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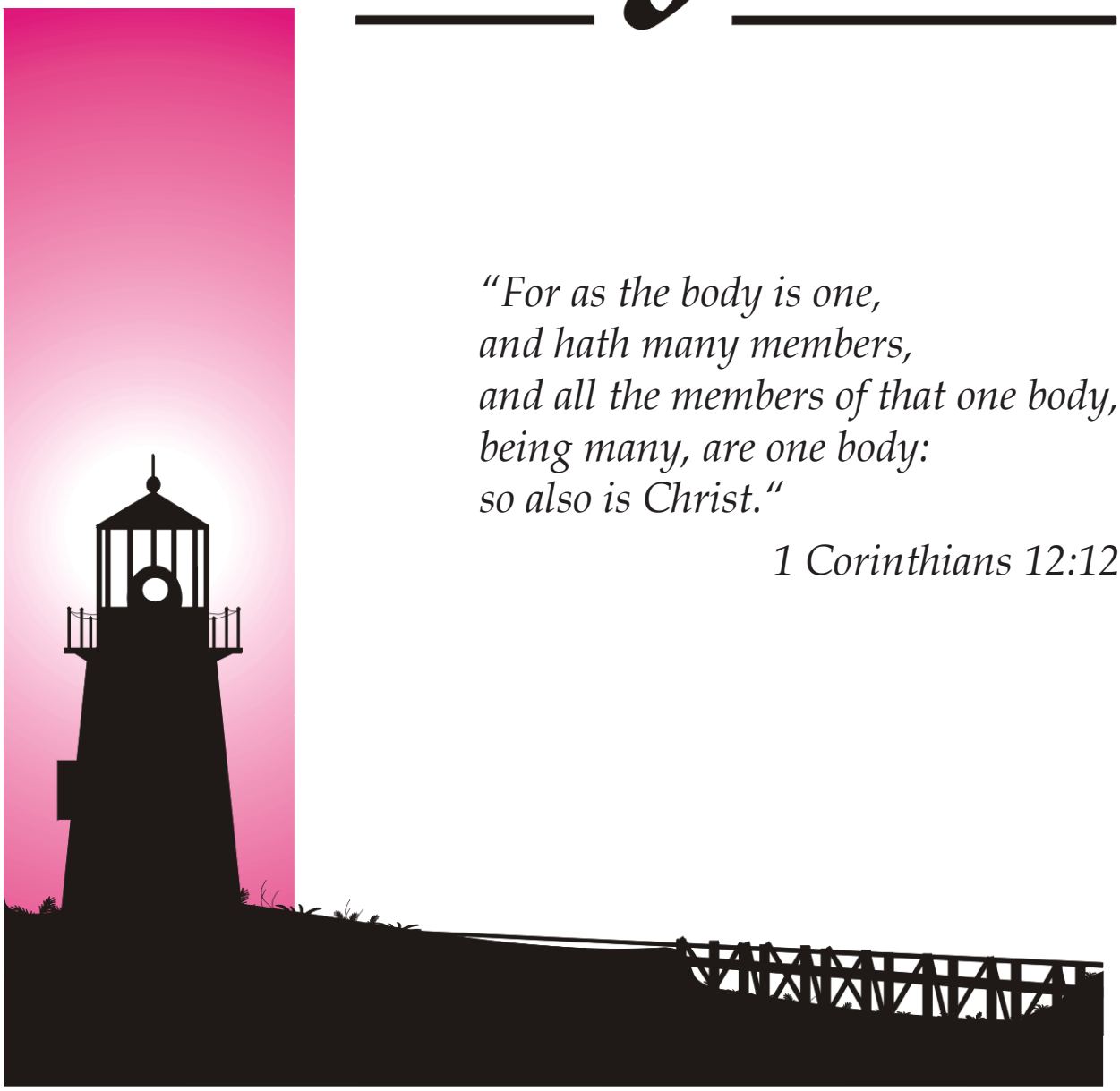

"For as the body is one,
and hath many members,
and all the members of that one body,
being many, are one body:
so also is Christ."

1 Corinthians 12:12

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Another Tender to Take on the Task

by John Huizenga

As the new editor-in-chief back in the April issue of 1995, I asked for your help as young people, parents, single adults, grandparents, and anyone else who has a desire to keep the light of *Beacon Lights* shining. I asked for young people to write, and for your prayers and support, and I can say with great thankfulness that over the past 17 years, we have never run out of oil. Sometimes it got rather low, but God always stirred up new writers young and old to supply excellent articles for *Beacon Lights*.

It has been a great blessing to have been given the privilege of trimming the wick and polishing the mirrors of *Beacon Lights*, but the time has come to hand this work over to another light tender. The *Beacon Lights* staff has been looking and asking, and is happy that Mr. Mark Hoeksema is willing to take over this work. Being new to the staff, he would like a little time to become acquainted with the work before assuming the full responsibilities of editor-in-chief.

As I wrote in my first editorial, the figure of a lighthouse and the name of this magazine was explained by Rev. C. Hanko in the very first editorial of *Beacon Lights* as a light to guide the Young People to their goal. Rev. Hanko then wrote "as a ship at sea is in imminent danger of suffering shipwreck on some hidden shoal or treacherous rock unless the beacon lights guide it through the raging storm and murky blackness of the night, so Protestant Reformed youth must be warned of lurking heresies and threatening temptations which so easily beset them."

It is our desire to keep this light shining with renewed brightness as the storm winds rise, and the waves, fog, and mist of temptation, lethargy and false doctrine rise to new heights. To that end, we continue to sound the need for more articles. Our new editor comes with a dedicated staff which has worked hard to maintain a steady flow of high quality material. They also come with new technology and tools to maximize the brightness of our light.

One of the goals is to tap into the power of the internet and use it like a thousand mirrors to spread the light and make past issues and articles easily accessible to our readers and especially the students in school with research assignments. The project begun some years ago to scan all the former issues and make them available on the internet is undergoing further processing. Currently, all these issues are available at www.beaconlights.org but our goal is to make it easy to search and find specific articles on specific topics. All the issues have been processed with computer software to convert the pages to actual computer text. But much work needs to be done to give it the final form necessary for quick and efficient searching. A good deal of excellent research can be done as is with the index that is available, but we want to improve it and encourage teachers to assign research projects that give students an opportunity to look through the old issues and take a healthy interest in the current issues.

Just as the modern lighthouses of today utilize new ideas and technology to keep the ships at sea well informed of the reality of dangers around them, so we hope *Beacon Lights* can keep our young people well informed of the dangers, and the way of truth and life. Pray for this work and the people who labor to keep this light shining. Pray for the lively preaching of the Word that nourishes our writers. ❖

Characteristics of Officebearers

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to David Warner's article on Homosexuality in the December 2011 issue of the *Beacon Lights*. Warner cites I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:4-9, which lay out criteria for office bearers: namely that, among other things, they be faithful to their wives and manage their houses with faithful children. "Gay men," Warner wisely notes, "do not have the wife and children that are clearly stated as requirements in Scripture."

I am in full agreement with Warner on this point; we must be faithful to scripture in all things, and the ordination of elders is a crucial place for the application of biblical principles. Furthermore, the Protestant Reformed Churches are to be commended not only for denying ordination to homosexuals, women, and homeschoolers, but in whole-heartedly condemning the practice in wicked, ungodly, apostate churches.

But I do take issue with the random manner in which the PRC applies these criteria. If the Bible mandates that an elder have a wife and children, why do the Protestant Reformed Churches not prohibit, as the Bible commands them to, the ordination of bachelors, widowers, and men who are childless? While it is true that the conscientious application of these verses would prohibit the ordination of Paul himself, as well as the other apostles, and even Jesus for that matter, it is not for us to question God's will as laid out in the Scriptures. It is only for us to obey.

It is time for the Protestant Reformed Churches to repent and to revise the church order to show the world that they are obedient to the Bible in all things. No wife, no children, no ordination.

Derek Vanden Akker

Response:

The statement that seems to be the issue is the result of hastily using inadequate language on my part, and I also apologize for that. Reading it again, I see how I wasn't very clear in stating what I was thinking. I don't hold to the position that a man must be married with children in order to hold office in the church. God doesn't give every man a wife, and at times he does not give them children either. Those passages in I Timothy and in Titus lay out principles for officebearers who are married and have children. Obviously, if a man does not have a strong relationship with his wife or has no control over his children, doing little to maintain his family unit, he most likely will not be a good candidate for overseeing and handling matters of the larger family of the church. Notice how the other qualifications Paul lists deal with the character of the man, such as self-control and temperance—one who doesn't get drunk or brawl or get greedy, etc. In this same way, he must have control over his desires and not be flirtatious. He must be faithful to his one wife if he is married, but if he is single, he still must demonstrate this self-control and be mature in such matters because anything otherwise would be adultery (Matt. 5:28). If Paul was implying that an elder or office bearer is required to be married and have children, it would seem contrary to his own teaching in I Corinthians 7:6-9, 25-34 in which he shows the benefits of being single. The single person, not burdened with the responsibilities of caring for spouses and/or children, is able to establish a very strong bond with the Lord and grow in spiritual matters. If the widower, bachelor, or childless man shows the fruits of the spirit and shows those qualities of a good office bearer, they should be able to take those positions in the church.

Also, in reading the Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons that the PRC uses, there is no mention that the man must be married with children. Rather, it explains the gifts, talents, and responsibilities of those ordained into office. Bachelors, widowers, and men who do not have children are still capable of having these characteristics and fulfilling these duties, and are thus eligible for these offices. The gay man, even if he is faithful to his "partner" or rules his "family" well, is living in deliberate disobedience to God. This willful, open sinning is ultimately what disqualifies them from being office bearers (as elders and deacons and ministers must be men after God's own heart), more-so than the fact that they don't really have a family unit for ruling over or demonstrating the necessary qualities of office bearers.

I hope this clarifies my statement. I apologize for not using the best choice of words initially.

