

The Standard Bearer

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Neither poverty nor riches

Rev. Dennis Lee

How could any Protestant go 'home' to Rome?

Prof. Barrett Gritters

Poor

Rev. William Langerak

The Synod of Dordt (8) Baptism

Prof. Douglas Kuiper

Whom are you inviting to the Synod of Dordt Conference?

Rev. Cory Griess



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Contents

Meditation

- 271 Neither poverty nor riches

Rev. Dennis Lee

Editorial

- 273 How could any Protestant go 'home' to Rome?

Prof. Barrett Gritters

Letters

- 276 Qualifications of elders

- 277 Obedience to the call of the gospel (part 2)

Rev. Kenneth Koole

A word fitly spoken

- 283 Poor

Rev. William Langerak

Dordt 400: Memorial stones

- 284 The Synod of Dordt (8)

Baptism

Prof. Douglas Kuiper

Things which must shortly come to pass

- 285 Premillennialism (25)

Postscript: Antinomism

Prof. David Engelsma

Pertaining to our churches—Contact Committee

- 287 Whom are you inviting to the Synod of Dordt Conference?

Rev. Cory Griess

Bring the books...

- 288 *Micah—Proclaiming the Incomparable God*

Dr. Julian Kennedy

Activities

- 289 News from our churches

Mr. Perry Van Egdome



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Meditation

Rev. Dennis Lee, pastor of Bethel Protestant Reformed Church in Roselle, Illinois

Neither poverty nor riches

“Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die; Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? Or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.”

Proverbs 30:7-9

This is the time of year when many who read this magazine observe Prayer Day with a worship service, in which we look to God to bless us in the year ahead so that our earthly needs are taken care of. Traditionally, if we are farmers, we ask at the beginning of the planting season that God give us a good season of growing under rain and sunshine, and a good harvest in the end. And if we are not farmers, we nonetheless ask that He provide for the needs of our family, for the needs of God’s kingdom, and for the poor among us.

In light of this occasion of Prayer Day, these verses we consider are very suitable for our meditation. It is the prayer of one called Agur, and there are two requests in it. In the first request, Agur prays that God “remove from [him] all vanity and lies.” Very pointedly, Agur, like the psalmist in Psalm 31:6, is praying for idols or lying vanities to be removed from his life. Positively, he asks the one true God to give him the word of truth. Accordingly, it is with such an earnest, truthful spirit that Agur makes his second request to God. This is the main request of these verses and is our focus in this meditation.

This prayer of Agur, which includes his second request, is an *urgent* request. Its urgency is made known in two ways. In the first place, note the word “require” that he uses. When we speak this way among ourselves and say “I require something of you,” we are using the language of a command. When we say to our children, “I require you to mow the lawn,” or when our boss says to us, “I require you to work this Saturday,” those receiving these statements know they are receiving commands. They know who the boss is. But when the language of a command or requirement is used by a child of

God to his heavenly Father, the idea is not that we are commanding or bossing God around, but rather that we are pleading with God in great urgency. Agur’s request was a very urgent request of his God.

And the strength of his urgency is great! For, in the second place, he also says to God in his prayer, “*Deny me them not before I die.*” Few things make a request more urgent and solemn than when a child of God has his day of death in view. Being conscious of the limited measure of his days, he purposes to live the rest of his life without any regrets. While he is still allowed by God to continue on his earthly pilgrimage, Agur would have this request be answered by his God. “*Deny me not!*” he pleads. Such is his urgency that there is great intensity, even a sense of desperation in the depths of his soul that his request be heard and answered by God. Do our prayers lack intensity? We can learn from the urgency and earnestness of Agur in prayer.

But there is more. As much as emotions run deep in the heart and soul of Agur, it is not to the point where his mind is not clear as to what he is pleading for. His urgent request of God was also *precise* and *accurate*. It was very clear to Agur what exactly he would petition the Lord for. The precision of his request comes out of the formulation of his request, which is “Neither A nor B but C.” Such clarity and precision in his request to God reveals a serious contemplation as he prepared to pray. Agur was not a wishy-washy, whimsical person. He was no careless, superficial child of God who prays every now and then, prays superficially, and does not give much thought to his life and its priorities. Agur was one who, by God’s grace, lived his life consciously before his God. And what does he say to his God?

First, Agur says, “*Give me neither poverty.*” Poverty refers to the state of life on earth in which we are constantly finding ourselves looking for the basic necessities of life. Agur pleads with God that he not be poor. Then second, Agur continues, “*Nor riches.*” How many church-goers in our day will pray this? Let the Pentecostal and mega-church preachers who promote the “health and wealth gospel” and all their followers take note of this prayer! Agur’s petition is the exact *oppo-*

site of what you are proclaiming! Away with that false gospel! Away with the message that “if you do what that preacher says, then God will add to your earthly wealth”! Away with the desire, zeal and goal to amass earthly riches! For Agur, under divine inspiration, says, “Nor riches.”

But this prayer of Agur is also for those who reject a “health and wealth gospel.” It is for everyone serious about his faith. Let what Agur says here speak also to you! How many times does not a child of God harbor thoughts, desires, and aspirations for himself or for his children to obtain abundant earthly prosperity? Living in our environment where we are surrounded with so much earthly wealth, materialism, and greed, do our souls share something of the prayerful desire of Agur here when he pleads with his God, “Give me neither poverty *nor riches*”? Are we willing to pray what Agur did?

Nor is Agur done. Moving from the negative to the positive, he continues, “*Feed me with food convenient for me.*” Literally, he says to God, “*Feed me with the food of my portion.*” This is the Old Testament equivalent of the fourth petition that Jesus taught us to pray, “*Give us this day our daily bread.*” In other words, “Give me what I *need*—nothing more, nothing less!” That need varies according to our circumstances: single, married without children, married with one child or with more children. But “*Give me what I need*” was the positive part of the request of Agur. How striking is Agur’s prayer!

As striking as his prayer is, so also *striking* are the *reasons* that Agur gives for his prayer. First, note the reason he gives not to be rich. Under inspiration, Agur gives us his reason: “*Lest I be full and deny thee and say, who is Jehovah?*” About this, we may say that it is certainly not sinful to be rich. There were godly men in the Bible who were rich, such as Abraham and Job. And certainly too, the sins of King Solomon were not his great riches, but rather his marriage to many wives and wives of the heathen nations. Yet, when we are rich, when we are full and have great abundance, when have so much more than we need, we are greatly tempted to deny our covenant God. Were not the Israelites warned by God that when they entered into the promised land and enjoyed the abundance of the fruits of the land, they must not forget Him (cf. Deut. 6:10-12)? And did they not forget Him, and soon after that deny Him by going after the idol gods of the heathen nations? Agur was well familiar with that history, and even more familiar with the weakness of his own flesh. Most of all, he abhorred intensely the thought of denying his covenant God.

Do you, dear reader, share that same sentiment with Agur? How true it is that all who have sought earthly riches have been ruined! The apostle Paul tells us just that in I Timothy 6:9-10, “But they will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

But just as striking is the second reason Agur gives, this time for the second part of his petition, which is that he not be poor. The reason has nothing to do with himself. It has nothing to do with the sufferings that come with being poor. But the reason had to do with God once again! Covenantal, God-centered, and deeply spiritual was the thinking of Agur! The reason is, “*lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*” Being poor, he will be put in a grave position in which he will be tempted to take God’s Name in vain. It could be that in his poverty he steals, and then under oath in court, he commits perjury to cover up his sin, which violates the third commandment of God. Or it could be that in his sore affliction of poverty he is tempted to take God’s Name in vain by cursing, either directly or indirectly by complaining and murmuring as God’s people did in the wilderness. Agur had no desire in the state of poverty or riches to blaspheme the Name of his God and hurt his blessed relationship of friendship with Him. Thus, he asks for neither poverty nor riches, but only for what he needs!

Having considered Agur’s prayer, let us conclude with three thoughts in the form of questions.

First, are we in the right spiritual state to make this request? If not, why? We need to ask God to search our hearts so that we are led to examine our lives carefully to determine the reasons why. May God give us grace to pray this prayer with the sincerity and urgency of Agur.

Second, what if God were to give us either poverty or riches? He might just do that! If God gives you, His beloved child, poverty, then submit to God and humbly accept that as His will for you. And then, pray mightily and constantly that you not take His Name in vain. But at the same time, do not be afraid to turn to the proper places for help: to family first, and if there is not enough there, to the deacons. God provides such care of us through them. When God gives us poverty, He also gives us deacons, whom He is pleased to use to meet our earthly needs. And if He gives you, His beloved child, riches, then also submit to Him, and accept

that as His will for you. And then, pray mightily and constantly that you are a good steward of those riches, handling them so that you do not deny Him, but rather purposefully glorify Him and serve Him and His kingdom through them.

Third and finally, what was the possibility for Agur

and, therefore, also our possibility for praying this prayer? Nothing else but the wisdom of the book of Proverbs, which is the wisdom of God in Christ crucified for us! In Christ we pray and grow in our hearts and lives! Trust in Christ and look to God for all your needs!



