for our indifference. Pray that our elders may be strengthened in their work of maintaining the preaching and discipline in our churches. Sing the Psalter numbers.

January 17 Read Ps. 42:3; Psalter 114:2; II Peter 3:1-7

As the world round about us continues to become more intolerant of the true church of God they become more bold in their scoffing “Where is thy God.” Give thanks unto God for the church where we can hear the reassuring Word of God. But do you ever wonder why we are such a minority? Does it make your faith waver? Even the so-called “church world” is quickly calling God’s Word a myth and that it is foolish to expect a literal return of Christ. How much more difficult it would be if our churches were forced into hiding and we were scattered and alone. Turn then to 2 Peter where God calls us to remember the faithful promises of God. Sing the Psalter.

January 18 Read Psalm 42:4; Psalter 114:3; 118:2; Acts 2:43-47

David is filled with grief when he thinks of the former days when he led the people to worship God. He was content and satisfied then. Do we look forward to and cherish the Lord’s Day? The early Church desired to gather with God’s people every day and show forth their thankfulness. May we also be filled with a desire to be with the people of God to hear God’s Word. May every day be a day in which we do our work in thankfulness to God for our salvation. May we never look back with regret because we did not use the Lord’s Day to serve Him but rather to satisfy our own desires. Sing the Psalter.

January 19 Read Psalm 42:5; Psalter 114:4; 116:3; 118:3; II Peter 1:1-16

David became very lonely and depressed when he was forced to flee from the gathering of God’s people. The disciples and early church would also easily slip into sadness after Jesus ascended into heaven. But God has given unto us the gift of memory and spiritual knowledge of God by which we cling to His promises. He will never forsake us. We will see His face. He reveals His love in the way of delivering us from trouble. Pray for faith which gives hope. Sing the Psalter numbers.

January 20 Read Psalm 42:6; Psalter 114:5; 118:3; Jonah 2:1-7

God is everywhere present. No matter where we are, God is there and He hears our every word and knows our every thought. This truth is a great comfort to every believer because when we are far from home, lost, or unable to be with God’s people in church, then we always have an opportunity to find comfort in the knowledge of this truth. Remember this truth. We do not know when it may be the only thing we have. Cherish each day you have in the comfort of your home and the house of God. Pray for the faith that will uphold you in the day of great need. Sing the Psalter numbers.

January 21 Read Psalm 42:7; Psalter 114:6; 115:2; 117:2; Acts 27:16-25

David compares his feelings to those of a sailor out in the sea in the middle of a storm. The storm tossed sea is often used in Scripture to describe turmoil. Unceasing waves of grief loosen every fiber of strength. The only comfort when we are completely undone is to trust in God. God revealed to Paul that all the troubles he endured were for his salvation. We are made weak so that God’s strength is magnified in us. We must remember also that God does not leave His people in despair. God will always send his Word of comfort and will gather us into his presence of everlasting joy and peace. Sing the Psalter numbers.

January 22 Read Psalm 42:8; Psalter 114:7; 115:3; 117:3; Acts 16:22-32

The song of Zion is a very precious gift. We do well to spend much time learning Psalter numbers and teaching them to our children. The saints who lie day and night on their bed in the rest home cling to those songs and sing them in the night for

comfort. The Psalms are a great gift of God. He speaks to us through them and uses them to bring joy into our hearts. May we be diligent to learn them and teach them to the children. Sing the Psalter numbers.

January 23 Read Ps. 42:9; Psltr. 114:8; Matt. 26:38-44

God is our Rock. We know it, yet we often see how weak our flesh is. We know God does not forget us, yet we are filled with fear and sorrow when the enemy comes against us. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. It is important for us to know how weak we are in ourselves. The disciples also needed to be taught that the salvation of Christ is by grace alone. May God fill you with a spirit that is indeed willing so that you cry diligently to God in your time of need. He will show his power and grace in our weak flesh. Sing the Psalter.

January 24 Read Ps. 42:10; Psalter 114:9; I Timothy 4

The scoffing of the wicked is a most piercing arrow of the devil. The wicked know they will be punished and they can't stand the presence of those redeemed. They especially delight when our sins bring us to sorrow. They take advantage of the weakness of our flesh and ask "where is the God that is supposed to save you?" They want to take you into their own way toward destruction. We can expect more taunting by the world as the end of the world draws nearer. Do you know where God is? Let us make our calling and election sure by diligent study of God's word and attentive ears in the House of God. Then, though we cry out to God, we cling more tightly to our God and abhor sin. Sing the Psalter.