In Christ,
David Warner

God's Mirror

by Chelsea Kamps

My Journey through the Vice of an Eating Disorder and How I learned Who I am in Christ

I felt as if the imprint of my butt was ingrained in the navy blue couch at my therapist's office. I knew every decoration; the smell of the office was all too familiar and I could probably drive there in my sleep. For the last couple of months I had sat on that blue couch receiving therapy twice a week. Although it was a warm Summer day I was still so cold, and I was trying so hard to stop shaking. What had she just said? My brain isn't working today, and apparently neither is my body. She gives me that look, like she's about to ask me that dreaded question. "How much have you eaten and drunk today?" A shiver goes up my spine, and I can't hide my shaking anymore. It's 1:30 pm. I could lie, I think to myself but I tell her the truth, "nothing." Up she gets from her chair, around the corner to fill the dreaded glass of water. She places it in my shaking hands, and tells me that in the next half hour I am to drink that glass of water. My stomach lurches, and feelings of frustration well up inside. "Who is she to tell me what to do?" I think to myself. Her next threat makes me lift that glass to my lips. "If you can't down it, you are going to the ER for an IV." 1:55 rolls around and there is half a glass of water, I wasn't going to drink it, and I couldn't. Next came a phone call, a drive to my doctor's and I was heading to the ER. What was this, the 5th time being poked with an IV? My heart rate was slow, my coloring was pale, I was told my eyes were sunken, and I was very dehydrated. "What next?" I thought. I can't eat, I can't drink, and I don't want to. The very thought of food frustrates me and scares me. Feelings of guilt, panic and defiance seize me. I was slowly surrendering my life to an eating disorder. The most taunting thought was that the more I surrendered the more engulfed I became in its arms, and the deeper I became the more hopeless I was. This would be my life, and this eating disorder (ED) would be my best friend.

A new best friend, one I didn't ask for but I chose to befriend anyway. He was always there for me but never in the right way. He stood beside me as any friend would but would whisper ugly things, lies that I many times believed. He watched as I stumbled and fell countless times, he laughed and would push me down again. I wouldn't amount to anything unless I did what he said. I thought I could find security in his "love" for me and my life would be better if he was my friend. He told me that he would make me feel beautiful, that his way with me was best. I listened, I followed, and he gradually began to control my life. My thoughts and actions revolved around my friend; nothing else mattered but ED. ED is a friend and an enemy alike. How is he a friend, how is he an enemy? Here we enter the complex world of an eating disorder.

From my previous article I shared my struggle with depression and suicide. I would love to leave you there, but there is more of my journey I feel is important to share. I want to share with you a part of my healing journey that like depression is ever so complex, the journey through the vice of an eating disorder. Eating disorders have become so very common among our young people, and I myself struggled with it also. By God's grace he brought me down that path for a purpose; there is always a purpose to what our sovereign God plans for us, even when it's hard to understand. Being led down this path has made me realize that sharing my experiences in my struggles can not only help those struggling but help loved ones and friends understand. I want to emphasize that I am not an expert and I don't have all the right answers. I may not cover all of the insurmountable information on eating disorders but I seek to bring you what I know from my struggle and what I feel is important to help. I pray that through the sharing of myself I bring God all the praise and honor he is due.

ED (a.k.a. eating disorder)

The struggle with an eating disorder or ED is unique to every person. Each person's struggle started somewhere different. Although each is different there is always a root, a reason and a starting point. This is an important thing to remember when it comes to those struggling and those watching someone who is struggling. I know from experience that although the root may be different the mind and behavior are very much the same.

I like to compare ED to a jumbled up ball of wires with many different colors. There are many strands which represent each individual person. The length of each wire represents the time each individual person struggles—some may only for a short time, and some may struggle for life. Each wire has knots or kinks that represent the times of either trying to get loose or becoming more entangled. The wires are in a jumbled ball; from the outside there is no color order, or organization. This represents the confusion and chaos loved ones see looking in. Now let's step inside that ball. From inside there is still chaos but each wire knows its place, for there is precarious organization. Each wire has its own color, length, and path, but all together they are so much alike. The ball is in the hands of ED. There are loose wires that so easily wriggle loose only to be wrapped tighter by ED. A worn wire in a last ditch effort tries to reach for help and ED finds a way to control the wire and to stick it again into the dark recess. There are even wires that lose all their color; these are ED's favorite, and they are gray and lifeless. He has worn those wires away; he's wrapped them and knotted them, worn their beautiful colors to gray and finally worn them lifeless.

What are the facts of ED?

Before I take you further into the mind of one with an eating disorder I want to share a little with those who don't know the facts about eating disorders. This is important to know as it is the spiritual and emotional aspect.

An eating disorder is a very serious mental illness that can cause severe and permanent damage or even death to one who suffers. The three most common eating disorders are anorexia, bulimia and binge-eating disorder. You may not realize how common eating disorders actually are or how serious they can be, so to give you an idea, here are a few statistics. Up to 24 million people of all ages and genders suffer from an eating disorder in the U.S. Anorexia is the third most common chronic illness among teenagers. Over ½ of teenage girls and nearly 1/3 of teenage boys use unhealthy weight control behaviors such as skipping meals, fasting, smoking cigarettes, vomiting and taking laxatives. Eating disorders also have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness.

The two most common eating disorders among young people and especially young women are Anorexia and Bulimia. It is important to know about anorexia and bulimia and the signs and symptoms; this will help you recognize an eating disorder.

Someone who has anorexia usually has a twisted view of their physical appearance. Usually the mindset is that she thinks she is extremely overweight when she is very thin. One who has anorexia usually starves herself and over-exercises. She is deathly scared of gaining weight.

The physical symptoms one with anorexia may have are: continual weight loss, irregular periods, low body temperature (that is why one may complain of always being cold), pale complexion and dry skin, dry brittle hair that may even fall out, growth of facial and fine body hair, easy bruising, exhaustion and fatigue.

The emotional symptoms are: An extreme fear of weight gain, excessive need for control, distorted body image, dramatic mood swings.

The behavioral symptoms are: Wearing loose clothing, deception (hiding food in napkins or clothes), abuse of laxatives, diet pills or diuretics, obsession with calories and fat content of food, excessive exercise, making excuses not to eat (such as " I already ate" or "I have an upset stomach"). Other behaviors are: isolation or avoiding social events, consuming a lot of low- or non- calorie food (such as diet soda, gum or coffee) avoiding restaurants and eating in front of others, ritualistic behaviors at meals (such as eating food in a particular order, or cutting food into tiny pieces), discomfort with or avoiding being touched, defensiveness when questioned about weight, hyperactivity and depression.

One who has bulimia overeats and then tries to get rid of it by inducing vomiting. One who has bulimia may abuse laxatives and diuretics which are other ways of making the body get rid of food.

The physical symptoms of bulimia are binging and purging, a constant sore throat, broken blood vessels in eyes, dramatic weight fluctuation, digestive problems, swollen neck glands and puffy cheeks, scrape wounds on knuckles (caused by contact between knuckles and teeth when one makes themselves throw up), eroding of tooth enamel and increased cavities.

The emotional symptoms are self criticism and poor body image, poor impulse control (abusing drugs, alcohol, spending and promiscuity.)

The behavioral symptoms are that one who has

bulimia expresses guilt after eating, avoids restaurants and eating in front of others, abuses laxatives, diet pills, ipecac, diuretics and/ or enemas, frequently going into the bathroom right after meals, showering after meals, hiding food throughout the house, alternating between eating large amounts of food and self-starvation.

The behaviors of an anorexic and bulimic have consequences. Bad choices always have consequences. Some of the long term results of an eating disorder can be osteoporosis, muscle deterioration, anemia, organ damage, acid reflux, and tears in the esophagus, chronic constipation, abnormal liver function, elevated cholesterol, decreased estrogen, infertility, abnormal blood pressure, heart attack, stroke, brain shrinkage and even death.

The deeper cause of ED

ED's are easy to explain when there are statistics and when doctors know the behaviors and symptoms. We can see that ED's are extremely serious and cannot be taken lightly. They are also very complex. Some may look at the behavior and simply say it is caused by vanity. Although vanity has its place it is not that simple; there is something so much deeper to be seen.

Explaining the thoughts and emotions of one with an eating disorder is almost impossible. It is literally like trying to unwrap that jumbled ball in ED's hand. No one outside that ball can truly figure it out. So that is why we need to step inside and look closer.

The root causes of ED are all different. The reasons are different but each individual did choose friendship with ED. This may be confusing and we would ask, why would someone choose to live this way?

The struggle begins where most of us can't go, inside the head. For most with an ED there is something in life that has led them to a place of need or want. They lack something that has made them turn to ED. For me it started with the feeling that I didn't have control in life and the only thing I thought I could control was what I put in my body. For others it may be the lack of attention and this is a way to get it. It also may not be lack at all but may source from low-self esteem, self-criticism and guilt. There may be an extreme fear of weight gain as a result of distorted body image and that can lead to an ED. Whatever the reason may be, the source begins with need and they find that ED gives them what they desperately need or want.

To go deeper into this I want to talk briefly about some of the reasons. The main reasons are: *control, guilt, self-criticism, self harm, low self-esteem, poor body image and attention*. ED's can be caused by other things than the ones I listed but I want to reiterate and explain these because they are the most common. I want you to notice as I explain, that although each reason may be different, every person who has an ED many times struggles with some if not all the reasons I listed above.

Control

Control is something each of us struggles to give to God. The Christians life isn't an easy one, and God didn't promise that it would be. God did promise that he has everything in his sovereign control and we are to trust in that promise. "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isa. 41:10). As sinful creatures it's hard to trust and leave control to God. We too often want our own control over things especially when life seems difficult. As a child I dealt with emotional wounds and then struggled with depression. With each obstacle I had to face I became frustrated and I turned my face away from God. It didn't feel that God was in control; in fact it felt like things were constantly spinning out of control. In sin I didn't see what God had for me, and I sought a foothold. My foothold wasn't placed on the rock of Jesus Christ but I looked at myself and I thought my control would be better.

For many who struggle with ED they are dealing with wounds in life. Wounds, whether they be from someone wounding us or the wounds of past sins; if they are not dealt with correctly they will inevitably lead to struggles. Dealing with wounds can be an uphill battle, but when the trust is taken away from God and put in ourselves the battle seems out of control. In desperation to seek control some turn to ED and their own will to fight. They find control in themselves and what they feed or don't feed their bodies.