Editorial

Prof. Barrett Gritters, professor of Practical Theology in the Protestant Reformed Seminary

How could any Protestant go ‘home’ to Rome?

One year ago, I reported that many Protestants are ready to “cross the Tiber” into Roman Catholicism. The expression “crossing the Tiber” refers to fording the river that runs alongside Rome, symbolic of the barrier between Rome and Protestants. With grief, I had to report that even leaders in our mother church are talking about making the crossing.¹ Some church leaders are sending not-so-subtle messages to members: *It is permissible, and probably time, to unite with the Catholic Church.* One Calvin Seminary faculty member wrote that Protestants and Catholics are “pilgrims on the same journey, serving one Lord with one faith” who “will come nearer to their goal if they walk together than if they walk separately.” If I had not read his words with my own eyes, I would have been disbelieving of such a report.

The campaign to bring Protestants (‘Evangelicals’) into Rome gained momentum from a 1995 project called ECT—Evangelicals and Catholics Together. ECT is an ad hoc committee that in 1995 published a major document, signed by influential Roman Catholic and Protestant leaders, expressing agreement in fundamental areas of doctrine and voicing commitment not to proselytize one another’s members. Since 1995, ECT has published at least nine more statements of unity in faith. Protestantism’s friendliness with Rome, however, has far deeper roots (down to the early 1900s) and a much wider reach than ECT (extending broadly into Protestantism).

In the year since I wrote that editorial, no other alarms have been raised about this movement. The silence in church magazines of conservative Protestantism is grievous. The original pushback in a few good books has seemed to end. A smattering of Internet articles speak out against it, but even these are not from the sources we would hope—Reformed and Presbyterian churches.²

Members of denominations whose leaders *support* this move to Rome ought to be up in arms. In churches that are *silent*, Christians ought to ask their leaders why no warnings are issued. Readers who have relatives and friends in denominations that lean toward Rome should equip them with good information, so they can take the action God requires of them: protest the leanings or leave those churches, for the salvation of their generations. Those inclined to *join* such a denomination where the children are not inoculated against false doctrine may be warned.

This is their warning, given in love for their souls: To go to Rome is to lose the gospel. There is no good news in Rome. In order to join Rome, those churches that call themselves Protestant must abandon the truth for which our fathers died and on account of which they left Rome. By definition, Protestants *protest*. Their protest was against *Rome*. By courting Rome, these Protestants abandon Protestantism.

How could it happen that churches so radically different historically could consider each other of the same faith and on the same journey?

¹ See my editorial of March 1, 2018, “Gathering at the river,” in which I referred especially to the Fall 2017 issue of *Calvin Theological Seminary Forum* entitled, “Reformation Reflections: What can Catholics and Protestants learn from one another today?” In this issue, five prominent members of the seminary propose rapprochement with the Roman Catholic Church.

² The seminary gets dozens of magazines from a wide spectrum of churches. Most ignore it. One exception to this silence is *The Trinity Review* (trinityfoundation.org). Another are the works of D.G. Hart, most recently his, *Still Protesting: Why the Reformation Matters*, Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2018.

Evangelicals (Protestants) and Catholics are coming together

Definition of a few terms is in order.

Catholics: A reference to *Roman* Catholicism, the world-wide religion based in Rome under the pope. To refer to followers of the pope merely as *Catholics* is mistaken since the real *catholic*, that is, *universal* church is the true church of Christ, not Rome. Followers of the pope are *Roman* Catholics.

Evangelicals: A term harder to define, but generally considered to be *conservative Protestants*. *Protestants* are non-Roman-Catholic Christians, but these are *conservative* Protestants. They have not gone *liberal* in rejecting the authority of Scripture, the necessity of regeneration for salvation, miracles, the Virgin Birth, etc. Their claim to retain the *gospel* explains the label *evangelical*. So, Evangelicals have been the branch of Protestantism that seeks to maintain Reformation orthodoxy. They are found in most branches of Protestantism, from Lutherans to Baptists, Presbyterians to Pentecostals to Methodists.³

Together: A reference to reconciliation. Some Evangelicals and Roman Catholics desire to break down what walls still separate them. They meet unofficially to discuss common beliefs and assure one another that what differences exist between them fall into three categories: a great deal is simple misunderstanding or misrepresentation; much is explained by historical circumstances no longer applicable; discussing the rest will cultivate deeper mutual appreciation.

Ecumenical: Relating to a movement that aims at world-wide union of all Christian churches. The word comes from the Greek for “the inhabited world.” The “togetherness” that Protestants and Roman Catholics seek is nothing less than the complete unity of all Christian denominations, world-wide.

Roman Catholics and Evangelicals *are* reconciling. Evangelicals are ecstatic about the project. Roman Catholicism is on board, even though initially, in the early 1900s, it was cold toward any ecumenical efforts because of fear it would “lose its distinctive Catholic dimensions.” That changed in 1962 when the pope convened a major council (Vatican II) that brought the Roman Catholic Church into the ecumenical movement. Vatican II declared unity with their “separated brethren” one of the “principle and essential goals of the RCC.”⁴

How can this be?

How can it be that Evangelicals, most of whom formerly said “Catholics are not Christians,” are now able to see unity as possible, desirable, even necessary? And why is Roman Catholicism no longer fearful of losing its distinctives?

The answer has two parts: Evangelicals are no longer evangelical. And Roman Catholics are not changing but engaging in creative shapeshifting. Evangelicals are guilty of massive compromise of Reformation faith. Roman Catholics are back to their old tricks, guilty of subterfuge.

From the side of Evangelicals, consider three major factors that contribute to their ability to consider Rome their home. At the same time, ask whether your own church or family may be guilty of these weaknesses, and thus in your generations may be vulnerable to Rome, *where there is no gospel*.

1. Ignorance of Scripture

Evangelicals can consider Rome as home because they are ignorant of the doctrines that stood at the heart of the Reformation. *Rome* has always depended on their sheep’s ignorance, but now Evangelicalism is destroyed for lack of knowledge. While some Evangelical leaders are educated, most of the common members are woefully ignorant. Public education (not Christian schools) is the norm and good catechetical instruction in Scripture and creeds is rare. This paves the way for the attitude that, as long as someone sincerely says “I love Jesus” and lives a moral life, he must be a Christian. A hundred years ago *liberal* Protestantism imploded from ignorance. Now, Evangelicals follow the same path. This time, to Rome.

2. Distaste for battle

Formerly, Evangelicals understood that Christians must adopt a militant stance in the world. They understood the antithesis and knew that engaging in spiritual and theological battles was essential for the church’s existence. They wrote “Onward, Christian Soldiers” and sang it with conviction. Now, most have forgotten that the church is a battling church, that Christians are to be armed (Eph. 6:10-17). Many have removed the battle hymns from their songbooks and would sneer if you would tell them that your Lord is “a man of war” (Ex. 15:3). So when someone proposes that there are errors in the Roman church that must be fought, false teachings that must be destroyed in ecclesiastical battles, these Evangelicals react with surprise and dismay.

³ There are other uses of the word *evangelical*, for example, in some denominational names. These denominations are not necessarily associating themselves with “evangelicalism.”

⁴ This, and much information for this article, are from the pro-

ECT book, *Evangelicals and Catholics Together at Twenty: Vital Statements on Contested Topics*, eds., Timothy George and Thomas Guarino (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2015).

Their misunderstanding of the peace-making calling of the church mutes their war cry.

3. *Abandonment of Reformation principles*

The majority of Evangelical Christianity today has renounced the gifts God restored to His church at the Reformation. The reader who doubts this would do well to go to the bookstores and read what is published by major Christian publishers. It will soon be clear that churches have lost the marks of the true church: truth in *preaching*; proper administration of the *sacraments*—a part of the larger concept of biblical *worship*; and Christian *discipline*—a part of the larger reality of proper *church government*. Let me explain:

Church government. There is no pope in Evangelicalism, but there are many little ‘popes.’ They are the presidents of their ministries, the senior pastors (think CEOs) of their mega-churches, the celebrity speakers on the conference tours, the big names that make money for the publishing houses. How much weight do these heavyweights carry in their circles? How often do Christians look to them as their authority rather than Scripture?

Christian discipline. Christian discipline is “rare as a white crow,” as already 100 years ago Abraham Kuyper lamented was the case in the Netherlands. Accountability to a body of elders, and a plurality of males who exercise authority in the church, an authority checked by the priesthood of all believers who know the Scripture, are strange concepts in Evangelicalism today.

Biblical worship. Worship governed by Scripture has been lost, too. The importance of proper worship as a mark of the true church appears in Calvin’s somewhat surprising testimony during the Reformation. Orthodox *teaching*, he said, stood in the *service* of proper *worship*. In other words, for Calvin, God-glorifying worship was the chief thing; truth served worship. The sacraments show that in a unique way. Proper administration of the sacraments involves both doctrine and worship. What the Roman Catholic church *taught* about the sacraments denied the gospel and, therefore, how they *used* the sacraments in worship robbed God of His honor.