January 25 Read Psalm 42:11; Psalter 114:10;115:4; 116:4; 117:4; I John 3:16-24

Hope in God is essential as we live in this world of sin. Hope is a central theme in this Psalm and therefore is included in many of the Psalter numbers we sing. Our hope is rooted in the love of God manifest in the cross. Do you desire a firm hope? We must know the truth of God's salvation and we must love one another; then hope will also dwell within your heart. Crucify your sinful pride, reach out to the brother and sister in the Lord in love. Hope in God and He will lift up your soul from despair. Sing the Psalter.

January 26 Read Psalm 43:1; Psalter 119:1; 120:1; I Peter 2:20-25

The Christian will be unjustly accused. We will suffer the unjust blows of wicked men when we do the right. Our calling is not to fight back and take justice into our own hands. Christ is our example. We must do well and if we suffer at the hands of wicked men for doing well, we are to take it patiently. Christ committed Himself to God Who judges righteously. Come to God with your cries of injustice. It is not a sign of weakness, but our humble submission is our glory. We glory in our God for He will be glorified in all things. Sing the Psalter numbers.

January 27 Read Psalm 43:2; Psalter 119:2; 120:2; Ephesians 6:10-18

Do not expect an easy life once you put on the whole armor of God. The armor is not to make life easy, it is for fighting and

protecting our life with God. Knowing God will keep and protect us, we may wonder why it would appear at times that God abandons us. Be assured, it is not because God has indeed abandoned us, but rather because our eyes do not always see the ways of God. We must live by faith in obedience to God. We must not let our fears and feelings guide our actions. Take the armor of God and fight. Pray always for perseverance. God will send relief. Sing the Psalter.

January 28 Read Psalm 43:3; Psalter 119:3; Psalter 120:3; John 1:1-14

When we experience the heat of our spiritual battles and God seems to have abandoned us, rest assured that it is not as we think, but it is our own blindness. Pray for the light of God which will guide us to peace and fellowship with God. Those who cry to God in their distress are those who were born "not of the will of man, but of God." God will never forsake His elect children. He has given us the Light of the Gospel: our salvation by grace alone in Christ. Give thanks to God today for the sound doctrines of grace which we hear from our pulpits. May God continue to bless us with the pure preaching of His Word. Sing the Psalter.

January 29 Read Psalm 43:4; Psalter 119:4; 120:4; Romans 5:1-11

Deliverance from our sorrows and troubles will bring us to offer up our sacrifice of thankful obedience to God. Deliverance works in us joy and peace that can not be comprehended. Indeed the ways of God are marvelous. Seek the joy that we have alone in God. Seek for this joy in the knowledge of God gained through your tribulations. Seek for this joy in the knowledge of God gained through a study of His salvation in Christ. Sing the Psalter.

January 30 Read Ps. 43:5; Psltr. 119:5; I Kings 19:13-18

Is your soul cast down and disquieted? Depression often strikes after a time of great joy and spiritual strength. Elijah could not even ask himself the question "Why is my soul cast down?" It is a question that we must face because the child of God has no reason to be depressed. Depression may be a chemical imbalance within our body, but at bottom it is a problem with sin. Our corrupt mind is responsible even for the chemical imbalances within our bodies. Pray that God may seek you out in our times of depression and show us our sins. Sing the Psalter.

January 31 Read Psalm 43:5; Psalter 119:6; Psalter 120

Psalter 120 included this verse in the chorus as a constant reminder to hope in God. Hope is not merely a wish as the word is commonly used today. We may say that we hope for sunshine without being certain that sunshine will come. Spiritual hope is certain. We hope in God in the sense of longing for a quick return to His fellowship. Our hope is rooted in the promises of God. We live by faith. All of our life is a life of hope in God. Hope is a very important subject for the believer. Hope was the constant source of joy for the Psalmist as we saw in Psalm 42:5 & 11. May God give you hope for this new year. Sing the Psalter.

Psalter 241— The Mercies and Faithfulness of God

by Mindy DeMeester

Sing! Sing joyful praises to our God! In lifting up our voices in praises to our God we sing of God's wondrous ways with us. He has chosen us and delivered us from our enemy, the devil, and from our sins which we daily commit. He has sent His beloved Son, the Son of David to deliver us from these evils. We as natural man do not deserve this pardon as well as any of the other blessings that God has bestowed upon us. Yet, through Christ, God's mercies are ever sure. Our Lord's faithfulness will never die. He will never forsake His people. Jehovah's council shall always remain: it will never change. From eternity our Sovereign God has willed all things to be, even the trails and sorrows of our lives. He has willed all to the honor and glory of His name. He has given David's Son, Christ our Saviour, to sit on His throne and be our King. He continually rules over us, all His church, and His handiwork. He is King over the whole creation: the swell-

ing seas, the angry waves, the starry heavens and vast designs. All creation sings forth praises to God who created it. "The heavens shall join in glad accord to praise Thy wondrous works, O Lord." Our God has done all this. He has created the whole creation to serve His purpose and has created us to live on this earth to glorify His name. To Him alone belongs all the glory, for none can compare to Him. So let us sing with the church of all ages and "proclaim our Maker's glorious name" and of his faithfulness to us. Sing these words with your heart and may it be a privilege to sing these beautiful songs to our God. ❖