The act of controlling what goes in and out of one's body can be a way of dealing with what seems to be out of control but it also can be a way of taking control. It can be an act of rebellion. Control can be taken away by force, as in instances of abuse, or it can be taken away for one's safety, by authority. Either way one with ED seeks to take back the control that has been taken, and one way is by again controlling food.

Guilt, Self-Criticism, Self-Harm

Guilt, self-criticism and self-harm are all feelings and tactics the devil tries to use to take our focus away from God. We also know very well that we are sinful creatures and can do no good. "As it is written, There

is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10). We live in a sinful world where our sinful natures and sin abound. With much guilt I hated myself, for things I had done, for the wounds in my life. I felt that because of my sin God hated me and I thought that I didn't deserve his love. I felt guilt for many things, and constantly thought that everything I did was wrong, I couldn't do the simplest thing right. I didn't care about myself. When I looked in the mirror I hated not only the inside but the outside. With all those things in mind I resolved that I didn't deserve food, happiness or even life. I began intentionally hurting myself. I not only starved myself but I didn't care what happened to me. I would drive reckless, exercise in hot weather; I even in my darkest times would scratch and cut myself. In my depression and struggles I really longed for death, and in my hatred of myself and my life I played with death.

We each know the struggle with sin, and also the wounds sin has on our lives. Many of us know the guilt we face in response to sins and what it is to carry wounds. Self-criticism and self-harm can be the way we wrongfully respond to sin and wounds—as a response to guilt for something they did in their past for a sin they feel is unforgivable. The feelings that the wound they experienced was somehow their fault, that God was and is punishing them. These can lead to shame and can lead to self-harm and criticism.

It is easy to see where self-criticism and self-harm come alongside and are a result of the guilt. The guilt experienced can feel as if God hates them and they begin to hate themselves. The guilt one feels validates their feelings of self-criticism and can even lead to self-harm. They harm themselves by self- starvation and some may struggle with other forms of self-harm such as cutting. The response to guilt is seen most in those with bulimia; one eats, but feels guilt for eating and tries to get rid of it by throwing up or making their body get rid of it.

Low Self-Esteem, Poor Body Image, Attention

During my struggle with ED, I, along with many others with ED, struggled with low self-esteem and poor body image and the want or need for attention along with. This is probably the most complex part of the ED because it doesn't make a lot of sense in the eyes of others. As with many, I dealt with low-self esteem and poor body image growing up. I dealt with a lot from the wounds I experienced as a pre-teen and I never felt good about myself. I never felt pretty in school and I gained weight during puberty and struggled with acne. I had that awkward stage pretty much all through junior high and I never felt like I outgrew it on into high school.

When I began dieting and restricting food I began to notice results that I liked. I not only felt and looked skinnier but others noticed too. I received many comments about how skinny I looked and I enjoyed those comments. I began to feel like I was accomplishing what I longed for, to be pretty. As I dropped pound after pound I began to crave the attention and concern others gave me, even when comments were about how sick I was looking. It started a vicious cycle and the attention actually fed into my eating disorder. I wanted to be skinnier and the skinniest. I sought fulfillment in achieving thinness. But with every pound I lost I still wasn't happy, I still hated the image in the mirror. So again the cycle went on.

Attention, low self-esteem and poor body image are the most common causes of an ED and affect most if not all with ED. If they don't cause they are an integral part. Low self-esteem and poor body image are many times the start. Many who struggle have grown up with or developed low self-esteem and poor body image. They may have gone through an awkward chubby stage, or just plainly never felt "as pretty". It's hard to understand why young girls struggle even with just poor body image and low self-esteem. I don't know the complete answer to that but I know that we live in a world that has a great influence on the young generation, especially on young girls.

In our day and age we have so many sources of entertainment, and influence. The internet, television, magazines, newspapers, and even our phones can tell us a whole host of things. These things are not in and of themselves bad but they can influence our lives drastically. One of the main influences the media can have on girls and young women has to do with self-image and worth. We can't even turn the TV on without being taunted by the world's image of beauty. Their image isn't of what's on the inside is what counts but it is about being as beautiful as the movie stars. Internet and magazines do a good job of influencing our young generations of what beauty looks like. The front covers of magazines and storefronts in the mall have scantily clothed models who scream "this is beauty, look like me!" There is nothing wrong with striving for beauty. God wants us to take care of our bodies by exercise and eating healthy, he says so in I Corinthians 6:19, 20: "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." We also

need to realize the false advertising in front of us. We don't always realize that these models are air brushed and altered to look "perfect." It's so easy for a young woman to be influenced. It's hard to not want to look like them; they are what our culture defines as beauty, right?

The influences in our world can affect every person differently. As a young girl I know I looked at the models and movie stars and I thought they were beautiful. And as I struggled with an ED I did look at those women and wrongly compared them to myself. I made a choice and my choice should have been to not believe the lies the media throws at our minds. My point here is that the influence of media and entertainment may not be a cause of an ED but it definitely does not help. Our day and age seems to emphasize being thin and the obesity epidemic of our country is showcased on billboards and television. Although this isn't all bad it can become to one who has an ED an extremely scary thing. Being "fat" is bad, and instead of living a healthy lifestyle, they see those diet plans and weight loss shows and go to the extreme. They use their behaviors to be the opposite, and become underweight and deathly thin. The image of beauty is to be tall, thin, and flawless. Though the models in a magazine may be an airbrushed image they are the world's way of displaying what we all should look like. When obesity is an epidemic those models are an idol. They strive by their behaviors to imitate those models, when in reality they are imitating an altered image. Those with eating disorders pay very close attention to their weight and image and strive to be the thinnest, impossibly thin, deathly thin. They think then that they will have achieved perfection and beauty.

Attention within an ED can go many ways. One may develop an ED as a way to get attention or attention can feed an ED. When attention feeds an eating disorder, it many times comes midst a full blown ED. It may start as feeling good from the comments about weight and cycle into craving those comments. Many times the comments of how good someone looks turn into comments about how skinny and sick someone looks. And the person with ED craves that even more. The cycle is vicious, it may seem to start with vanity, but we can see that it is more complex than that. The aspect of attention is hard to understand because many times the attention one with an ED receives really is needed. This means that the ED is noticeable by physical and emotional appearance - they don't look healthy, and something needs to be done. I don't want to detract from the importance of this for parents and loved ones. Do not refrain from doing something because you're afraid it will "feed" the eating disorder. I just want to bring understanding to you about what is going through your child or loved one's mind.

We have gone through many facts and causes of an eating disorder, and it is definitely a complex mental disease. Standing on the other side of this disease, I compare ED to having an addiction as to alcohol or drugs. In all the causes we can clearly see many things that point us to the same reasons many turn to alcohol or drugs. And having an ED can be just as dangerous as, if not more dangerous, because one needs food and health to live. An ED can be used to control or to numb pain; it is used to hurt oneself; it is used to make oneself feel better; it is even used to gain attention. Many may not see my point of view or want to see my point of view, but it's truth. There is a reason for these addictions; they are always laced with sin, and many choose to turn to addictive habits because they aren't handling it God's way.

We all as Christians struggle with our own battle with sin, though some not to this extent. It's easy for us to judge those who struggle to the point of sickness with addictions, but we must remember that God is the judge. We have the Christian duty to pray for those who struggle, not to judge. As someone who has held the hand of ED, I know I was judged and I was easy to judge others who looked like they had an ED. I hope that you also now realize that appearances don't just make up an ED. Just because someone may be skinny it doesn't make them automatically anorexic. Please be careful with your comments and judging. Again, give it up to God who alone knows that person's needs and struggles. *(to be continued)* ❖

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Let the Word Rule You

by Rev. Rodney Miersma

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom (Col. 3:16a).

In this text the apostle Paul is exhorting the Colossians to be heavenly minded. They and all God's children are to put off the old man and put on the new man, that they look not to the things of the earth which is characterized by wickedness, but look to heaven which is the home of eternal glory. One's whole life is then one of love, the bond of perfectness. With that love we have harmony with God with the result that peace shall rule in our hearts. In order that we live a life of sanctification and have peace rule in our hearts we must let the Word of Christ dwell in us.

That Word of Christ is none other than the Word of God through Christ and his faithful servants. This is in contrast to the word of Satan as it comes to us from the lips of men of the world, dreamers and philosophers and unbelieving educators. The Word of God through Christ is exceedingly rich. Although the Word of God in creation is rich yet the Word of God through Christ is far richer. It contains rich and precious promises to us. Here we find the gospel, the good news of salvation unto us in which we see the love and mercy of God.

Paul tells us here to let this Word of Christ dwell in us richly. That does not mean that the Word of Christ merely dwells among us, in our midst. It must certainly be preached from the pulpit, taught in catechism, discussed in our society meetings, and taught in our homes. But if this is all we have we are still not heeding the admonition in our text and the preceding. All these require that the Word dwell *in our hearts* as we see in vs. 15 which reads, "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts," and in vs. 16, "singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Indeed, the Word must be in our spiritual control center, the heart. The heart controls all of our thinking, willing, thus all of our activity for out of it are all the issues of life. Therefore, the Word of Christ must be in our heart, ruled by it so that it will rule us in all our actions. If the Word is not there, what more do we have than Satan, for he too has the Word in his mind. We must have it in our hearts; otherwise the Word of Christ in our midst will have no positive effect at all. The Word must be a permanent resident, not an overnight or weekend guest. Our hearts must be the house of the Word of Christ, its home. He must be the resident.

It follows, then, that He will also be the ruler, for he who dwells in the house rules it. A guest may enjoy the facilities, but the house is ruled by the man that dwells there. He has the say as to what goes on in that house, determining all that takes place within that house. So the Word of Christ dwells in us in order to rule us. It rules by very virtue of being the Word of God. It is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our pathway. Thus, it is profitable for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

It becomes very plain, then, that the Word is authoritative. It dwells in us that it may rule us. For that purpose we receive it into our hearts. If we lean unto our own understanding and pay attention to the world's ideas, then the Word of Christ is displaced and Satan is dwelling in us and ruling us. If you do not believe that this can happen, it only shows how much this is true already.