What has happened in Evangelicalism with regard to worship and the sacraments is no less tragic because, although the *form* of their corruption of worship and the sacraments is different, it is just as dishonoring to God. Evangelicalism’s loss of proper worship is explained by the abandonment of the “regulative principle of worship.” *How* to worship is no longer governed by the rule of the second commandment but left to the judgments of men and women. Regarding the sacraments, baptism either is denied covenant children, or it is considered unimportant. And the ‘fence’ around the Lord’s table was broken down when discipline fell away, so that the sup-

per is profaned as badly in much of Evangelicalism as it is in Roman Catholicism. The Reformers would view Protestant worship today as smoking ruins. Weeping, they would say that the worship they died to restore is gone.

Could your generations end in Rome?

It is easy to point out the errors of apostate Evangelicalism. Of Romanism. Of *others*. But self-reflection is always in order. Let *us* take heed who think we stand. Remember, the demise of Evangelicalism did not happen overnight.

Ignorance. How thoroughly are *we* “taught of the Lord” (Is. 54:13)? Do we know, for example, what the RCC teaches about salvation by grace and justification through faith? How committed to reading and studying Scripture is my family? Is it our meditation all the day (Psalm 119:97)? How much time do we and our families spend in the Word, compared with leisure, sports, entertainment?

Authority. In a theological discussion, how inclined might we be to give more weight to the views of a man with a big name than to the plain teaching of Scripture? At the time of the Reformation, men did not care so much about what the Bible taught as they did about what ‘papa dixit’ (the pope says). Are we returning to this?

Discipline. Are we thankful for our elders, willing to engage in this work? Do we support and pray for them when discipline is exercised among us? How much do we initiate discipline (Matt. 18)? Do we discipline *ourselves* and our own children?

Militancy. If we sometimes properly loathe battle because we are “for peace” (Ps. 120:7), are we nevertheless always willing to be armed, ready to fight? Are we *always* fighting sin within so that we understand the threat of sin every day? Do we teach our children to be good soldiers, to put on the armor, to pray for hands that war and fingers that fight (Ps. 144:1)?

Worship. Is the Lord pleased with our worship? Proper worship includes a humbled heart, a right spirit, genuinely dependent on the righteousness of Christ alone and deeply grateful that His grace has been extended to *us*. Is God any less displeased with worship that is outwardly proper when our *hearts* are not right than He is with the improper worship in Evangelicalism?

If we are not spiritually cautious in all these respects, what has happened to bring Evangelicalism to Rome could happen in our families or churches. It will not be the *natural* result, but the severe and righteous judgment of God. The lesson of Evangelicalism is that it does not take more than a couple generations.

(to be continued)

Qualifications of elders

Thanks for your recent articles on elders.

Knowledge of Scripture is essential, but without wisdom and love it could be ineffective, harmful, or even dangerous.

Unless a man loves God, loves the people of God, and has a heart to serve them, he will never be a good elder. He must serve in love (Gal 5:13). He must, with all of us, have what Paul desired for the Ephesians: “strength in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts.” An elder should be gentle and kind, humble and learning, trustworthy, friendly, a man of prayer. Read I Corinthians 13 with the words “If I [as an elder]...have all faith...but have not love....”

In your second article you said you would not “trust... anyone who was not (knowledgeable in Scripture and Reformed creeds)” and in your first article you used the tired term ‘worldly psychologist.’ If an elder had to counsel a female rape victim or one of incest or marital abuse, I would think his primary goal would be to mourn with her and comfort her from Scripture, helping her seek justice. A good Christian psychologist, Reformed or not, will work within her faith framework to help her heal, and understand and process trauma. A good elder is not trained in this area of counsel, nor need he be. Thankfully, we do have excellent resources in Christian counselors; wisdom is knowing when to employ people with the compassionate, God-given skills of Christian counseling. Elders don’t have the time to do this kind of counseling. Their job is to convey what God says to His people about truth, about love, and to uphold them spiritually.

Love is the main qualification of an elder. An elder without love is like a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal—an unprofitable, jangling noise.

Faith Noorman

Response:

Mrs. Noorman’s letter makes some important points, but is not really a response to my articles, which were on the *training* of elders. Her interest is to remind us that elders must love God and love the people of God. Indeed, without love, an elder cannot and may not serve Christ. Elders must pray for loving hearts; the people of God must elect men who manifest love. But the editorials were speaking of those areas in which elders can receive *training*. Primarily, this is in the knowledge of the Reformed faith, of Reformed church government, and of counseling.

A few other things should be said about the letter, though. First, it is not true that elders are not trained, nor called, nor have the time, to help wounded women “heal” or “process trauma.” They are, and do. Elders may not have skills to help her in *all* the ways she needs; in which case, the elders look for others (preferably Reformed Christians) with specialized skills in these areas. But an elder *is* called, trained, and must take the time, to help wounded women heal and process trauma. This is exactly what Scripture mandates elders and pastors to do. It will be a grievous day when Protestant Reformed elders simply give over their wounded women to counselors outside the church, with the explanation that they have neither time, skills, nor calling to it. *That* will be the loss of love.

Second, Mrs. Noorman may be thankful if there are “excellent resources in Christian counselors” where she lives. Pastors in her area would benefit from a list of the names. If it is true for her, can the same be said in Belfast and Limerick, Alberta and Ontario, California, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Washington, etc.?

Third, the experience of many Reformed pastors with alleged “Christian resources” often is very disappointing. I know of women who testify that counseling from the “Christian” counselors was in fact contrary to Scripture. One said that she did not even realize it until some years later, damage having been already done by bad counsel. Over 35 years a minister in West Michigan, I have had more than enough experience with Christian counselors to know that some of them give very poor advice. Using “Christian resources” must be done with greatest caution, one of which (after you have found one based on good referrals) is to have the elder or pastor know just what counsel is being given, so that it can be *tested* with Scripture. And *supplemented* with Scripture, for many do not explain Scripture and pray.

Fourth, the phrase “worldly psychologists” is criticized as a “tired term.” Reformed Christians should tire of that term at the same time they weary of referring to Arminians as false teachers. There is as much damage done by worldly psychologists as by Arminian preachers. In the extreme case in which elders, pastor, or parent would recommend one of God’s sheep to use a non-Christian counselor for a serious emotional or mental problem, he should stay as close as possible to that sheep, to filter out the chaff that will be mixed in the kernels of good advice that may be given. This has always been my counsel to God’s troubled people, and it is my earnest counsel to elders today who ask.

In the end, may God give to the churches qualified el-

ders who love the sheep, are wise, and are trained in all the areas they can be. Also in the calling to “be assistant with their good counsel and advice to the ministers of the Word, yea, also to serve all Christians with advice and consolation” (Form for Ordination of Elders).

Prof. B. Gritters

Editor’s Note: The March 1 issue contained a letter from Rev. A. Lanning and the first half of Rev. K. Koole’s reply. However, prior to that printing, Rev. Lanning had sent the SB a revised letter, one that we intended to print, and to which Rev. Koole is responding. We inadvertently sent the wrong letter to the printer. We apologize to Rev. Lanning for this error. Therefore, in this issue we print the revised letter that Rev. Lanning intended to be printed, as well as the second half of Rev. Koole’s reply.

Obedience to the call of the gospel (part 2)

Dear Editors,

I write regarding the editorial in the October 1, 2018 *Standard Bearer* entitled “What must I do...?” The editorial intends to teach that obedience is necessary and possible for the child of God. With this doctrine, I am in full agreement. However, I believe the editorial errs when it explains the relationship between man’s obedience and man’s salvation. The editorial teaches that if a man desires to be saved, he first must perform some obedient activity. By teaching this, the editorial teaches salvation by man’s work, rather than salvation entirely apart from man’s work, that is, salvation by faith alone.

Allow me to point out three places where the editorial develops the idea that if a man desires to be saved, he must first do something. First, on page 7, the editorial poses the question, “And then, [is it altogether improper for preachers], in the end, to go so far as to declare that if a man would be saved, there is that which he *must* do?” The editorial answers that it is biblical and Reformed for a preacher to declare that if a man would be saved, there is that which he must do. In this statement, salvation is the desired goal. “If a man would be saved....” Man achieves this desired goal by doing something. “If a man would be saved, there is that which he *must* do.” Man’s salvation is withheld until man acts. “If a man would be saved, there is that which he *must* do.” This makes man’s salvation depend upon man’s doing the required deed. “If a man would be saved, there is that which he *must* do.”

In response, I ask the editors: What precisely is the relationship between man’s obedience and man’s salvation? If a man would be saved, is there that which he must do? Is there that which he must first do? Is there

that which he must do in order to obtain the desired salvation? Or what about this: Do any of the gifts or blessings of salvation in any sense whatsoever *depend upon* man’s obedience? Isn’t man’s obedience, rather, the fruit—and only the fruit—of God’s salvation of him?