241 The Mercies and Faithfulness of God S.C.P.

PSALM 89 L. M. MARYTON H. Percy Smith

1. My song for - ev - er shall re - cord The ten - der
 2. I sing of mer - cies that en - dure, For - ev - er
 3. Be - hold God's truth and grace dis - played, For He has
 4. The heav'n's shall join in glad ac - cord To praise Thy
 5. Who in the heav'n - ly dwell - ings fair Can with the

mer - cies of the Lord; Thy faith - ful - ness will
 build - ed firm and sure, Of faith - ful - ness that
 faith - ful cov - enant made, And He has sworn that
 won - drous works, O Lord; Thy faith - ful - ness shall
 Lord Him - self com - pare? Or who a - mong the

I pro - claim, And ev - 'ry age shall know Thy Name.
 nev - er dies, Es - tab - lished change - less in the skies.
 Da - vid's son Shall ev - er sit up - on his throne.
 praise com - mand Where ho - ly ones as - sem - bled stand.
 might - y shares The like - ness that Je - ho - vah bears.

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

Corporate Responsibility

by Rev. Doug Kuiper

You may ask, What is that? Corporate responsibility is the truth that God holds an individual responsible not only for the sins which he personally commits, but also for the sins committed by an organization, institution, union, society, or body to which the individual belongs and in which he holds membership.

At this point we ask you to read from your Bibles the entire seventh chapter of Joshua, for this chapter gives us a clear example of our subject. The salient points of this event from the history of Israel just after the crossing of the Red Sea and the defeat of Jericho are: 1) Israel had been instructed to destroy with sword and fire every thing in the city of Jericho. If they keep any thing for themselves, they are accursed. Silver, gold, iron and brass might be saved but then it had to be given into the treasury of the Lord. (6:17-19) 2) Achan of the tribe of Judah coveted a goodly Babylonish garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and fifty shekels of gold; he took them on the sneak and buried them in the ground under his tent. (7:1 and 7:21) 3) When Israel marched westward to continue her conquest of Canaan, she came up against the city of Ai with 3,000 soldiers. But they could not defeat the little city of Ai; thirty-six men of Israel were killed, and the remainder fled with their hearts as water. (7:4-5) 4) Joshua, (perhaps not understanding corporate responsibility as yet, but soon to learn it) complained to the Lord about this unexpected, devastating defeat. He even suggests that the Lord is at fault. (7:6-9) 5) The Lord will have none of this. He tells Joshua to get up from the ground, look for and find the source of the trouble in Israel. And the one who has wrought folly in Israel must be burned with all that he has. (7:10-15) 6) Significantly we read that “the children of Israel committed trespass in the accursed things.” (7:1) And that “Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them.” (7:11)

This history shows that although Achan and his family were the primary sinners in this matter, yet God holds

the entire nation responsible for the sin committed in her midst. Achan and his family were stoned and burned; Israel lost a battle and thirty-six soldiers besides. Clearly, God does not only view individually, but also collectively and organically. And He holds people responsible as individuals as well as members of organizations, nations and churches.

God may do this. This belongs to His sovereignty, to His right to do whatsoever He pleases with whomsoever He pleases. But God is always righteous when He sovereignly determines all things and then powerfully carried these things out. He never acts capriciously, unfairly, or unjustly. Covetous Achan, with his family members (who were very likely aware of what he had done), deserves to be put to death. The thirty-six soldiers who perished in battle were worthy of death for some, unstated reason, in distinction from the rest of the 3,000 men. *And*, the nation of Israel deserved to lose the battle as a nation, congregation, assembly, or corporate body, *they had sinned*.

This is not the only place where Scripture reveals to us the God-ordained truth of corporate responsibility. Adam was the head of a vast body or corporation called the human race. He represented that race in Paradise. When he sinned, all the members of the human race sinned: this is the great Biblical doctrine of original sin, including both original guilt and original corruption. This is spelled out most clearly in Romans 5:12, “Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Every member of the human race sinned when Adam sinned; is responsible for Adam’s sin in that he is a member of the Adamic race.