Our calling is to let it dwell there in our hearts so that it may continue to rule us. Paul in effect is saying, "Keep that Word in your hearts." Paul is addressing the saints, regenerated children of God, including you young people as the seed of believers. Let that Word *continue* to dwell in your hearts and be the sole tenant in that spiritual control center. The word of Satan has always been there and we are exhorted to evict him so that the Word of Christ may dwell alone.

If that Word is to dwell in us richly, we must learn it richly. We must be taught from childhood, in our schools, from the pulpit nothing other than that Word of Christ. We must learn it fully, in rich detail, that it may dwell in us richly. May the Lord and king of his church richly supply you with His grace unto that end. ❖

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Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter

March 11 Read Joshua 11

Notice the last verse again. "The land rested from war." The last words of Scripture about the Promised Land before Israel went to captivity in Babylon also concern the land. One of the reasons for the captivity was that the land had to receive her sabbaths. This land was typical of the land that the church will receive. That land is heaven. Now we must fight. We will be the church militant until Christ comes again. But when Jesus (Joshua) comes on the clouds of glory, he will reign as the Prince of Peace. Let us fight the battles of faith, knowing that we will receive the promised rest. Sing Psalter 262.

March 12 Read Joshua 12

In this chapter we have a summary of the work of conquering the land of Israel. There is a listing of all the battles and the lands captured. This is preliminary to the dividing of that land to the children of Israel. Each of them would have an inheritance and a possession in the Land of Promise. This chapter is more than just history. It is a typical reminder of what would be God's people including the church of today when the conquering King returns to take us unto himself. Sing Psalter 27.

March 13 Read Joshua 13

We might look at this chapter and others like it as not useful to the church today. Some might say it is not as interesting reading as the victories won in battle. Others may say that these names make no sense. But the child of God must not dismiss these chapters so lightly. First of all, the division of the land helps us to understand some of the history of the land in later years. Secondly, we see that the Levites were not given land. This shows to us Christ and the way of our salvation. Finally, we see what was done to Baalam for the grievous evil that he did to God's people. Let us take the time to read this history carefully and see what the Spirit says to the church. Sing Psalter 215.

March 14 Read Joshua 14

Israel still made their headquarters at Gilgal. Joshua is carrying out the work of dividing the land by lot as God has commanded him. Then there is an interruption. Joshua's companion in the spying out of the land, Caleb, reminds his friend of the command of Moses. Caleb has a claim on a certain piece of land that he spotted as he went through the land at Moses's and God's command. Joshua grants his friend's request, as he must. Caleb is to be rewarded for his faithfulness in not only carrying out God's command but also believing that God would give them the land. Let us be faithful and let us believe that our inheritance in the New Canaan will be given to us. Sing Psalter 33.

March 15 Read Joshua 15

Here we have an accounting of the division of the tribe of Judah's land. Judah would receive a very hilly country in the southern part of Canaan. Parts of it were dry as we see in the request of his daughter. Caleb had made a promise to the man who helped him drive out the wicked in his possession. In keeping that promise he gave to his daughter a piece of land that was dry in nature; therefore, she asked for another piece of land. This was granted. Our possession in God's kingdom is not dry. We have the upper and nether springs of his Word which will water our spiritual lands now and for eternity as the spring of living water resides in heaven. Sing Psalter 164.

March 16 Read Joshua 16

In this chapter we see that the promise of two parts of Jacob's inheritance is given to Joseph through his sons Ephraim and Manasseh. God's promises are always true and will always come to pass. Of this we have no doubt. As we hear God's promises in marriage, in baptism, and in confession of faith, we can rest assured that he will keep those promises. We can know that he will care for us now and through eternity. Sing Psalter 241.

March 17 Read Joshua 17

The book of Joshua continues to describe the inheritance that each tribe received. In some cases, as we see recorded in this chapter, individual families are recognized. Look at verse four once more. The daughters of a man by the name of Zelophehad were promised an inheritance by Moses. As Zelophehad had no sons, his daughters were promised the inheritance. They wanted

to make sure that their father's name was continued in Israel. What is significant about the request is that Joshua gave the inheritance as God had promised. This work of dividing the land was God's just as the work of inheriting heaven is God's. May we never fall prey to the evil of man-centered salvation. Sing Psalter 359.

March 18 Read Joshua 18

As Israel continues to work to possess Canaan, Joshua gives orders that the tabernacle be set up in Shiloh. This, too, is typical, for Shiloh means rest. This was not Joshua's nor the people's selection, as we read elsewhere in Scripture that God chose this place. Seven of the tribes could not find rest there as they were slack concerning the instructions to occupy the land. Joshua chides them for their slackness and then gives order how they were to busy themselves with their appointed work. Are we slack concerning the work God has given us to do in his kingdom? If we are, we, too, will find no rest in that way. Sing Psalter 367.

March 19 Read Joshua 19

In this chapter we find Israel finishing the work of dividing the Promised Land by lot even as Jehovah had commanded. Just as their places in that land were determined by God's hand as Proverbs says: "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." Proverbs 16:33. Then at the end Joshua receives his reward for faithful service. This reward, like that of Caleb, had been promised at the end of the spying trip. May we be faithful in our calling no matter what it might be. Sing Psalter 106.

March 20 Read Joshua 20

One by one Joshua carried out the commands that God had given to Moses. One by one he fulfilled the promises made to Abraham and those that followed him as he set up society in Canaan. These cities of refuge were made for the protection of the innocent. Quite often the innocent have a hard time of it in this world. Because of the passions of the moment, justice is forgotten and facts are glossed over. All of God's people have a refuge. That refuge is in Jehovah God. May we give thanks for this, and may we flee to him in whom all refuge is found. Sing Psalter 253.

March 21 Read Joshua 21

First of all we see that those ministers of the Lord are provided for in the establishment of forty-eight cities and the land around them for the Levites. The church should always see that the workers in God's kingdom are provided for. Of special note in the chapter are the last three verses. First of all, God gave to his people rest in the land of Canaan. Secondly, all the promises that he had made unto them were now fulfilled. We have no reason to doubt the promises of Jehovah. He will keep them and us until the day that his Son returns on the clouds of heaven to take us unto himself. Sing Psalter 242.

March 22 Read Joshua 22

As the fighting had now ceased the three tribes who had been given residence east of the Jordan River were released from their service and now prepared to return home. Joshua recognized their faithfulness and reminds them to serve Jehovah always. Then follows the incident concerning the altar built by those three tribes. The building of that altar caused Joshua and those with him to jump to a wrong conclusion. How often does this happen to us? We must be careful to deal with our brothers in love and to not imagine sin where it does not exist. In this way the church will be strengthened and God's people will be blessed. Sing Psalter 239.

March 23 Read Joshua 23

As his life is about to come to an end, Joshua calls Israel together to give them a farewell address. This address is not about him as many addresses of "great" men today are. This address is about God and all the wonderful works he has done for Israel. Joshua recounts those works and recounts the promises that God has made to them. Then he reminds them of the key attribute that they must have. That attribute is courage in Jehovah. With courage they can finish the task of taking the Promised Land. With that courage we can live our lives on this earth until we are taken to the Promised Land of heaven. Sing Psalter 175.

March 24 Read Joshua 24

Joshua continues his farewell address in Shechem. He reminds Israel of a choice they had made. He had reminded them that they chose to serve Jehovah. He holds them to this choice. This is an active part of "working out our salvation." This is the walk of sanctification in our lives. Then the chapter recounts the deaths of Joshua and Eleazar, the high priest. The final verse shows how God's promises are fulfilled as they bury the bones of Joseph there in Shechem. Let us hold to the promises God has given to us and serve him every day. Sing Psalter 400.

March 25 Read Judges 1

The next chapter of Israel's history is begun in chapter 1 of Judges. After Joshua's death the tribes begin the final work of driving out the inhabitants of the land. Judah takes the leader's role as was prophesied by Jacob. They worked diligently at driving out the heathen. The other tribes were not so diligent, and it would show, as later

they would fall prey to the idol worship of the people they left in the land. May we be diligent daily in the work that God has set for us to do in his church. This work may be that of an officebearer, or it may be as that of a parent. It is God's work and must be done to his honor and glory. Sing Psalter 360.

March 26 Read Judges 2

This chapter serves as a bridge between the events of the book of Joshua and the events of Judges. Israel had already fallen into idolatry. God sent the angel of the Lord, the Old Testament Christ, to warn them of the folly of their way. While they repented for a time, that repentance was short lived. The chapter then describes the cycle that is repeated many times in the book of Judges. Israel would fall into sin; God would send an enemy to rebuke them. Israel would cry to God. God would send a deliverer to help them. Israel would serve God as long as this deliverer was alive. When he died, Israel would fall away once more. Sing Psalter 146.

March 27 Read Judges 3

This chapter recounts the history of the first three judges: Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar. Each of them, with God's help carried out a mighty deliverance for God's people. We might wonder why they did not learn. If we wonder about that sentiment, then we need to look into the mirror of our soul. Are we any better than Israel? God has sent to us "The Deliverer" Christ Jesus. What is our response? Sing Psalter 103.

March 28 Read Judges 4

Some times in the churches' weakness, God will use extraordinary means of deliverance. That is what we see in this chapter. The men did not show the courage Joshua had ordered them to exhibit in the face of the king of the Canaanites. God used Deborah and Jael to deliver them from this wicked king. As the cycle of the Judges shows, God is merciful towards his people. Are we observing? Are we learning? Are we fighting the battles of faith in the callings that he has placed upon us? Sing Psalter 281.

March 29 Read Judges 5

Here we have a song recounting God's faithfulness in the victory of the preceding chapter. Take some time to examine the various elements of the song. Some might say it is a song of praise of Deborah and Jael, but then reread the last verse. It is a prayer to God that his enemies might perish, and that his people may prosper in the way that he has led them. May we remember that all things are in God's hand and are done to the honor and glory of his name. In this way we will find rest now and especially in eternity. Sing Psalter 271.