Second, on page 8, the editorial asserts that the Canons of Dordt “confessed and taught that if a man with his household was to be saved and consciously enter into the kingdom, placing himself with his family under the rule of Christ as his Lord and Savior, he was called, he was required, to respond obediently to the call and command of the gospel—‘Repent and believe, that thou mightest be saved with thy house.’ Covenantal salvation is to be found in no other way.” Here again, the editorial teaches that if a man would be saved, he must first perform some obedient deed. “If a man with his household was to be saved...he was called...to respond obediently....” The same objections and questions as before apply. However, here the editorial adds the element of man’s experience, his consciously entering the kingdom. “If a man with his household was to be saved *and consciously enter into the kingdom*...he was called...to respond obediently...” (emphasis mine—AL). This makes man’s consciousness of entering the kingdom depend upon his obedience.

In response, I ask the editors: In order to enter into or inherit the kingdom of heaven, is there some obedient deed that man must perform? In order to enter into the kingdom *consciously and experientially*, is there some obedient deed that man must perform? Does any of man’s conscious experience of salvation *depend* in any sense whatsoever upon man’s obedience? We all would reject DeWolf’s statement that our act of conversion is a prerequisite to enter the kingdom. But is it correct to say that our act of *believing* is a prerequisite to enter *consciously* into the kingdom? If that is incorrect, how is that statement different from the editorial’s declaration: “If a man with his household was to be saved and consciously enter into the kingdom...he was called...to respond obediently....”

In the preceding two points, I recognize that the editorial is talking about faith. On page 7, the obedient deed that man must perform is believing. On page 8, the obedient deeds that man must perform are believing and repenting. I fully agree that God grants salvation to His people through faith. I also fully agree that faith is an activity—the activity of embracing Jesus Christ. The problem is that the editorial treats this activity of faith as though it were a work of obedience. The editorial consistently refers to faith as “obedience.” It develops the idea that faith is an obedient doing and an obedient

responding to a command, which makes faith a work. The editorial especially makes faith a work by suspending man's salvation upon man's obedient performance of the activity of faith. In reality, faith is not a good work of obedience, but the opposite of working. Even faith's activity of believing—knowing and trusting God—is not working, but the opposite of working. Faith is the opposite of working because faith is the instrument through which I receive Jesus Christ alone and all His benefits. See Romans 4:1-5 where Paul develops this distinction between believing as one thing and working as an entirely different thing. When the editorial makes faith a work, it teaches salvation by works, rather than salvation by faith and by grace.

Third, on page 8, the editorial offers its exegesis of Acts 2:37, 38 and Acts 16:30, 31. In these two passages, distressed sinners ask Christ's apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" and "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The editorial apparently understands the apostles' answers—repent, be baptized, and believe—to mean that the sinners' salvation depended on this repenting, being baptized, and believing. As the editorial puts it, "There was something they were called *to do*. And they did it." In my judgment, this explanation completely reverses the actual answers of Christ's apostles. In both passages, the distressed sinners were asking what they should do. The premise of their questions was that there was some work they could do to be saved from sin and death: "What must I do to be saved?" When the apostles answered, they did not affirm the premise of the question. They were not saying, "You are correct, there is a work for you to do that will save you, and here is the work: repent, be baptized, and believe." Rather, when Paul answered, he did not talk about good works of obedience at all. He called the people to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, which is the very opposite of working. When Peter answered, he called people to repentance as the fruit and evidence of faith, and to baptism as the sign and seal of the only ground of their salvation in the blood of Christ. By these answers, the apostles were denying the premise of the questions. In effect, the apostles answered, "What must you do to be saved? Nothing! There is nothing you can do or must do to be saved, because Jesus Christ has done it all. Therefore, disregard all of your obeying and working and instead believe in Jesus." The editorial's treatment of these passages continues the same earlier error of making man's salvation depend on his obedience. For salvation, "there was something they were called *to do*. And they did it."

I remind us that Herman Hoeksema exegeted Acts 16:30, 31 much differently than the October 1 editori-

al. Hoeksema said that Paul's answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" was: "Nothing!" See his sermon "The Calling of the Philippian Jailer" on SermonAudio at <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=4612137350>. Therefore, I ask the editors: Does the *Standard Bearer* agree with Herman Hoeksema's exegesis of Acts 16:30, 31, and does the *Standard Bearer* agree with Hoeksema's theology expressed in that exegesis?

Once again, I am in full agreement that good works are possible for the child of God by the work of God's Spirit in our hearts, so that the believer's good works are the beautiful fruit of his salvation. I also wholeheartedly confess that obedience is necessary for the child of God, as Lord's Day 32 of the Heidelberg Catechism explains. With the Canons, I repudiate the idea that the children of God are "stocks and blocks." However, I object to the editorial's explanation of the relationship between man's obedience and man's salvation. The editorial taught that if a man desires to be saved, there is some obedient deed he must first perform. In so doing, has not the editorial taught a doctrine of salvation by man's obedient working, rather than salvation by faith alone in Christ alone?

Your fellow servant in Christ,
Rev. Andy Lanning

Response:

Brother A. Lanning:

In this second installment of my response to your criticism of my October 1, 2018 *SB* editorial we will consider the two passages on which I based my conviction that when the gospel call goes out, the hearer is called *to do* something, namely, to repent and believe; and that these two activities may properly be referred to as forms of obedience to the gospel call, indeed, that this is something the recipient of the gospel call *must do* if he will be saved (that is, if he will know that the salvation and Savior presented in the gospel is his, unworthy sinner though he be). And I contend that doing so does not jeopardize the truth that salvation is all of grace, sovereign and free, and neither does such language mean we have turned grace (and faith) into works, or made salvation to depend on man, on self.

The language I used in my editorial and summarized above is, I maintain, biblical and confessional.

The biblical support for my language is to be found in Acts 2:37ff. and Acts 16:30ff., as I stated in the editorial you challenge.

You claim that the questions of the Jews in Acts 2 and of the jailer in Acts 16 were misguided questions,

betraying a commitment still to a work-righteousness, their need to do something to merit favor. And, then, that the two apostles' answers, the one "Repent," the other "Believe," were informing the questioners there was nothing they could or had to do.

With this I disagree. Repenting and believing were precisely what they were called to do in obedience to the gospel call. And this does not turn faith into something meritorious, but simply sets it forth as a spiritual response to the gospel command.

To support your criticism of this position you make reference to a sermon by H. Hoeksema on Acts 16:30, 31 dealing with the conversion of the Philippian jailer, an incident in which the jailer, having witnessed the great earthquake that he correctly connected to the unjust punishment and imprisonment of Paul and Silas, cries out "Sirs, what must I do?" In that sermon HH makes plain that he is convinced that this was really an improper question, the jailer with his heathen background thinking that there was something he had yet to do or could do (some good work or sacrifice to be made) to placate God and be spared wrath. To which question, according to HH, Paul should (or could) have replied, "Nothing! There is nothing you should do, nothing you can do." Meaning, of course, that when Paul responds by saying "Believe," he is really saying there is nothing you are called to do (or required to do), and that even faith itself is not a doing, an act of obedience, to the call of the gospel. In response to the call of the gospel, the command to repent and believe, there is nothing that one *must* (is required) to do. One must simply cling.

Although, in the interest of consistency, HH would not, really could not say, "One *must* cling." In this sermon he wants nothing to do with the word "must," not even "*must* believe." Rather, faith is a clinging to, and that is all that may be said.

I was well aware of the sermon prior to writing the October 1 editorial. I have had that sermon (typed out by C. Hanko) for some time.

Simply put, there are aspects of HH's explanation with which I do not agree. HH is mistaken when he views the question of the jailer as a wrong-headed question, claiming there was nothing that the Philippian jailer was called to do and that, when to that question Paul responds "Believe, and thou shalt be saved and thy house," Paul was in essence saying, "There is nothing you are called to do, nothing you must do."

Quite frankly, if it were anyone else than HH, at this point I would say, Nonsense! So all I will say is, I disagree.

The question of the jailer was a proper question arising out of a regenerated heart (in which a spiritual

earthquake was taking place, as HH also states), and was a response to the gospel truth he had heard, but which, to this point, had rejected.

HH is of the mind the Philippian jailer, at this point, was completely ignorant of the gospel. I disagree. The text indicates that whole city knew the occasion for Paul being arrested, whipped, and then imprisoned, namely for healing the demon-possessed maid in the name of this Jesus of Nazareth, whom Paul had been preaching as Lord and God's appointed Savior from death, wrath, and bondage to the devil. The jailer, part of the city's law-enforcement force, of all the citizens, would have been an eye-witness of the trial and charges and would have known this Paul was preaching this Jesus as the one only Lord and Christ, supreme even over Caesar. He knew full well when the powerful, city-demolishing earthquake struck, that it was Paul's God who had sent it as a judgment. It is in that light the jailer asks "What [now] am I to do?" meaning, "What does this God and Christ whom you represent and preach, require of me if I am to be spared their wrath, as I know full well at this point that the one God whom you preach must be the true God, and the gods I have been worshipping are false and powerless to save me and mine?"