Another example of corporate responsibility is found in Daniel 9. The young man Daniel was surely one of the most God-fearing, holy members of captive Judah. Yet in this chapter he prays with full understanding of his being part of the nation of Judah. He says in verse 4, “And prayed unto the Lord my God, and made *my* con-

cession.” He goes on to say in verse 5, “*We* have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from Thy precepts and Thy judgments.” Daniel closes his prayer in verse 15 with the words, “*We* have sinned, *we* have done wickedly.” He means that every member of Judah was responsible in various degrees for the sins which led to their being taken away to Babylon as captives.

There is another example of corporate responsibility in Scripture of a similar but grander kind. God made Christ and the elect church one body or corporation. When God gave the elect to Christ in eternity, by that act He made Christ responsible for every member of that Church. First, Christ was made responsible for the church as far as her sins were concerned. He was made sin for us. He was made of a woman, made under the law, that He might deliver us sinners from the curse of the law. In catechism, we refer to this part of Christ’s mission as the state of His humiliation. Do you remember those five steps? A state is one’s position before the law. In the state of humiliation, God looked at Christ, and treated Christ, as if He were guilty of all our sins. Our sins were imputed upon His mighty shoulders; God held Him accountable for them, even though He knew no sin personally! Was that just and fair, that the Just had to suffer and die for the unjust? It was, because God had made one corporation of Christ and His church.

But there is also according to Scripture a state of exaltation, in which God looked at Christ and treated Christ as innocent before the law. Having satisfied the justice of God in regard to the sins of those given unto Him, God exalted His beloved Son in our flesh by raising Him from the dead, taking Him up to heaven, seating Him at His own right hand in order to rule over all things, and committing all judgment into His worthy hands! But this exaltation of Christ by God was also in connection or union with the church. In Him we are also raised from death to life; in Him we have our flesh in heaven; in Him we rule as a nation of kings; and with Him we will also participate in the great judgment. He was delivered to the cross on account of our offenses, raised again on account of our justification. Generally this relationship between Christ and His church is called representative headship, but there is also an element of corporate responsibility involved here as well.

This truth of corporate responsibility has implications for the people of God today, and it is well that young people understand these implications and live according to them. By virtue of your confession of faith, you

are a member of a certain congregation and denomination. You have been taught the doctrines and world-and-life view of those churches. You are by virtue of your confession responsible for the contents of the Three Forms of Unity, and for the decisions that your consistory, classis, and synod have taken. By virtue of the principle of corporate responsibility, God holds you responsible for all that your church holds for truth, although you

God holds every member of every group responsible for the beliefs and activities of that group.

may not have voted on these things personally. This points out the importance of making public confession of faith. This explains the precise, comprehensive language of the three questions that are asked of a young person at this time. When you give your “Yes,” you involve yourself with a heavy responsibility with all the members of the congregation.

There are church members, and entire congregations, which try to escape this ecclesiastical responsibility. I know of consistories which meet to review the decisions of their synod each year, and then vote their disapproval of decisions that they do not agree with. This happened widely the past several years in respect to the issue of women in church office. Churches, through their consistories, have tried to disassociate themselves from synodical decisions, while still being members of the denomination! All in the attempt to avoid responsibility before God for evil decisions! This cannot be done! All church members are responsible before God for the decisions and positions of their church and denomination. After all, those decisions are binding on all the churches. Let this be a warning to anyone of you who might be inclined to associate with a denomination less pure than ours!

Labor union membership is another case in point. Every union member is responsible not only for the contents of the union’s constitution, but also for the decisions and behavior of that union. Strikes. Picket lines. The violence of arson, shootings and bombings. To say nothing of the basic evil of rebellion against authority

that God has vested in the master or the owner. (See the Heidelberg Catechism's interpretation of the Fifth Commandment, L.D. 39.)

Here, too, some try to avoid corporate responsibility. They want the good wages that union jobs provide, but they are uneasy with the violence and rebellion of unionism. So they say, "I'll pay my union dues, but I will not go to their meetings nor vote. I'll never walk the picket line nor join in any violent actions." It won't work. God is not mocked. God holds every union member responsible for the actions of his union.

There are other associations that young Christians may be considering. What about the Right to Life organization? What about political action groups? What about inter-denominational Bible-study classes? What about Bible-publishing organizations which champion unfaithful versions of the Bible? Be careful! Know what you are getting into! Study their constitutions. Observe their behavior! Think through the implications! God holds

every member of every group responsible for the beliefs and activities of that group.