March 30 Read Judges 6

Backsliding Israel is chastised once more. They become so afraid that they take to hiding in the caves and dens that pockmark the landscape. God sends a prophet to remind them of the wondrous work he has done for them. The prophet and his message are ignored. God then calls Gideon to do the work of a judge. Gideon is hesitant and requires at least two signs that he is really the one for the job. While we might say he has little faith we must consider two things. First of all, are we any different? Secondly, God calls him a man of faith in the roll call of faith found in Hebrews 11. Sing Psalter 252.

March 31 Read Judges 7

There are two poignant picture stories in this chapter of deliverance. First there is Gideon's test. Are we watchful like the three hundred, or do we consider our own comforts more important than zealously fighting the battles God has placed before us? Then you have the account of Gideon and his servant spying on the camp of the enemy. Are we ready to bear the sword of Gideon, no matter how foolish it may seem, in Jehovah's battles? Are we willing to expose ourselves to ridicule daily by using God's Word in our daily lives? Let us be courageous to fight the battles of faith knowing that God will give to us the victory by his name. Sing Psalter 248.

April 1 Read Judges 8

Nothing causes trouble in God's church like jealousy. When we are jealous of another, we are really angry with God for giving to that person what we wish was ours. Jealousy leads to a multitude of sins. We can and do commit many if not all the sins in the second table of the law when our passions are ruled by jealousy. We see that this is so in the words of this chapter. Even God's courageous fighter Gideon fell prey to evil because of jealousy in the church. Israel could find no rest when they walked in this way, and neither will we. Let us pray daily for God to deliver us from such a sin. Sing Psalter 348.

April 2 Read Judges 9

What a mess God's people had gotten themselves into because they did not obey his laws. Trouble upon trouble was multiplied unto them. They committed sin upon sin. This Abimelech whose name, by the way, is a Philistine name, was determined to kill all of his brothers so that he could rule Israel. His brother Jotham escaped the murderer and spoke the fable that portrayed the folly happening in Israel. Let us renew our efforts to obey God and walk in his laws. In this way we will receive his blessing and also receive it for our families. Sing Psalter 41.

April 3 Read Judges 10

God's patience, as it were, seemed to be waning with his covenant people. He had given them two more judges to deliver them. When they died, Israel went right back into sin. Now, God brings another enemy against them. Israel cries to him, and his lack of patience seems to show itself when he reminds them of all that he had done for them since they left Egypt. Is God ever less than patient with his people? Does his loving kindness toward them ever wane? The answer is "of course not." God cares for us even when we do not deserve it at all. Sometimes he deals with us in such a way that we despair of his mercy. God is always patient with his people; otherwise, he would have destroyed them all. That was true during the time of history of which we are reading, and this is true today. Sing Psalter 187.

April 4 Read Judges 11

Here in this chapter we have the account of the usually misunderstood vow of Jephthah. Jephthah did not make a rash vow. He did not make a vow which he wished he had not said. He was faithful to his vow and to the God to whom he had vowed that vow. Check Hebrews 11 if you are not sure about this. May we be faithful to all the vows that we have made in our lives. Young people, you vow at the occasion of your confession of faith. Are you determined to pay that vow? Sing Psalter 207.

April 5 Read Judges 12

Once again jealousy reared its ugly head in Israel. Relatives of Jephthah are angered at his supposed failure to include them in the battle plans against the Ammonites. It appears that what they want, which sometimes drives our desires, is the glory that falls to the victor in a battle. We also see in this chapter God's continuing care for his church when they do not deserve it through three more judges. Israel did not change; it would be God who would change them as he prepared them for the Savior. Are we prepared to meet the returning Savior? Sing Psalter 371.

April 6 Read Judges 13

God's people are to be a separate, holy people living an antithetical walk in this world. Sometimes God has to give to us reminders of this calling. Samson was such a reminder for Israel. Samson was one of the Nazarites that God gave to Israel to remind them of the life that they were called to live. In his very appearance they knew that they were to be different than the world around them. By the Nazarite lifestyle the people were to see their calling. We have the same calling. Are we living holy, separated lives unto God? Sing Psalter 353.

April 7 Read Judges 14

Sometimes even those called to special offices make poor choices in their lives. Samson, even though he was marked to show holiness, made many wrong choices. His choice of a wife was for all the wrong reasons. He chose a wife because she pleased him, not because that choice would please God. Because of this error, God chastised him even when he used such chastisement for his people's good. We must be careful how we justify our actions. We must measure them against the standard of doing all to the glory of God and his name. Sing Psalter 83.

April 8 Read Judges 15

Even though Samson continued to walk in a way that glorified himself and not God, God turned it for his own good. The miracles recounted in this chapter show only God's glory and not Samson's. Israel undoubtedly heard of Samson's feats. By them they were called to walk in a right way. They were judged by Samson and God even when they did not want such judgements. Let us pay attention to the goings on in the world around us. Do we see God in those actions? Do we acknowledge him as our God and deliverer in those actions? This must we do aided by his help in his Word. Sing Psalter 328.

April 9 Read Judges 16

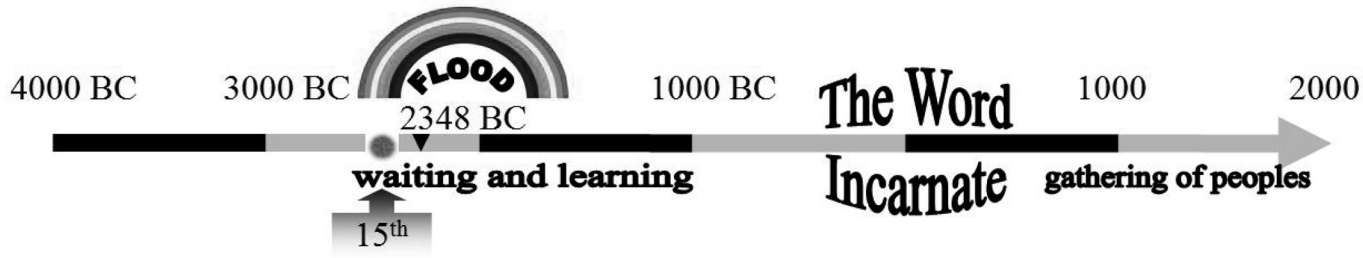
The events of this chapter fill us with wonder. First of all we wonder at Samson's failure to learn that his walk of life was not pleasing to God and was causing great distress to fall upon him. Secondly, we see the insolence of the heathen as they shake their fists at the Creator in their heathen worship. Finally, we wonder about Samson's end and the meaning of it. What we must not wonder about is that God's name was vindicated. The heathen were not allowed to continue in their dishonor of God's name. The faithful in Israel were helped by Samson's judging of Philistia. God will care for his church; of that there is no doubt. Sing Psalter 312.

April 10 Read Judges 17

This chapter seems to be a summary of the evil of idolatry that had fermented in Israel since the time of Joshua's death. As we read these words we might be found shaking our heads at the folly exhibited by this man. Then we get to the final verse and wonder at his conclusion. We might say. "How could a man grown up in the church make such a statement?" Then, as James says, we must look into the mirror of God's Word. What do we see? Are we any better than this man? Let us daily go to God in prayer to be delivered from such sins that affect our lives. Sing Psalter 308.

The Fifteenth Century of His-Story: The Church Squeezed Through a Genetic Bottleneck

by John Huizenga



God describes the church that he gathers throughout all history as a beautiful body and a glorious temple. One aspect of that beauty is the diversity and variety of different people that are united into one glorious whole. The entire universal body of believers is united as a spiritual body, and an individual congregation also expresses that beauty and unity as the members serve one another with their unique gifts and bear one another's burdens (Heidelberg Catechism LD 21). The variety of unique individuals, personalities, and nations is astounding. God works this variety through the means of his providential guidance of the complex interaction of factors that regulate the expression of genes in our DNA. God created creatures to have a great deal of genetic diversity so that they would multiply and be able to adapt to a variety of environmental conditions filling every nook and cranny of the earth and every cornice of the glorious temple of God.

We discuss this topic of the church as a body and the related concept of diversity among people at this point (the fifteenth century of history) because God will soon send the Flood which will destroy much of the diversity. At this point in history, all the genetic information necessary for the great variety of people that exist today would be carried by eight people through the Flood, through a genetic bottleneck. In these few people was all the genetic information for skin colors ranging from black to white, sizes from pygmies to giants, the whole spectrum of personality types, and everything else that makes each individual today unique. The sections of DNA in their cells which contain the code for determining skin color, for example, had all the diversity necessary to make all the colors we have today. How those colors were expressed in their children and grandchildren, etc. would depend on how the genetic code from each parent was combined as well as a host of environmental factors present from conception throughout the development of the child. How this diversity comes about has been studied since Gregor Mendel's work with genetics in the late 1800s, but new fascinating discoveries have recently been made opening up a new field called "epigenetics."

We noticed last time that the church by this time was growing very small while the rest of mankind was growing exponentially in every way—numbers, power, worldly wisdom, and pride. If we think about the human race as a genealogy tree with Adam and Eve as the trunk, the tree has become enormous with millions of branches. The church, on the other hand, has become only one of the twigs and will soon be down to Noah's family and the spouses of his three sons. This twig, as it were, will soon be plucked from the tree and replanted after the Flood. The rest of living mankind will be destroyed, and with that destruction would come the destruction of much of the genetic diversity.

With the loss of genetic diversity comes weakness. In the animal world, when a population of a certain species of animal becomes small, the ability to produce strong offspring is also diminished and the species is in great danger of spiraling toward extinction. Intermarriage between close relatives also can result in weakness and health problems. Adam and Eve's children had an enormous resource of genetic diversity and therefore there were no genetic problems with the intermarriage of siblings. Even after many generations to the time of

Noah, plenty of genetic diversity remained in individuals to prevent crippling weaknesses in the children of Noah's sons. The weakness may have been one of the reasons for the greatly reduced lifespan of people after the Flood.

The loss of genetic diversity in individuals has a positive effect as well. With more individuals, more of the individual traits and combinations of traits are expressed unveiling the full beauty of God's church. As time goes on, more and more of the unique characteristics of the diversity get expressed. Perhaps the process could be compared to the phenomenon of white light being split into the colors of the rainbow. Adam and Even would be like the white light which is in reality composed of a diversity of colors. Each generation gives expression to different parts of the spectrum. Each of these colors can in turn be combined and recombined to form millions of different colors. We don't see the great diversity of color/people until the full range is expressed after many generations and children.