One might argue: But there is no proof that the jailer had knowledge of the gospel of salvation by the grace of God's Son, Christ Jesus. To read the jailer's response to the earthquake in the context of a gospel knowledge is speculation.

To which I reply, even if that were true, the same could not be said about the Jews on Pentecost, could it? Read Acts 2 and Peter's sermon. It was exactly in response to hearing that sermon, one that clearly dismissed the possibility of any work-righteousness and declared a salvation based on the sacrificial work of the Lord's Christ *alone*, that the same question arose, and the same basic apostolic response was given.

The incident of the Philippian jailer is clearly parallel, only now with a Gentile hearer.

Surely, on a mission field where the gospel has been declared, the answer to the question "What then *must* we do to be saved?" is not, "There is nothing you are called to do (required to do, commanded to do) if you will be saved (that is, if you are to come to the *knowledge* of your own salvation)." At least I trust that is not what we as PR churches will start requiring of our missionaries as they preach Christ crucified and the question of the Jewish crowd or Gentile jailer comes to them. Not their saying, "There is nothing you must do, are called to do." But rather this, "What are you as those convicted of your guilt and damn-worthiness before God called to do?" This: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!"

This is not to deny that by the words “believe” or “repent” the preacher is banishing and dismissing a certain category of “doing.” He surely is, namely, the need for and the requirement of performing some good works, the need for making some household sacrifice of family or animal or possession. The preacher is banishing the fear of needing to bring or produce anything of one’s *self* if one is to be worthy of this salvation.

And that’s the point, is it not? Faith is not something we *produce* of ourselves. Nor is the repentance that belongs to true conversion something we produce of ourselves. They are the evidence of grace working; they are grace’s gifts.

But all that does not discount believing as a “doing.” For what is believing? It is a turning from sin and self, a casting one’s self at the throne of God pleading for His mercy, and doing so in the name of Jesus and on the basis of His atoning work alone. Such can properly be called a “doing,” a response of obedience, because it involves an act of one’s will (set free) that involves a turning, a casting of self, and a trusting in God’s word of promise. Conscious conversion: “Turn ye, turn ye,” as God calls to sinners. This is confessional. And if one will know God’s mercy for oneself (and will hear that this covenantal mercy extends even to one’s house and family), it is a *necessary* doing (in the sense stated in our previous installment).

I say again, I am persuaded that HH’s criticism of the urgent question posed by the Philippian jailer, followed by his explanation of the implication of the apostle’s answer, is mistaken. In his zeal for the unconditional covenant and reaction to the conditional covenant controversy of our churches at the time, he went too far.

I am not in agreement with his exegesis.

But before you imagine this proves your challenge of the orthodoxy of statements in my editorial because I disagree with the highly-esteemed HH, there are a few matters that all parties interested in this dispute best consider carefully.

For my disagreement with HH and yourself, I take my cue from two sources. The first being the Scriptures, the other being that of John Calvin.

And, interestingly enough, there is another sermon by HH that all should consider as well; one on Romans 10:16, 17 (to be quoted later).

First of all, there is the Acts 2:37, 38 account. It is, for all intents and purposes, parallel to the Acts 16:30, 31 passage. The apostolic gospel was the same in both locations, the question posed by those convicted of their guilt before God is the same, and the apostolic answer is basically the same, though in the Acts 2:37, 38 passage the apostolic command was to “repent” rather than to “believe.”

What is significant about the Acts 2 passage is that it informs us what it was that prompted the question “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” And it was not that the hearers were still of the mistaken impression that they had yet to perform some good work that would be sufficient enough to counter-weigh God’s wrath and make them worthy of God’s mercy somehow. The apostolic sermon, so thoroughly Christ-centered and Him crucified, had disabused them of that. What prompted the question is stated in Acts 2:37, “And when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren....”

“Pricked in their heart.” Not just their consciences. Their hearts! By whom? By the Holy Spirit, of course.

This means that the question was one posed by regenerated (born-again) elect and prompted by the Holy Spirit. The reason they asked the question was that Peter’s preaching concerning Jesus of Nazareth (as God’s Christ and Son, the one only sufficient sacrifice for sin, which Jesus they as a nation had rejected and crucified) had convinced them there was nothing they could do *for themselves* to make themselves right with God, nothing to counter-weigh their guilt. All such was shut to them. What then were they called to do?”

Peter might as well have said, “Nothing”?!

No! Rather, “Repent!”

I say again, repentance is a “doing,” a spiritual activity. In the language of the Canons (having magnified the wonder of sovereign regeneration): “Wherefore also, man is himself [!] rightly said to believe and repent by virtue of that grace received” (III/IV, 12).

As such, one can be said to be obeying the gospel call.

And this brings us to my second source, the view of the esteemed John Calvin as he preached on Acts 2:37-39.

Calvin preached a series of 44 sermons on Acts 1-7. We have no record of a sermon on Acts 16:30, 31. But we do on Acts 2:36-39—two of them, in fact. What Calvin has to say about the question put to Peter by the elect hearers, “Men and brethren, what must we do?” is instructive.

Calvin declared:

God gave such authority to Peter’s sermon that those who heard it were pricked and grieved in their hearts from committing such an egregious and villainous act. According to Luke’s account, that is the first fruit [!] produced by that sermon.

Then he added that they asked Peter and the other apostles what they should do. For it is not enough to be pained by the knowledge of one’s sin. One must seek the remedy [!]. And yet Luke says the answer they received

was that they should repent, that through Jesus Christ they would receive remission of their sins, and that, as a sign thereof they should be baptized in his name.

Now that is how the teaching first bore fruit. To the extent that the Jews who had previously despised the Son of God and were hardened in that very damnable act they committed, to that extent they are so humiliated and dejected that they ask only *to yield themselves to the will of God in all reverence and humility. That is the meaning of the expression 'pricked in their hearts'* which Luke uses here (*Sermons on the Acts of the Apostles*, The Banner of Truth, 2008, p. 20; emphasis added).

Notice that Calvin calls the question “What must we do?” the first “fruit” of the sermon, and that by it they were seeking “the remedy.” In other words, a proper, spiritually prompted question.

In fact, Calvin viewed the question as an essential question and *the* evidence of spiritual renewal. As he states later:

Now we must join these two things together, namely, the goading of the heart and the counsel which the Jews asked for when wanting to know what *they were to do*. There are many who will keenly feel a goading and anguish in their heart but all the same will not allow themselves to wander and caper heedlessly to such a degree that they bring themselves to ruin. We see what happened to Cain and Judas [Iscaiot]. It is true that Cain does say he offended, knows his sin, and has great anguish in his heart (Gen. 4:13). Judas admits he sinned by selling innocent blood and makes a proper confession (Matt. 27:4).... And yet, what end do both men come to? They die desperate and lost because, while having that goading in their hearts and knowing their sin, they still refused *to ask for advice about what to do*. (pp. 21, 22; emphasis added)

Obviously, Calvin considers the question asked to be an important evidence of true contrition. He underscores this in his concluding practical applications:

Therefore, we see what we must do [!] if we want to profit from the teaching [of the passage]. We must sense our evil in order to be grieved by it and seek ways to shake it off. Are we so disposed? Let us understand that God is ready to receive us and that, when he condemns us, it is to cleanse us; when he pricks us, it is to heal us; and when he threatens us, it is to call us unto himself.

Therefore, let us be gentle and gracious so that when we feel the harshness [severity] of those who preach the gospel, we will realize they intend to strike like lightning so that we will conform to the word *with all obedience* and so avoid kicking against the goad (cf. Acts 26:14). [pp. 23, 24, emphasis added]

And then next, in connection with partaking of the Lord's Supper, he states:

We must be all the more mindful of these things

since we are to come to the table of Jesus Christ next Wednesday to make an open declaration that *we wish to obey God and submit ourselves* unreservedly to him and his word. (p. 24; emphasis added)

In the next sermon Calvin reiterates what he said previously:

Furthermore, we have shown it is not enough to acknowledge our sins unless we put ourselves in God's hands and are prepared to receive the counsel he gives us. Judas, Cain, and their ilk did indeed acknowledge their sin but consequently fell into despair because they did not seek counsel concerning what they should do [!]. Therefore, when God reproves us for our faults, we must take care not to lose courage, as the Jews did, who upon learning of their offence and being aggrieved in themselves for committing it, said “Brethren, what shall we do?” (p. 27)

What Calvin is saying, of course, is that, when we are reprov'd, we must not lose courage but rather must do as the elect Jews did, asking “What must we do?” a question that distinguishes the receptive hearer from the stony-ground hearer.