Let's end on a positive note. God has given you a wonderful, spiritual heritage in the Protestant Reformed Churches. We stand for the absolute sovereignty of God, particular grace, a unilateral covenant with the elect only, the five points of Calvinism, the entire contents of the Three Forms of Unity, and an antithetical world-and-life view. You belong to, or will shortly belong to, a church that holds, confesses, and by the grace of God *lives* all these truths! And God holds you responsible for knowing, believing, and living these truths also! Confess these great, Biblical truths with the church. Live them out in all that you do. And do not let them slip. Pray that God will continue to find you, and all of us, faithful to that heritage. ❖

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Church History

Interview with Rev. C. Hanko

Part #4: 1960 and Beyond

Question:

After the split in 1953 you remained at First Church for several years. In 1964 you accepted a call from Redlands, CA. How did that transition go?

C. Hanko:

I felt it was a good time to leave. I had been there 16 years. I felt if I didn't leave then I better just figure on staying, because Rev. Hoeksema was failing. But he could still preach so I thought maybe this was a good time for me to leave, and they could make a transition. But it didn't work. He was taken to Pine Rest shortly afterward. He had often said that he wanted to die in the harness, that he wouldn't mind if he died in the pulpit. Well, you can have an ambition like that, but no one decides that but God. God has your life in His hands, and He will decide how you leave.



Question:

What is most memorable about your later years in the ministry?

C. Hanko:

I had good years in Redlands. I was there 7 years. I enjoyed being there. The difficulty was that I had been there only a half year and my wife had a stroke. From that time on she couldn't talk. She had difficulty walking. But the congregation of Redlands was very good to us. They did everything in their power to help us. I always think of the good years that I had there and their kind help in my problems. I partly left Redlands because I wanted her to be with the family. I knew she wouldn't live very long anymore. She was failing, and I wanted her to be with the children for a little while. That's one reason I came to Hudsonville. I had good years in Hudsonville. I enjoyed the ministry there.

I only retired because I thought at 70 it would be a good idea to retire. I dreaded the idea because I didn't want to sit around doing nothing. But the Lord has supplied me with a lot of work. I've always kept busy. And I must say that I've enjoyed my retirement. I had a chance to visit a lot of churches and to work in the churches.

Question:

You've been active in our churches from the very beginning. Based on your experience then and now, what do you see as the biggest difference between our churches today and how they were in earlier years?

C. Hanko:

There are two outstanding differences. The first is that we were in times past much more doctrinal. I suppose this varies with ministers, but the trend has been, through the years, to emphasize the practical more than the doctrinal. I suppose the times bring that on too. But, you know, it was not uncommon in our early years to have a sermon that was completely doctrine, without any application. Rev. Hoeksema used to say, "They can apply that. I'll just present the doctrine and they can apply it themselves." Well, you sometimes wonder whether that's entirely true, but I do think that the pendulum has swung too far the other way. Probably we were too doctrinal at one time. But I think now the pendulum has swung so that you don't get much doctrine in the pulpit.

Question:

When you say doctrine, do you mean Theology, who God is?

C. Hanko:

Yes, for example it was very common in our early history to begin with God. If you preached on a text like Jesus' statement "I am the light of the world," you would begin by saying "God is light and all light is in God," and you would stress this and take it as your point of approach. If you preached on righteousness you started with God. God is the essence of righteousness. So then the emphasis was not only doctrinal but theo-centric. Always the emphasis was on God. We've gotten away from that, and now it's more a sermon to fit man. And I think that is a weakness. I'd like to see us get back to doctrine.

The other thing is that the times have had quite an influence on us. We go along with the times. I don't know if you can avoid that, but we have more internal problems now than we've ever had. Fifty years ago divorce would be out of the question. You wouldn't hear of it in the church. Today we have problems with that. You can't get the young people interested in doctrine. I taught a couple catechism classes a year or two ago and I was really amazed. You can't get it across to them. They just aren't interested. And these are young folks that are going to make confession of faith. I know from my experience when I was still a minister, that they come to the consistory and they don't know doctrine. They are good Christians, I suppose. They lead Christian lives, that may very well be; when it comes to sound doctrine they don't know it. And I don't blame the ministers for that. I think the ministers do their level best in catechism. But you just don't get through to them. They are so full of other things from the world around them that I don't think they understand. And I'm afraid for the future of our churches from that point of view.

Question:

What do you see as the most serious problem facing our churches?

C. Hanko:

Young folks should understand the doctrines of the church. Now I know you can't always be talking about the three points. I think that's one weakness we had at one time. I don't think there was a sermon that didn't somehow or other bring common grace in, and that was overdone. But I do think that we've moved away from that.

Question:

The *Beacon Lights*, as you know, is written primarily for young people. What can we do to spark an interest in spiritual things among our young people?

C. Hanko:

That is a good question. I've been wondering myself how we can get the young people active in the church. It was the young men of First Church that started the radio program. The request had come to Synod to start a radio program. Synod had voted it down as too expensive. So the young men got busy. They went around asking for donations. They arranged for a time, four o'clock

in the afternoon, and asked Rev. Hoeksema to speak. Soon afterward the church took over because, well after all, they were a little embarrassed to leave it to the young fellows. And they were the ones to start the *Beacon Lights*, not the older ones, the young folks themselves. They were the ones that started the conventions. The young folks did all the work.