The wonder and power of God's grace is revealed in the fact that he gathers each one to fit in the particular place in his church. Each one serves the other in the same way each part of the body serves the whole. Though the universal church is numbered as the sand of the sea and the stars of heaven, and though it spans thousands of years and many generations, God shows to each of us every day an example of this glorious church in the local congregation to which we belong. As we grow in knowledge and faith, we begin to take our place in the church and serve our brothers and sisters in the Lord. ❖

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Our Psalter Turns 100

by Andrew Koerner

The year 2012 marks an important anniversary for the Protestant Reformed Churches. This year, the songbook which we use in our worship services, in our homes, and in our good Christian schools, The Psalter, turns 100. That this book is still used among us today is significant, since most Reformed and Presbyterian denominations no longer give the Psalms pride of place in their worship, or have discarded the singing of them altogether. It is therefore imperative that we treasure the heritage given to us in our Psalter, thank God for the blessings it brings, and also, where necessary, fortify its weaknesses, so that it might better reflect our commitment to singing that which is found in Scripture alone.

Historical Background

Our Psalter is sometimes called the 1912 Psalter because that is the year in which it was first published, although its origins go back to 1893. There were a total of nine denominations that participated in the making of this songbook, including the Christian Reformed Church, but the project was initiated by the United Presbyterian Church in North America.[1] The first draft of the Psalter was presented in 1905, with a second appearing in 1909. In 1912, a final committee meeting was held in Pittsburgh and the finishing touches were put on the new songbook, which was published the same year.[2]

In 1914, our mother denomination, the Christian Reformed Church, adopted the new Psalter for the English-speaking congregations of the denomination. When the Protestant Reformed Churches began, we also made use of this Psalter, and continue to do so down to the present day.[3] Actually, our own churches originally adopted the 1922 edition of this Psalter, and have since published our own special editions which include our doctrinal standards and liturgy, church order, and the ecumenical creeds.[4] Other denominations that use the 1912 Psalter include the Free Reformed Churches in North America and the Netherlands Reformed Congregations.[5]

1 Ray Lanning. "The Songs of Zion: An Appreciation of the Psalter of 1912." (*Standard Bearer*, Volume 69, Issue 17, June 1, 1993).

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

The Blessings of our Psalter

The 1912 Psalter has been and continues to be a great blessing to our churches. This is true from several perspectives. In the first place, the songs of our Psalter are the songs of Scripture, in which our lives are rooted. It is in the Scriptures that we read of our total depravity and guilt of sin. It is in the Scriptures that we learn of God's grace in delivering us out of our spiritually dead state. And it is from Scripture that we derive the proper attitude of thanksgiving to God in our whole life for the wonderful salvation he has wrought for us. Hence, it is appropriate that we sing about all these things, inasmuch as they are found in the Psalms.

These very same Scriptures also bring us words of comfort in our many afflictions and sorrows, especially in the face of death. The Psalms are particularly comforting to God's people as they face the last enemy. It is no secret that dying saints love to hear, read, and sing the Psalms, for they so wonderfully describe the pilgrimage of the child of God, and above all give solace concerning the end of that earthly journey. The rest of us too, whether facing the death of a dear one or some other personal affliction, undoubtedly find great consolation in singing the Psalms.

Indeed, we must appreciate the fact that the songs of the Psalter are taken specifically from the Psalms. There is great blessing in singing the Psalms because they are the very words which God has given to his church to sing, a fact which she has recognized for centuries. Rev. Jason Kortering, in his excellent pamphlet on Psalm-singing, tells us that in the apostolic and post-apostolic periods, the church sang only the Psalms, and the best of the church fathers strongly advocated the singing of them. Also, at the time of the Reformation, the Reformers revived the singing of the Psalms which the Romish church had abandoned almost entirely, thus making Psalm-singing a glorious heritage of Reformed and Presbyterian churches.[6]

Therefore, it is also a great blessing that our Psalter incorporates many of the same songs sung by the church of the past. For example, there are songs from the Genevan Psalter, the very songbook used in John Calvin's day for the worship of Jehovah when those of Reformed persuasion risked their lives in confessing the true gospel over against the errors of Rome. Who can forget the stirring words of Psalter 353: "Now Israel may say and that in truth…"? There are also songs from the Scottish Psalter of 1650, sung by the Presbyterians on the moors of Scotland during the awful "killing times." One such song is known even to the little children: "The Lord's My Shepherd" (Psalter 53). Even the Chorale section, though not originally part of the 1912 Psalter, is included in this heritage. It contains some of the favorite songs of our fathers in the Netherlands (also originally from the Genevan Psalter) which they sang with gusto even as they were persecuted by the apostatizing state church and arrested and fined by the oppressive government.

There is blessing also in that the Psalter we use is the universal songbook of our denomination. One of the many fruits of this denominational commitment to a common songbook can be seen at the pre-Synodical service each year, when so many strong singers from our various congregations come together and raise their voices with the words of the same Psalter they all know and love. This love of the Psalter arises not only out of familiarity with its contents, but also and especially out of a deep appreciation for its confession of the truth of God's Word.

What is more, the members of our churches make this confession of the Psalter their very own, over against the lies of heretical hymns. Whereas hymns, written by sinful men, are prone to doctrinal error, the Psalms are the timeless and infallible words of the Holy Spirit, given to the church as a gift to be used for as long as she is upon earth. The introduction of hymns into the church services tends to the obliterating of the Psalms, and becomes an open door for heresy to creep in by means of song. Not so with the Psalms. They are secure, and ascribe all glory to God, for God is the author of them. This is not to say that we are forbidden to sing the good hymns. Rather, it means that we must guard our worship services so that the Psalms are maintained as the primary songs of praise to God.

Capacity for Improvement

Although our Psalter is indeed wonderful and a great blessing to our churches, it is by no means perfect. In fact, there are some aspects of it which should be altered. For example, some of the song titles are inaccurate, such as, "God in Nature" (171), or "Responsibility of Civil Officers" (223). Although the titles are not as important as the songs themselves, they nevertheless are meant to accurately reflect the content of the songs. Therefore, using an inappropriate title may very well lead to a wrong understanding of the words of the song itself.

There are also selections in our Psalter which leave

6 Jason Kortering. *Psalm-Singing: A Reformed Heritage*. http://www.prca.org/pamphlets/pam)phlet_37.html.

out whole phrases and verses of the original Psalm. One example of this is in the two versifications of Psalm 137, both of which fail to explicitly mention the dashing of Babylon's little ones against the stones. Although this is certainly very graphic language, it is inspired by the Holy Spirit, and perhaps ought to be included in future editions.

In at least one instance in our Psalter, there is a song which contains lyrics which are questionable at best and heretical at worst. The song is Psalter 255, stanza 4, which begins this way: "While he proffers peace and pardon, let us hear his voice today." Although some might argue that these words can be understood in a Reformed sense, they nevertheless have strong overtones of the well-meant offer, so much so, that this stanza is rarely if ever sung in the Protestant Reformed Churches. Thus, these words should be altered, so that we might in good conscience sing the fourth stanza of this song without subscribing to common grace.

Other songs of our Psalter, while not heretical, are rather loose renderings of the words of the Psalm on which they are based. An outstanding example of this is Psalter number 247, a versification of Psalm 90 arranged by the Unitarian composer Isaac Watts. While this and other such selections do not necessarily need to be removed from our Psalter, we do need to be aware of what the Psalms say, and in the singing of them we may not stray so far from the original text that the meaning is entirely lost.

Improvements to our Psalter may indeed be forthcoming. Synod 2011 instructed the contact committee of our churches to correspond with the Free Reformed Churches in response to a letter and survey sent by that denomination regarding the possibility of updating the Psalter. Included in this survey are a number of potential revisions, including a "review of the accuracy of Psalter selections wording."[7]

Whatever may come of this correspondence, let us always seek the Lord's guidance concerning this important matter of updating the Psalter. If changes are to be made, let us see to it that they are made to better praise our God in song, and not to cater to the lusts of our flesh or make the Psalter look better in the eyes of the broader church world. May our chief purpose with the singing of the Psalms be to glorify our covenant God, thanking him for the miracle of the salvation he has wrought in Jesus Christ:

Now with joyful exultation
let us sing Jehovah's praise,
To the Rock of our salvation
loud hosannas let us raise;
Thankful tribute gladly bringing,
let us come before Him now,
And, with psalms His praises singing,
joyful in His presence bow.[8] ❖

7 *Acts of Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America*, 2011, 104. See also pages 31-32 and 92-93.

8 Psalter 255, stanza 1.

Andrew is a member of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Where We Stand

Actors, Swords, and Racetracks: Tertullian on Entertainment Madness in Ancient Rome

by Ryan Barnhill

We live in an entertainment-saturated world. To illustrate this, let's enter into any given home on a relaxing Saturday evening. Dad and son have their feet up on the couch, shouting with glee as two hockey players draw blood at center ice. Meanwhile, mom rests in the living room, taking pleasure in the promiscuous and slanderous behavior of the characters in her fiction book. Another brother sits downstairs, heart racing with excitement as he shoots and mutilates hundreds of enemy soldiers with a controller and TV. Sister is not home—she received free tickets from a friend to listen to the band everyone's been talking about lately.

Why another article on entertainment, you ask? Have we not long ago lost our battle against movies? Have not the comedies, music, and virtual realities of our world influenced the mind of our young people and young adults to such an extent that renewing the battle is a vain effort? By no means, is our cry! *Beacon Lights*, with the ancient church, must fight the battle against sinful entertainment. In a day in which church magazines advertise, rate, and review movies, and much of the church-world is swept up by the pleasures of our age, we stand with the ancient church against such worldliness.