Such is Calvin's explanation of the passage and his estimation of the importance of the question asked by those in whom the Spirit was working—the very evidence that the Spirit was working in them in contrast to others. And it is plain that, according to Calvin, their response of repentance and faith can be referred to as an obedience to the gospel call.

Are we now to find fault with, perhaps even to condemn Calvin for his explanation and statements? Is now not even Calvin ‘Calvinistic’ enough for us? Historically, there is a label that has applied to such. And it is not complimentary, as we all well know.

I for one am satisfied with Calvin's explanation of the Spirit-prompted question and of the apostolic answer, which were fundamentally the same in both Acts 2 and 16, preferring it to Hoeksema's.

And now I refer you to another sermon of Hoeksema. This one on Romans 10:16, 17. The key phrase for our consideration is, “For not all have obeyed the gospel.” The sermon quotations are taken not from the volume *Righteous By Faith Alone* (RFPA, 2002), but from the earlier edition of HH's sermons on Romans 9-11, *God's Eternal Good Pleasure* (Doorn Printing, 1940; RFPA, 1979).

Of interest, first of all, is that in this sermon HH makes reference to Peter's Pentecost sermon in Acts 2. And there HH states that the Holy Spirit was working in the questioners and then used the Word of God to prick their hearts, which word then “...filled them with

sorrow after God...and caused them to repent. And then impelled them unto the obedience [!] of faith.” (p. 199)

I urge all and sundry to read pages 198-99. For that matter, the whole sermon.

Further on, HH says: “For there is a twofold hearing [of the gospel] even as there is a two-fold fruit of the preaching of the gospel. There is the hearing of obedience [!], and there is a hearing of disobedience” (p. 200).

At the conclusion of the sermon (p. 207) HH states:

Faith is out of the preaching that is heard!

And that faith is obedience. Even as unbelief is disobedience to the gospel of God in Christ, so faith is obedience.... By faith we abhor sin and love righteousness, flee from the former and seek the latter....

Clearly, here HH views faith as a “doing,” speaking of it even in terms of an obedience. Honesty with the text would not allow him (or us) to put it any other way. Clearly, to use the word “obedience” in describing faith as it responds to the gospel call was not something HH found fault with, at least not in this sermon.

And while we are on this sermon, there is a most significant phrase that HH uses that also has bearing on the debate being carried on in our circles about acceptable language, one worth considering.

HH points out that the apostle’s putting the refusal to believe the gospel and to respond by faith in terms of *disobedience* proves that the call of the gospel is not then a free offer or invitation, but is a *demand*. He then proceeds to state:

“This stands to reason; for it is the gospel of God. And God always demands, just because He is God. And *in the way of obedience* to what He demands, He blesses us with life and glory [!]” (p. 204; emphasis added).

We do not say that HH is the standard by which all orthodoxy is to be judged. All are but earthen vessels. But if HH’s name and statements are to be appealed to in our present controversy (as we are prone to do), this statement needs to be carefully weighed!

And while we are lifting quotations from books written by men of our own circles, a couple of quotations from David Engelsma’s book *Hyper-Calvinism and the Call of the Gospel* (RFP, 3rd ed., 2014) would not be out of place. In his concluding chapter, “The Threat of Hyper-Calvinism,” he writes,

If the fruit of the preaching of the gospel is that men, pricked in their hearts, cry out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” or that a Philippian jailer says, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” it is not in place, it is not typically Reformed, to launch into a fierce polemic against free will or to give a nervous admonition against

supposing that one can do [!] anything towards his own salvation. The answer to such questions, the Reformed answer, is “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...,” and “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (Acts 2:38; 16:31). [p. 194]

Again, words worth weighing carefully. And then this:

When hyper-Calvinism has developed somewhat, there is a failure, even a refusal, to preach the admonitions and exhortation of the Scriptures to the saints on the ground that good gospel preachers should not tell God’s people what to do. [!] At the very least, the admonitions and exhortations are not proclaimed with the sharpness, urgency, boldness, and freedom that obtain in the Scriptures. From this stage, it is but a little way to the disorder and license of open antinomism: “Let us sin that grace may abound.” (p. 210)

To state it simply, in this whole controversy swirling in our circles, this is precisely what I fear—that we become so restrictive in what certain words and phrases *might* imply handled by the wrong men, that the freedom to preach using scriptural phrases is muzzled, especially in the realm of exhortations, admonitions, and warnings to God’s church and people. Yes, to God’s own people too! This must not happen. And this I am convinced the Canons in Head III/IV was guarding against by its refuting the allegation of the Arminians, namely, that consistent Calvinism must maintain that no preaching may really imply that the hearers are called to do something—either in faith and practice—lest salvation be made to sound as if it depends somehow on man. And so the urgency and sincerity of the gospel calls are really muzzled.

Calvinism as defined by the Canons has never conceded the validity of such a charge. To do so would give credibility to the charge of antinomianism.

It was to make this point that I wrote the October 1, 2018 editorial. I stand by that editorial.

We must not become a denomination that, out of fear of being misunderstood, loses the “imperative,” daring really only to speak in the “indicative.” The Scriptures we are called to preach are filled with imperatives concerning our calling, that which, in response to the Word declared, we are commanded to do. And we must see to it that the freedom to preach such is preserved. Without them, we will surely drift into a dead orthodoxy.

From this may Christ’s Spirit keep us.

Yours for the cause of God and truth,
Rev. Kenneth Koole



A word fitly spoken

Rev. William Langerak, pastor of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan

Poor

In our age of capitalist bounty and socialist welfare state, of justice warriors and identity politics, it is easy to be cynical toward the poor and pleas to assist them. Nevertheless, every Christian ought to have the deepest pity for the poor, and if given the means, ought help his poor neighbor generously. Even more so, if that poor fellow is a believer. For if we have this world's goods, see our brother in need, and show no compassion, the love of God does not dwell in us (I John 3:17). And no one can say, "We have no poor," for the poor we have with us always (Matt. 26:11). And the poor we have always, as an enduring picture to remind us poor sinners of the gospel of grace we preach, that Jesus Christ, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich (Deut. 15:4-5; II Cor. 8:9).

The cure for any such cynicism about the poor is to remember our Lord's attitude toward them. Consider the many laws He instituted to care for the poor in the old covenant, even poor strangers like His ancestor Ruth (Ex. 22-23; Deut. 15, 24; Lev. 19, 23, 25). Often He warned Israel not to harden their hearts or close their hands to the poor. He forbade them to charge the poor interest, take their garments as security, enslave, or withhold their wages until the next day—lest the poor cry out and He hear. Provisions were made for the poor to bring 'lesser' offerings (Lev. 5:7; 14:21). Judges were warned of prejudice against the poor. Farmers were charged to leave grapes on the vines, fallen crops on the ground, and corners of fields unharvested so the poor could live on these leftovers. And few things angered Him more than when Israel would cast down, turn aside, push away, tread down, forsake, oppress, persecute, rob, sell, and murder the poor—all characteristics of the wicked (Amos, Job 20:19; 24:4-9; Ps. 10:2-10, 14:6, 37:14).

Consider also that in the new covenant where the figures of the law ceased at the coming of Christ, this one earthly picture remains—the poor with us always; and since Christ was made poor, our obligations to the poor have only increased. For the gospel is that Jesus is

Savior of the poor, not rich. He hears the poor man's cry, but is deaf to his oppressor; He delivers the poor from trouble, but troubles his troubler; He lifts the poor from the dust, but turns the rich into dust; He holds Lazarus in His bosom, but casts the rich man into hell; He blesses the poor in spirit, but torments the rich body and soul; He brings the rich to poverty, but feeds the poor with His own flesh (Belgic Confession, Art. 35; Matt. 5:3; Heidelberg Catechism, LD 51; I Sam. 2:7-8; Job 5:15-16; 36:6; Ps. 12:5; 34:6).

Still today, spiritual worship of God requires we "contribute to the relief of the poor" (Heidelberg Catechism, LD 38); Jesus still calls the husband to work, not to be rich, but to "maintain his household honestly and...have something to give to the poor" (Marriage Form); and one question Jesus still puts to every consistory is, "Are the poor cared for?" We ought also to consider that Jesus deliberately instituted an office in His church with one job—to show this gospel of mercy in deed by visiting, assisting, and comforting the poor and distressed in their need with cheerfulness, compassion, and hearty affection (Belgic Confession, Art. 30; Church Order, Art. 25).

And no Christian (or deaconate) may ever say the poor do not deserve my help. Yes, certain sinful behaviors—laziness, being miserly, greed, obstinance, drunkenness, gluttony, and vanity—tend to poverty (Prov. 6:10; 11:24; 13:18; 20:13; 23:21; 29:19). Yes, he that will not work, should not eat (II Thess. 3:10). And yes, deacons are to distribute alms prudently. Nevertheless, to withhold help because someone does not deserve it betrays the very mercy and compassion of God shown to us in Christ. Since when did we deserve His riches? And what riches do we have that we did not first receive? (I Cor. 4:7).