But you know there was a willingness to work. There was a lot of enthusiasm. That isn't there. I wish we could do something about that, because after all, that is the future. I think if we want to save our Churches we have to do that. We have to get our young people interested not only, but enthusiastic. ❖

The Hillegonda Church of Hillegersberg

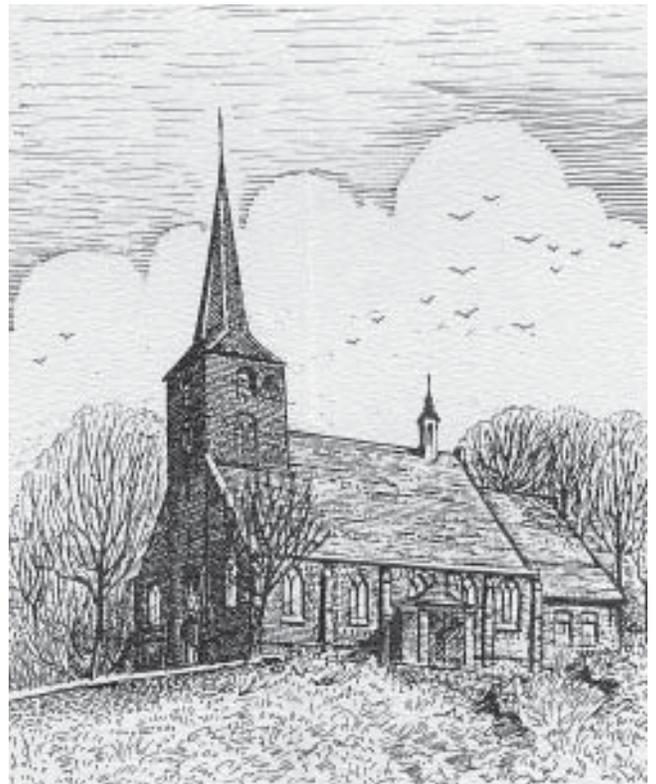
by J.P. de Klerk

Hillegersberg is a suburb of the city of Rotterdam, but when this small town was founded the now famous harbor city of Rotterdam did not yet exist. There was only a marsh and a river with the name, the Rotte.

The Hillegonda Church with a castle were built on a big hill of sand, by Count Arnulfus, probably in 990, and finished with the help of monks in 1025 A.D., but completed as a fortress in 1250. The first occupant of the castle was Franke Stoep of Hildegardsberg, the second Lord Kerstant van den Berge (1343). In 1426, the castle was destroyed by Jacoba van Beieren, but the Church was saved; the ruins are left.

The name of the State Reformed Church is not related to a saint, but dates back to a legend about a woman who would have brought the sand to that unusual spot, Countess Hillegonda.

In the tower of the church are two bells since 1592, but renewed in 1909 because of cracks. Of the first Church some very big bricks have been used later, during enlarging of the building in all directions. But in 1426



the Church was destroyed, in 1530 rebuilt in the shape of a pseudo-basilica. In 1687 and 1856 again enlarged.

The first Reformed minister was in 1577, Arnoldus Genius.

In 1700, eight beautiful stained windows were given to the Church by wealthy members, but all of them were vandalized. In 1923 began attempts to replace them, again by gifts, in total twelve (including a window above the entrance). They relate to well-known parts of the Bible.

The vestry was rebuilt in 1783. The whole Church is restored in 1967, under supervision of the Committee for Monuments care of the government.

The pulpit was made in 1631 of oak by Dirck Michielezn Cock, but had to be restored carefully in 1975, because wood worms had taken hold of it. In 1628 and 1661, chandeliers were made by Johan Kampvoort, for the use of candles. They are still used in the evening services.

In 1830 a very good organ was built, but in 1922 replaced by a new one, and again another one in 1982. The air in the church is not good for organs. The exterior, however, has remained the same over the years. Now the Hillegonda Church has a big problem, because the whole roof has to be renewed, since it has been discovered that it has been attacked by a gnawing beetle (aggressive bug). This will cost 1 million Guilders. About 75Z of the money has been brought together so far.

Still every Lord's Day hundreds of people of all ages climb up the hill to the Hillegonda Church.