Recently, I read a piece called *The Shows* (*De Spectaculis*), written by the church father Tertullian (150-220 or 240 A.D.). Little is known of Tertullian, but historians believe he labored either in Carthage or in Rome.[1] You may have heard it said before that our society today, especially Western society, closely reflects ancient Rome. I was taken aback by the application that Tertullian's warnings concerning entertainment and pleasure in Rome has for today. As you read this article, I hope that you, too, are simply astounded by the richness of instruction by the hand of this man, and apply it to your life as I have to mine. I was also struck how much I, and we all, have become so desensitized to the sinful entertainments and pleasures in our lives. I hope that Tertullian's piece can serve the purpose that it makes us more sensitive to the sin all around us, and more eager to serve God even in this pleasure-laden world. I want to present Tertullian's instructive and insightful discussion on entertainment and pleasure in ancient Rome, and then apply his teaching to today. After treating his discussion, we will briefly look at the proper view of entertainment, according to Tertullian.

To start off, Tertullian reminds his readers that the places and things used in the service of sin are not of themselves sinful. God created all things good; it is we who corrupt them. Says Tertullian,

> It cannot, then, be thought that what exists by God's own creative will is either foreign or hostile to Him; and if it is not opposed to Him, it cannot be regarded as injurious to His worshippers, as certainly it is not foreign to them. Beyond all doubt, too, the very buildings connected with the places of public amusement, composed as they are of rocks, stones, marbles, pillars, are things of God, Who has given these various things for the earth's embellishment.[2]

Perhaps this is obvious, but it is a necessary starting point. Hollywood corrupts with its filth, not your television; Nashville contaminates with its music laced with revenge, fornication, and drunkenness, not the radio itself.

But that which God has created good becomes a medium for sin by depraved man. Tertullian writes that the sport of equestrianism, of itself, was not sinful, but it became sinful when it was brought into the games: "In former days equestrianism was practiced in a simple way on horseback, and certainly its ordinary use had nothing sinful in it; but when it was dragged into the games, it passed from the service of God into the employment of demons."[3] Various aspects of equestrianism were dedicated to the gods; equestrianism, a good and pure activity of itself, became idolatrous when brought into the context of the games during that time.

…idolatry fills today's entertainment—the great idol of self.

Indeed, the games and entertainment of ancient Rome were permeated with all kinds of idolatry, and our entertainment today is no different. People do not dedicate college football games, soccer matches, and Hollywood productions to Jupiter or Mars. Yet, idolatry fills today's entertainment—the great idol of self. Take a look at entertainment or celebrity magazines in the check-out lanes of your local grocery store—woman X is divorcing man Y; so-and-so is suing so-and-so over some infringement on his rights; at bottom, these celebrities ask, what is good for me? Drug addiction, alcoholism, and scandals run rampant in the professional sports programs. Commercials on the radio and television aim at self-improvement, self-gratification, and self-worship. Take away the names of the gods and goddesses, insert the idols above under the great umbrella of "self," and the idolatry of Rome once again becomes manifest.

Tertullian not only charges sinful entertainment in ancient Rome for its idolatry, but also warns Christians of their duty to avoid entertainment because of the heathen people themselves in those places where the games and shows take place. Such a command can be found in Scripture. Tertullian states,

> Well, we never find it expressed with the same pre-

1 Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 2, pgs. 819- 821.

2 *The Master Christian Library: The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 3, The Shows, p. 144.

3 *The Master Christian Library: The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 3, The Shows, p. 152.

> cision [what he means here is that one cannot find this kind of command word for word in Scripture], "Thou shalt not enter circus or theater, thou shalt not look on combat or show;" as it is plainly laid down, "Thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not worship an idol; thou shalt not commit adultery or fraud." But we find that the first word of David bears on this very sort of thing [going to the circuses or theaters and combats or shows]: "Blessed," he says, "is the man who has not gone into the assembly of the impious, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of scorners."[4]

Tertullian broadly applies this verse to the shows and games of his day. No Christian ought to be found at the places where the heathen congregate. Tertullian, then, not only has in mind the entertainment itself, but the *unbelievers* present at the places of entertainment.

What Tertullian has to say about avoiding the gatherings of unbelievers is applicable to us today. What about those with whom we fellowship when we attend entertainment venues? We can be quick to judge the entertainment itself, but sometimes we don't think of the *people* watching the entertainment. Are the fans present at country music concerts those who are zealous for the worship of God? But the questions become harder, and involve even our attendance at sporting events, of themselves not sinful: what about our fellowship among those at a hockey game, for example, where swearing, gluttony, and drunkenness can be found? While I believe Christians may watch sports, Tertullian does seem to prick us where we do not want to be pricked. What effect does our fellowshipping with unbelievers have upon our hearts, even if the entertainment is not, for the most part, sinful of itself? It is true—we must live in the world, but our calling is to live not of the world. We must work with unbelievers, shop with unbelievers, etc.; but it's another thing to entertain ourselves with unbelievers. Let us as young people and young adults discuss this point of Tertullian among ourselves and think about it carefully!

We must work with unbelievers, shop with unbelievers, etc.; but it's another thing to entertain ourselves with unbelievers.

Tertullian does not stop with blaming sinful entertainment for its idolatry and for its erosion of the antithetical life, but makes one more devastating argument against Christian attendance at the shows. He does this by comparing the things of God with the sinful characteristics of entertainment in his day:

> God has enjoined us to deal calmly, gently, quietly, and peacefully with the Holy Spirit, because these things are alone in keeping with the goodness of His nature, with His tenderness and sensitiveness, and not to vex Him with rage, ill-nature, anger, or grief. Well, how shall this be made to accord with the shows? For the show always leads to spiritual agitation, since where there is pleasure, there is keenness of feeling giving pleasure its zest; and where there is keenness of feeling, there is rivalry giving in turn its zest to that. Then, too, where you have rivalry, you have rage, bitterness, wrath and grief, with all bad things which flow from them—the whole entirely out of keeping with the religion of Christ.[5]

Place yourself for a moment in the coliseum at Rome. You sit among the thousands of spectators as they yell wildly and shake their fists at two gladiators who are fighting to the death. The men around you have placed bets on a certain gladiator to win the battle; another man curses because his fighter is on the losing end; as you glance behind you, a woman is absolutely transfixed on the scene, unable to take her eyes away for a moment, perspiring heavily in her nervous anticipation. Hardly an environment for Christians!

Tertullian addresses our hearts. He speaks the Word of God when he says Christians must deal calmly, gently, quietly, and peacefully. He makes clear that the Bible forbids us to vex God with rage, ill-nature, anger, or grief. We too, with the church father, must examine the direction of our hearts when we place ourselves among the fellowship of unbelievers in the amusements of this world, as we watch the gruesome horror movie or the comedy with dirty jokes, or as we listen to certain kinds of music promoting an immoral lifestyle. What is filling our hearts and minds? Psychologists are dead-wrong when they judge video game violence, for example, merely by the outward rage it causes in teenagers. Sin starts in the heart. Sin is already found in the ungodly passions of our flesh. It does not matter that rock music does not lead you and me to an outward life given to the service of the devil in sin, for it has corrupted the heart

4 *The Master Christian Library: The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 3, The Shows, p. 146.

5 *The Master Christian Library: The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 3, The Shows, p. 157.

already with its wicked lyrics. We, Christian young people and young adults, may never justify our use of sinful entertainment because we say it has no outwardly sinful effects on our behavior—Tertullian demonstrates that sin starts in the heart.

Because Tertullian speaks of sin present already in the heart, he forces us as Christians to be very strict with respect to what we allow for our entertainment. Sinful entertainment is not a matter of Christian liberty. We must always measure our entertainment against the standard of God's Word. We may, I believe, and we must, as parents and young people, make definite lists for ourselves: what is acceptable (Christian) entertainment, and what is unacceptable (sinful) entertainment? Certainly, we must then agree, for instance, that all video games with shooting of humans, no matter the enemy and the circumstances, are sinful, because they excite in the heart the lust for blood and murder; much of country music glorifies drunkenness, fornication, greed, and a multitude of other sins, and ought to be detestable to the Christian; books are not exempt from criticism, either—no Christian ought to read literature that glorifies sin, for sin is horrifying to the child of God; the same can and should be said concerning television, movies, the internet, and all other forms of entertainment.

But Tertullian does not end his writing with the negative. I include here a lengthy quotation, simply breathtaking in beauty—truly a treasure from church history! With these thrilling words we positively conclude our treatment of the Christian and entertainment:

> With such dainties [the sinful entertainments] as these let the devil's guests be feasted. The places and the times, the inviter too, are theirs. Our banquets, our nuptial joys, are yet to come. We cannot sit down in fellowship with them, as neither can they with us. Things in this matter go by their turns. Now they have gladness and we are troubled. "The world," says Jesus, "shall rejoice; ye shall be sorrowful." Let us mourn, then, while the heathen are merry, that in the day of their sorrow we may rejoice; lest, sharing now in their gladness, we share then also in their grief. Thou art too dainty, Christian, if thou wouldst have pleasure in this life as well as in the next; nay, a fool thou art, if thou thinkest this life's pleasures to be really pleasures. The philosophers, for instance, give the name of pleasure to quietness and repose; in that they have their bliss; in that they find entertainment: they even glory in it. You long for the goal, and the stage, and the dust, and the place of combat! I would have you answer me this question: Can we not live without pleasure, who cannot but with pleasure die? For what is our wish but the apostle's, to leave the world, and be taken up into the fellowship of our Lord? You have your joys where you have your longings. Even as things are, if your thought is to spend this period of existence in enjoyments, how are you so ungrateful as to reckon insufficient, as not thankfully to recognize the many and exquisite pleasures God has bestowed upon you? For what more delightful than to have God the Father and our Lord at peace with us, than revelation of the truth, than confession of our errors, than pardon of the innumerable sins of our past life? What greater pleasure than distaste of pleasure itself, contempt of all that the world can give, true liberty, a pure conscience, a contented life, and freedom from all fear of death? What nobler than to tread under foot the gods of the nations—to exorcise evil spirits—to perform cures—to seek divine revealings—to live to God? These are the pleasures, these the spectacles that befit Christian men—holy, everlasting, free. Count of these as your circus games, fix your eyes on the courses of the world, the gliding seasons, reckon up the periods of time, long for the goal of the final consummation, defend the societies of the churches, be startled at God's signal, be roused up at the angel's trump, glory in the palms of martyrdom. If the literature of the stage delight you, we have literature in abundance of our own—plenty of verses, sentences, songs, proverbs; and these not fabulous, but true; not tricks of art, but plain realities. Would you have also fightings and wrestlings? Well, of these there is no lacking, and they are not of slight account. Behold unchastity overcome by chastity, perfidy slain by faithfulness, cruelty stricken by compassion, impudence thrown into the shade by modesty: these are the contests we have among us, and in these we win our crowns. Would you have something of blood too? You have Christ's.[6] ❖

6 *The Master Christian Library: The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 3, The Shows, pgs. 167, 168.