So be charitable, you who are rich, give liberally, and contribute willingly to the poor in need.



Dordt 400: Memorial stones

Prof. Douglas Kuiper, newly appointed professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary

The Synod of Dordt (8) Baptism

...These stones shall be a memorial unto the children of Israel forever.—Joshua 4:7c

During its sessions the Synod treated four distinct matters relating to the administration of the sacrament of baptism.

Baptism in the Dutch East Indies

Synod met during the Dutch Golden Age. The Dutch had established a merchant colony in the East Indies. Dutch families who moved there had adopted or enslaved some of the native children. At session 18 (December 1, 1618), the delegates from North Holland (the province from which ships were ready to sail) asked whether these children could be baptized if the ones bringing them for baptism promised to raise them according to the Christian faith.

On December 3 (session 19), Synod answered that baptism should be administered only to those children who have been instructed in the faith and have made profession of faith. Often the Dutch had *not* instructed these children: many of these children did not understand the Dutch language, and some Dutchmen may have been concerned more with their own earthly interests than with teaching the gospel to such children.

Baptism form

An overture to Synod requested that it require consistency in the churches regarding how baptism is administered. The Dutch already had the Form for Infant Baptism that we use. Synod required the churches to use this Form (session 162, May 16, 1619). At the same session it also decided to draw up the Form to be used for adult baptism. This Form was adopted on May 25 (session 175). Synod expressed this same requirement that all Reformed churches use the same Form when it adopted its Church Order (Art. 58).

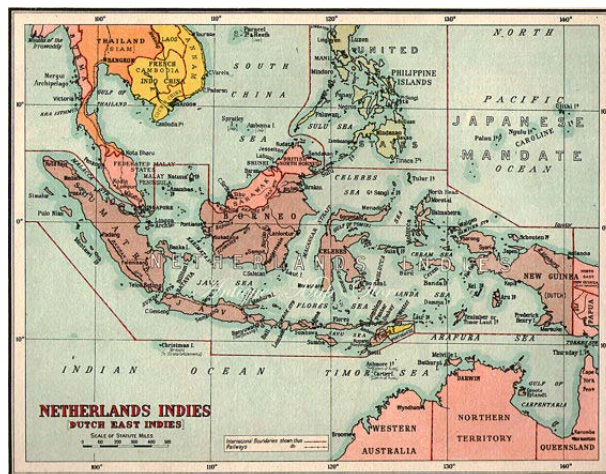
Baptism non-Reformed ministers

What if one had been baptized by a Romish priest or an Anabaptist, and then came to the Reformed faith? Should such be baptized again?

At session 162 (May 16, 1619), Synod said that such baptisms must not be repeated if the baptism had the form and essence of Christian baptism. (Although the *Acts* does not spell this out, the point is that one was baptized with water, in the name of the triune God.)

Baptism outside the public worship service

Synod also faced the question whether sick people may be baptized outside the public worship service if they cannot come to the worship service. At session 163 (May 17), Synod answered in three points: 1) only in instances of “great need” could such baptisms be administered; 2) such administrations must be with the knowledge of and in presence of the consistory; and 3) only with advice of classis could such baptism be administered to a condemned criminal.



Dutch East Indies



Things which must shortly come to pass

Prof. David Engelsma, professor emeritus of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary

Premillennialism (25)

Postscript: Antinomism

Previous article in this series: February 1, 2019, p. 211.

“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.”

Hebrews 10:16

“Why will God...have the ten commandments so strictly preached?...That we may become more and more conformable to the image of God, till we arrive at the perfection proposed to us in a life to come.”

Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 115

Introduction

In my treatment of premillennialism as part of my defense of Reformed amillennialism in eschatology, I have deliberately restricted myself as much as possible to considering the premillennial error concerning the last things—eschatology.

The entire series, now concluding, beginning with the apology on behalf of Reformed amillennialism, concerns the biblical doctrine of the millennium as an aspect of the truth of the last things, culminating in the return of the Lord Jesus.

But there is an aspect of the dispensational premillennial heresy which, though it does not bear directly on premillennialism’s doctrine of the last things, I cannot refrain from considering critically. Therefore, this “postscript.”

I refer to premillennialism’s false doctrine concerning the law of God consisting of the Ten Commandments as found in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5.

It is fundamental premillennial doctrine that the law of the Ten Commandments does not apply to the New Testament church. No premillennial church reads the Decalogue every Lord’s Day, as is the practice of the Protestant Reformed Churches in keeping with the Reformed tradition. Dispensational premillennialism is *opposed* to the law of the Ten Commandments regarding its application to the church and its members.

Premillennialism, therefore, is antinomian. As the

word itself, which means “against the law,” indicates, premillennialism rejects the law of God. Premillennialism is inherently and essentially lawless. It necessarily produces lawlessness of life on the part of its adherents.

This characteristic of premillennialism makes this “postscript” of interest and importance to the community of conservative Reformed churches.

There is yet another reason why this “postscript” to a critique of premillennialism is of special interest to members of the Protestant Reformed Churches and of other Reformed churches in North America. In the latter part of the first decade and the early part of the second decade of the nineteen hundreds, the Christian Reformed Church was troubled by a controversy over premillennialism. A prominent Christian Reformed preacher, the Rev. Harry Bultema, was advocating dispensational premillennialism by his preaching and writing.

Bultema’s main opponent was the young Christian Reformed minister, Herman Hoeksema.

The Christian Reformed Synod of 1918 condemned Bultema’s premillennial teaching. Bultema was separated from the Christian Reformed Church. He formed the Berean (premillennial) church.

A prominent feature in the controversy was the issue of Bultema’s rejection of the law, that is, his antinomism. Bultema himself made this aspect of his dispensational premillennialism prominent in the controversy.

The antinomism of premillennialism

Antinomism is the heresy of rejecting the law of God. More specifically, it is the rejection of the law of God consisting of the Ten Commandments as the authoritative rule, or guide, of the holy life of the New Testament children of God.

Antinomians of all stripes and shades contend that their opposition to the law is due to their defense of salvation by grace alone. The gospel of grace, they argue, does away with the law. Against those who defend the role of the law as the divine rule of the life of New Tes-

tament Christians, the antinomians charge “legalism,” “works-righteousness,” and, in general, all the accusations of the New Testament against the heresy of seeking to be justified by the keeping of the law.

To state the doctrinal position of antinomism as succinctly as possible, antinomism contends that grace does away with the law in the life of the New Testament believer.

Dispensational premillennialism shares these characteristic antinomian beliefs. But its basis for these beliefs is unique. Premillennialism rejects the law because of premillennialism’s doctrine of dispensations. History, especially the history of divine revelation, is divided into distinct and different dispensations, or ages. The law belonged to the dispensation, or age, of Old Testament Israel. The New Testament church lives in a different age—the age of grace.

The law, therefore, was for Israel, for the Old Testament nation of Jews. The law is not for the New Testament church, which is “under grace.” As though grace completely rejects the law in every respect! As though in the new covenant, God does not write His law on the heart of the elect believers and their children who make up the church (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 10:16)!

Regardless of its distinctive approach to the heresy, premillennialism is guilty of the gross heresy of antinomism. And the practical consequences necessarily afflict the lives of those who avow the false doctrine: refusal to have the Ten Commandments rule their life; open, impenitent disobedience to one or more of the commandments; and, finally, the godless attitude that promotes the licentiousness of the antinomism condemned by Paul in Romans 6:1: “[Let us] continue in sin, that grace may abound,” and of the antinomism of the Jezebel in Thyatira, who taught that the way to discover the heights of grace is by actively and deliberately knowing “the depths of Satan” (Rev. 2:24).

Premillennial advocacy of antinomism

The rejection of the law as the rule of life of the New Testament believer, *as the necessary implication of premillennialism*, was emphasized by premillennialism’s founding fathers. C. I. Scofield asserted that “the most obvious and striking division of the Word of Truth is that between Law and Grace. Indeed, these contrasting principles *characterize* the two most important dispensations—the Jewish and Christian.”¹ In the strongest language, Scofield applied this division by

damning the use of the law as “the rule of the Christian life”: “It was reserved to modern nomolators to wrench these holy and just but deathful tables [the Ten Commandments—DJE] from underneath the mercy-seat and the atoning blood, and erect them in Christian churches as the rule of Christian life.”²

“Nomolators” are worshippers of the law, idolaters. Use of the law as the guide of the Christian life is a form of idolatry, according to the antinomians. Dispensationalism’s antinomism is ferocious. It is hatred of the law, as of an idol.

Lewis Sperry Chafer was by all accounts extremely important in the forming of the theology of dispensational premillennialism. Chafer taught that “grace delivers the child of God ‘from every aspect of the law—as a rule of life....’”³ So far did Chafer go in asserting the antinomism of his theology that he dared to emasculate the admonitions, that is, commandments, of the *New Testament*: “Grace teachings are not *laws*; they are *suggestions*. They are not *demands*; they are *beseachings*.”⁴

According to this antinomian father of dispensational premillennialism, God merely “suggests” to the New Testament Christian that husbands love their wives; that wives be in subjection to their husbands; that children obey their parents; and that parents not provoke their children to wrath (Eph. 5, 6). For God to “command” this behavior of New Testament Christians would be for Him to run afoul of dispensationalism’s restriction of law (as the rule of life) to the Old Testament and millennial Jews.