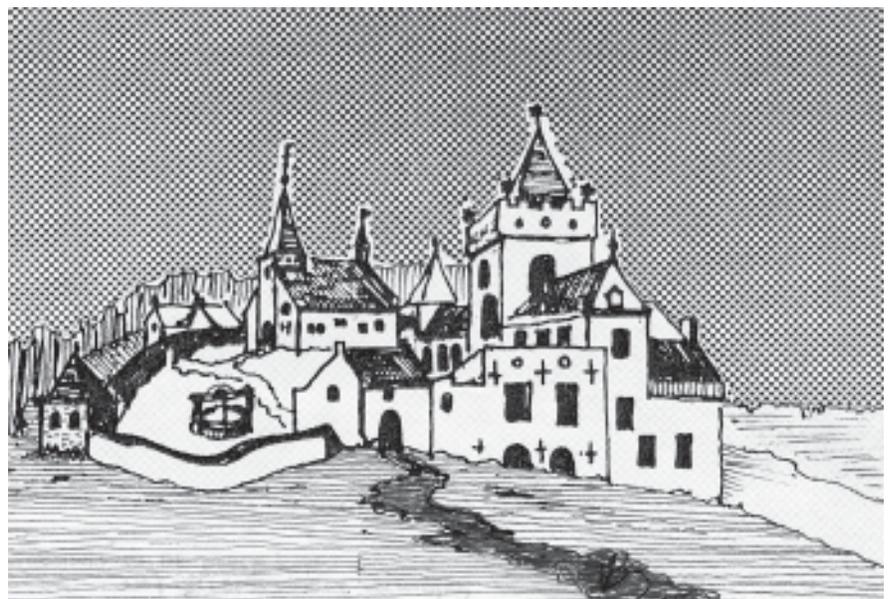


J.P. de Klerk is an author and journalist from the Protestant Reformed Church in New Zealand.

From an old picture. In 1425 the Church (smaller than nowadays) standing next to the castle, protected by walls (defense fortress). In 1672 the Church got its own surrounding walls because the castle etc. was destroyed (only some ruins of the main tower are still there). There is a cemetery inside and outside the Church, well looked after, but not used. Interesting for historians.



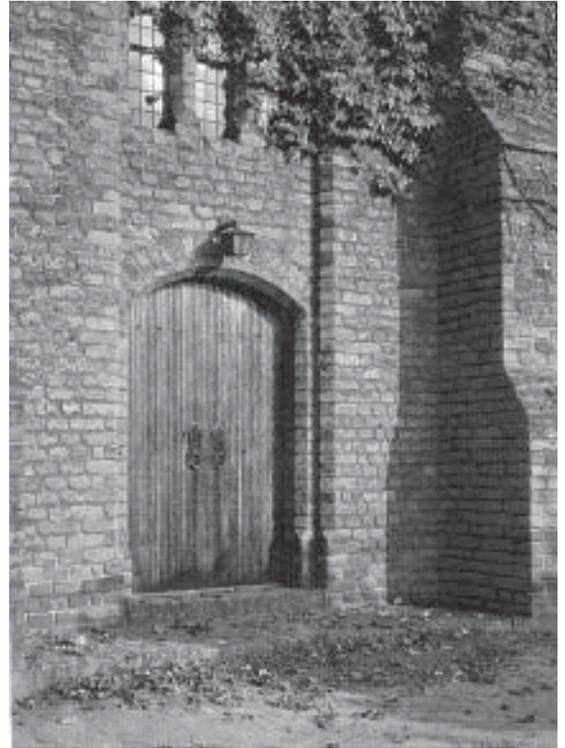
Drawing made in 1940. The Church seen out of the Church street, going to the iron gate, before the side entrance of the Church, always open for visitors. There is an electric clock on the side of the tower.





The Hillegonda Church (State Reformed) of Hillegersberg (near Rotterdam), is built on a hill. On the left the ruins of the castle, from the Middle Ages, with which the place started. Deep under the foundation wooden rests were found of Roman barracks; perhaps they made the sand hill as a refuge against high water during the winter. The entrance of the Church is on the side, when the wrought from the gate is open.

Detail of one of the stained leaded windows of the Hillegonda Church in Hillegersberg, made by G.A.H. van der Stok in 1943, replacing a vandalized window. This shows: "The Good Samaritan," reminding us of the message "Love thy neighbor," the Lord gave us in His Word. Are you a good neighbor?



The original entrance under the tower of the Hillegonda Church (restored), oakwood mounted on bronze, with large medieval bricks (next to a buttress). Nowadays a side entrance is used, next to a vestry. This Church requires a lot of maintenance.

Interior of the Hillegonda Church of Hillegersberg, with the so-called Abraham Meere Organ (made in 1830) and the pulpit (from 1631).



"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

Watching for the Signs (6)

"Are we almost there?" asked little Anna after they had traveled for several minutes.