Ryan is a member of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

Church News

BAPTISMS

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body..." I Cor. 12:13

The sacrament of holy baptism was administered to:

Lily Ruth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joe Lubbers—Byron Center, MI
Colby Jon, son of Mr. & Mrs. Terry VanMaanen—Calvary, IA
Emma Renae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Matt denHartog—Faith, MI
Jamon Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Hanko—Faith, MI
Avel Russel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Alex Mowery—Georgetown, MI
Faith Noelle, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Bill Leep—Grace, MI
Nathan Mark, son of Mr. & Mrs. Pete Boverhof—Grandville, MI
Melise Brienne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Corey Terpstra—Holland, MI
Hazel Kate, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dan VanUffelen—Hope, MI
Cora Eden, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Matt Overway—Hope, MI
Adelynn Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Booth—Hudsonville, MI
Kate Addison, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Blankespoor—Hull, IA
Zeke Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brian VanEngen—Hull, IA
Junior Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Postma—Hull, IA
Dalia Jamie, daughter of Mrs. Nicole Kooienga—Loveland, CO
Harold Silas, son of Mr. & Mrs. John Tolsma—Loveland, CO
Reagan Olivia, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Greg Bruinsma—Peace, IL
Abegail, Abraham, Aaron, Axcel and Azaleia, children of Bro. Buboy Prosia - Philippines
James Louis, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Krosschell—Randolph, WI
Jace Hayward, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Regnerus—Randolph, WI
Lauren Jessica, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Hanko—Southwest, MI
Lucas Marc and Logan Jacob, twin sons of Mr. & Mrs. Marc Kuiper—Southwest, MI
Noah Jay, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ben Zandstra—Southwest, MI

Adult baptism was administerd to:

Courtney Vander Stel—Hudsonville, MI
Buboy Prosia—Philippines

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." I Tim 6:13

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

Ryan Mark Zandstra—Crete, IL
Melissa Kaptein—Faith, MI
Emily Moelker—Faith, MI
Jason Corson—First, MI
Ruth Kamps—Hudsonville, MI

MARRIAGES

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh." Gen. 2:24

United in the bond of holy matrimony were:

Mr. Ryan Karsemeyer and Miss Brittany Hordyke—Georgetown, MI
Mr. Derek Kuiper and Miss Lydia Bruinsma—Grandville, MI
Mr. David VanDenTop and Miss Gina Kamps—Grandville, MI
Mr. Brad Kiel and Miss Sarah VanderMeer—Kalamazoo, MI
Mr. Scott Meyer and Miss Kara Miersma—Redlands, CA

Find the underlined words in the puzzle below:

"So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel. And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word" (I Kings 18:20, 21).

"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors…" (I Peter 2:13, 14).

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"LITTLE LIGHTS"

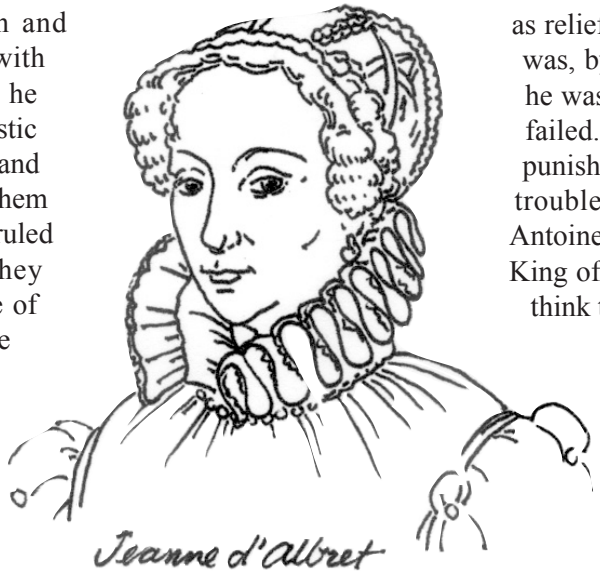
... let it shine !

A Royal House (2)

by Connie Meyer

The crown fit Jeanne d'Albret well. Four days after her coronation in 1555, she secretly wrote a letter to a Protestant nobleman. She wanted to talk about how matters of the Reformation could be helped along in Navarre. But she had to be careful. Even though she agreed with the doctrines of Calvin, she continued to worship at the Roman Catholic Cathedral at Pau. The times were not safe for those who believed such new "opinions."

Her husband, Antoine, let it be known that he was Protestant through and through. He did not go along with her to the grand cathedral, and he invited Huguenot (French Calvinistic Protestant) ministers to Navarre and to the castle at Pau to preach for them there. The Pope and those who ruled in France saw what he did. They threatened him with war because of it. Jeanne was right. She had to be careful.



But ought she be so careful? She could "halt between two opinions" only so long.

It had been five years since she had received her crown. She looked out one of the castle windows onto the grounds below. Henry, her son, was seven years old and was playing with other young boys of Pau. They were all dressed in the simple clothes of the peasantry, including Prince Henry. Jeanne was glad. She wanted him to have a childhood unlike her own. At only four years of age she had been sent away to another castle to be educated there, apart from her mother and father. Her uncle, King Francis I of France, had wanted it so. It had made for an unhappy childhood. Yes, she was glad to watch Henry laughing and playing now with the other boys. Princess Catherine had joined the family in the royal house as well. Jeanne wished a happy childhood for this little one-year-old daughter, too.

But what might be the carefree joys of childhood were far past for Jeanne. Trouble was brewing in nearby France. A plot had begun to try to overthrow the young new king there, a king who was Catholic and who was greatly influenced by his very Catholic mother and men at court. This king was only sixteen years old. Some noblemen in France wanted Louis de Bourbon on the throne instead. There would be relief from the lack of law and order if Louis ruled, as well as relief for persecuted Huguenots. Louis was, by blood, in line to the throne, and he was very Protestant. But the plot had failed. Those noblemen behind it were punished with death. Why might all this trouble Jeanne? Because her husband, Antoine, was Louis' brother. Now, did the King of France, his mother, and the court think that Louis and Antoine had played a part in that plot too?

Disobeying and overthrowing the civil authority of a king was a serious matter. Scripture had things to say about that. Calvin had been consulted as well, and he had advised against it. The outcome could not go well.

Louis and Antoine were tricked into visiting France. Louis was imprisoned there, and Antoine was put under house arrest. All Huguenots all over France were in grave danger of being killed in a matter of days. Soldiers were coming even now to Pau to force Jeanne to arrest her own Huguenot ministers in Navarre—which she would refuse to do. On top of that, Spain was threatening to take over Navarre from her border below. Jeanne fled with young Henry and Catherine to a safer town.

No, being careful could not help her anymore. The queen of Navarre knew she must have the courage to stand with the Huguenots, or give in to all.

Jeanne d'Albret chose to stand with the Huguenots.

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

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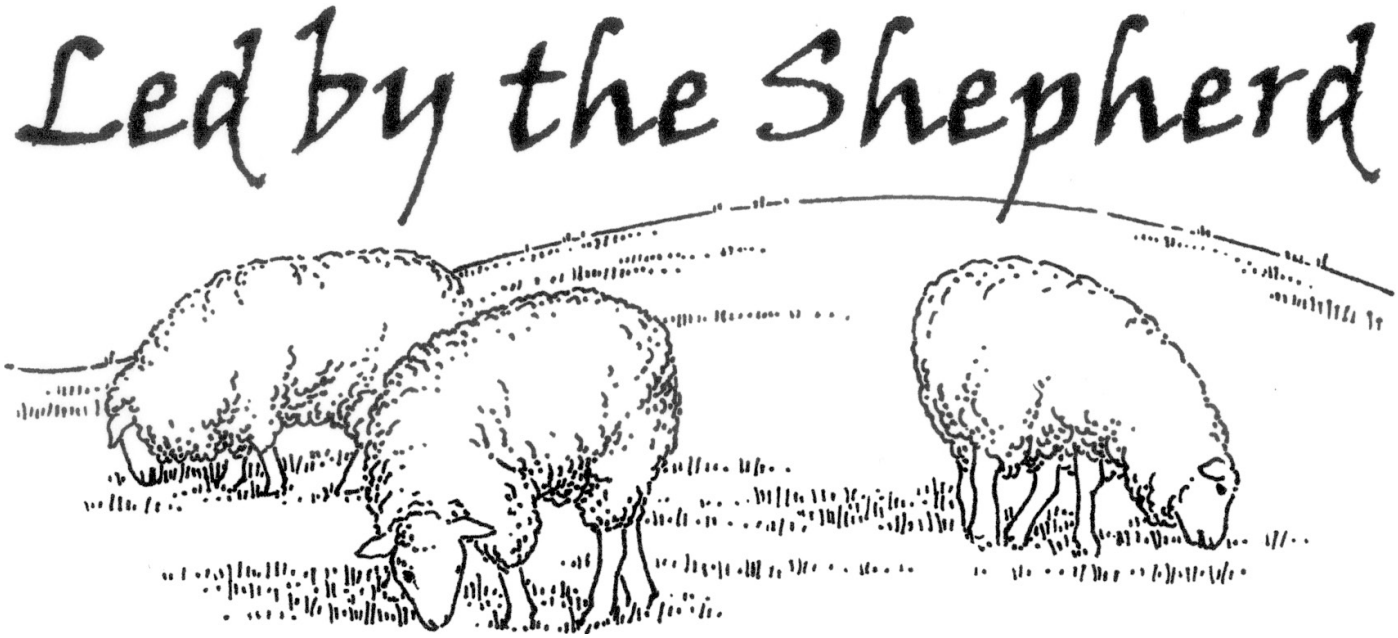

The Shepherd
The Sheep
The Blessed Relationship

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