"No, Honey," Mother smiled and tried to explain, "It will be a long time before we get to Grandma's house."

Anna took the news quite well, until several more minutes had elapsed. "Are we almost there yet?" she asked again. And again.

Lydia and Nathan knew it would be a long trip, but Anna's impatience made their own grow too. Finally she fell asleep.

"Are we almost there yet?" whispered Nathan.

Mother looked back at him with growing impatience of her own.

"Just kidding," he quickly added.

"Well, I'm not," Lydia joined in. "How long will it be until we get there?"

"Maybe another two hours," said Father. He tuned in the radio on low volume and, while Anna slept, the family listened to the news.

"...another earthquake shook the northern region...talked of peace, but the war-torn area...this particular strain of the disease is more difficult..."

"Don't they ever have any good news?" asked Lydia.

Father thought for a moment and replied, "It sounds bad to us, but these things *must* happen for Christ to come. In a way it is good news. It's the news that says He is really coming. He told us to watch for earthquakes, wars, famines, and many other signs. Why? So we will be ready and waiting when He does come again."

"Ten virgins waited for the bridegroom, but only five were ready when he came," added Mother. "We're impatiently waiting to get to Grandma's house right now. I wonder...are we just as excited for Jesus to get here?"

"Sure we are," said Nathan. "Well—I suppose we are."

"We can get pretty wrapped up in the cares of this world," said Father thoughtfully.

"Maybe we should read that parable again," said Mother as they drove past a welcome sign to the state where Grandma lived, "—and study the signs more, too."

Read the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13. Even though it was late and dark, the wise virgins were ready. The foolish virgins were not. How many signs of Christ's coming do you know?



Connie is the mother of 5 children and attends Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.



The following list of words comes from Matthew 24, a chapter about signs of Christ's return. Find them in the puzzle below:

- | | | |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|
| deceive | wars | famines |
| pestilences | earthquakes | sorrows |
| iniquity | abomination | tribulation |
| false prophets | darkened | shaken |

S	E	C	N	E	L	I	T	S	E	P	A	I
D	A	R	K	E	N	E	D	N	Q	U	B	S
T	R	I	B	U	L	A	T	I	O	N	O	W
S	T	Y	A	H	S	H	P	F	P	S	M	O
T	H	C	N	R	S	R	A	D	M	N	I	R
N	Q	A	D	E	C	E	I	V	E	S	N	R
I	U	B	K	M	S	V	K	R	H	L	A	O
F	A	L	S	E	P	R	O	P	H	E	T	S
E	K	V	I	Q	N	S	A	F	O	P	I	H
S	E	N	I	M	A	F	L	W	A	S	O	A
R	S	O	L	B	Y	T	I	U	Q	I	N	I

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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:

Tessa Noelle, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Chad Huber—
Georgetown, MI
Colin Scott, son of Mr. & Mrs. Scott Riemersma—
Georgetown, MI
Logan Spencer, son of Mr. & Mrs. Robert Huizinga—
Georgetown, MI
Emily Renae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Chris Harwood—
Georgetown, MI
Brittany Rae, Danielle Lea, & Taylor Paige, children of
Mrs. Ruth Schimmel—Georgetown, MI
Ryan George, son of Mr. & Mrs. Henry DeJong—
Holland, MI
Brantley James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kevin VanOverloop—
Holland, MI
Kayley Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mark Langerak—
Hope, MI
Matthew Tim, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Kooima—Hull, IA
Ashley Rose, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Barry Pollema—
Hull, IA
Marcus Daniel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brian VanEngen—
Hull, IA
Brooke Elisabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Steve Potjer—
Redlands, CA
Aaron Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Marlin Feenstra—
Redlands, CA

Sherry Ann, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Wayne Buiters—
Redlands, CA

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:

Nathaniel Bol—Faith, MI
Terry Kaptein—Faith, MI
Jared Kooienga—Faith, MI
Bruce Koole—Faith, MI
Andrew Kuiper—Faith, MI
Heidi Pastoor—Faith, MI
Janis Van Baren—Faith, MI
Katherine Vander Schaaf—Faith, MI
Brenda Van Dyke—Faith, MI
James Boorsma—Hope, MI
Tami Moelker—Hope, MI
Jeremy Lubbers—Hudsonville, MI
Stephanie Lubbers—Hudsonville, MI
Brent Vander Kolk—Hudsonville, MI
Emily Zandstra—Hudsonville, MI
William Moore—Loveland, CO
Rebecca Kats—Loveland, CO
Nicole Pastoor—Redlands, CA

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

Matthew 19:5

United in the bonds of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. & Mrs. Randy Lunsfor—Pella, IA
Mr. Craig Poortinga and Miss Tiffany Griess—
Loveland, CO