A “suggesting” god is a different god from the commanding God of the Reformed faith.

The god of L. S. Chafer is a different god from the one, true, sovereign God confessed by the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord’s Days 34-44. The God confessed by the Reformed Catechism is not a “suggesting” God. To suggest that He is would be to insult, if not deny, Him. The God of the Reformed Catechism and faith is the God who “enjoins,” “requires,” “forbids,” and “commands.” He enjoins, requires, forbids, and commands *the church and the New Testament Christian*.

The Reformed church does not present to the members of the congregation a god’s “suggestions” how they

2 Scofield, 61.

3 The quotation is from dispensationalist John MacArthur, *The Gospel according to the Apostles: The Role of Works in the Life of Faith* (Nashville, Tennessee: Word, 1993, 2000), 227. The quotation within the quotation is from Chafer’s *Systematic Theology*.

4 Chafer, quoted in MacArthur, *Gospel according to the Apostles*, 227. The emphasis is Chafer’s, or MacArthur’s.

1 C. I. Scofield, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth* (New York/Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, n.d.), 50.

might live if they choose to do so. But the Reformed church “preaches the ten commandments *strictly*,” that is, according to the original German of Q. 115 of the Heidelberg Catechism, “*sharply*.”

And the Reformed Christian is not the man or woman who heeds or disregards a god’s “suggestions” as he or she pleases. But he is the man or woman who *obeys* God’s law.

The historic, creedal Reformed faith takes issue with antinomism, fundamentally, by confessing that the law of the Ten Commandments is the authoritative guide of the holy life of thankfulness of the believing child of

God: “Our Reformers, especially Calvin, have perfectly correctly taught that, although Christ has fulfilled the law, believers have need of that law, first of all as mirror of sin, in order from it to receive knowledge of sin and misery, *but also as guide of the life of thankfulness.*”⁵
(to be continued)

5 “Antinomianisme” [“Antinomianism”], in *Christelijke Encyclopaedie voor het Nederlandsche Volk* [*Christian Encyclopedia for the Dutch People*], ed. F. W. Grosheide, J. H. Landwehr, C. Lindeboom, and J. C. Rullmann, 6 vols. (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1925), 1.130, translation mine (the work has not been translated; emphasis added).



Pertaining to our churches—Contact Committee

Rev. Cory Griess, is secretary of the Contact Committee and pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan

Whom are you inviting to the Synod of Dordt Conference?

If you are privileged to attend the upcoming Synod of Dordt conference at Trinity PRC this April, you may notice a similarity between the actual Synod of Dordt and this 400th anniversary conference on the Synod of Dordt: Both are gatherings of many Dutch people, yet with an international character! Out of the over 100 delegates to the Synod of Dordt, 27 foreign delegates (including the two replacements) were seated and given full voting rights in the matters regarding the Remonstrants. There would have been more even than that, except the French King Louis XIII did not allow the French delegates to attend. Who knows how many Dutch people will be at the PR Theological Seminary conference celebrating the 400th anniversary of that momentous Synod but, the Lord willing, amongst them will be a healthy number of foreign “delegates.”

The PRC Committee for Contact with Other Churches (CC) decided to invite officebearers from our contacts throughout the world to come to Grand Rapids to attend this conference with us and to stay in our homes and fellowship with us. In select instances we are helping to finance travel costs of our guests through a generous, anonymous donation to the cause. Our prayer is that our visitors see the life of God’s covenant in the truths celebrated and defended, and in the way we live with each other and warmly welcome them into our lives.

The CC has invited attendees from our sister church-

es. This we believe is in line with the mandate of our Constitution. In regard to full sister-church relationships, the Constitution of the CC states that we are to “take heed to one another’s life as churches” (V, B, 4). To “take heed to” is to “be attentive to, diligently turn the mind to.” The CC is sending delegations to our three sister churches again this year in partial fulfillment of this calling. But in addition to that, inviting them to come to this conference will allow for our sisters to “take heed” to our life as churches. It will also allow for good discussion of our respective situations and callings as Reformed church bodies. The CC hopes to have official meetings with our three sisters as well as our other contacts while the attendees are here. Thus, we look forward to the visit of members of the Covenant ERC in Singapore, the Covenant PRC in Northern Ireland, and of our most recent sister, the PRC in the Philippines. At Synod 2018 this full sister-church relationship was officially established. We hope that this taking heed to one another’s life as churches will strengthen our bonds in the Lord.

Our Constitution speaks of corresponding relationships as relationships of “no mere formal ties,” but ones “that serve the actual welfare of the churches involved and the manifestations of our unity in the Reformed faith” (V, C, 2). It explains that part of the way this relationship must serve the welfare of the churches involved as, “discussion by means of...conferences on differences

which are known to exist...as well as on those matters on which there is agreement” (V, C, 2, b). Thus the CC seeks to serve the welfare of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia as well as our own, by inviting attendees to the conference from this denomination with whom we have a corresponding relationship.

Additionally, the Constitution speaks to seeking relationships with other churches with whom we do not currently have an official relationship as a denomination. This part of the Constitution calls us to “put forth every effort to contact such churches.” Given the fact that some of our congregations have been developing relationships throughout the world and have asked for varying levels of involvement from the CC, we thought it would be wise to make more effort as a denominational committee to contact such churches. The Lord willing, some or even all of these relationships will develop into denominational ones someday. The CC has invited a minister and professor in Mexico with whom First PRC Grand Rapids has recently become acquainted. We have invited a minister and professor in South

Korea with whom Southeast PRC maintains connections. Rev. JY Pauraj in Vellore, India, with whom Georgetown PRC has been working for years, has received an invitation. Rev. Titus in Yangon, Myanmar, whose ministry receives support and direction from our Hope PRC, was asked to come. Visitors from the BERG in Germany, with whom Faith PRC has established a connection, has been requested to join if they are able. In addition, the Lord willing, some from the Reformed Church of Namibia will be coming at our invitation.

Why not do the same as your CC and invite your personal contacts, neighbors, friends, acquaintances within your own area to come to the conference at the end of April? Whether they are Dutch or not! After all, the States General requested a delegate come to the Synod who, though living in Dutch lands, was not Dutch at all—a French delegate from the Walloon churches in the Southern part of the nether-lands.

May the grand, biblical religion that the Synod of Dordt defended, be celebrated, enjoyed, and still defended in a unity of faith in these last days.

Bring the books...

Mr. Charles Terpstra, member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan and full-time librarian/registrar/archivist at the Protestant Reformed Seminary



Micah: Proclaiming the Incomparable God by Martyn McGeown (Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2018), hardcover, 227 pages (also ebook). [Reviewed by Julian Kennedy]

This commentary on an otherwise fairly obscure Old Testament prophet is a gem. Micah’s name means “Who is like Jehovah?” hence Rev. McGeown’s title *Proclaiming the Incomparable God*.

McGeown proceeds to show that Jehovah is indeed unique. He is, after all, the only true and living God, but He is a God who judges His people, denouncing false prophets and charging His people with thieving and butchering. Micah, His faithful servant, is not afraid to address the evil spiritual and political leaders of the people: “But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord and of judgment and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin” (Micah 3:8). He sees defeat and captivity on the horizon but also the preservation of a remnant and of a wonderful age to come with Messiah and His kingdom in the New Testament age: “In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in

the top of the mountains...and the people shall flow into it” (Micah 4:1).

The author’s accurate and enlightening exposition of the text grants insights into other parts of Scripture, as he brings his Reformed glasses to bear on the prophecy. For example, in Micah 4:10 we have the birth pangs of a woman, which here refer to the horror gripping wicked men when destruction comes upon them (Is. 13:8); but it also represents the convulsions of creation laboring to bring forth the day of the Lord (Matt. 24:6-8); and finally, it means the struggle of faithful pastors striving to form Christ in their flock (Gal. 4:19).

This book on Micah addresses all the great themes of Scripture contained in the prophecy, including the covenant, God’s chastisement of Israel, His severe judgment of the enemy heathen (Micah 5:15), and the victory of His people through the Lord Jesus Christ their Messiah. Messiah is the “Breaker” who bashes down the gates of hell (Micah 2:13) and the Shepherd-Ruler of His people. McGeown shows how correctly to interpret Old Testament picture-language in terms of our modern Christian lives. For example, “the dew from the Lord” is “health-giving, refreshing, vivifying doctrine of the gospel of God’s grace.”

Perhaps one of the best-known verses in the prophecy

is Micah 6:8, “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” The author states that, “Mercy is tender affection and pity or compassion upon those who are miserable,” and this is exemplified by our covenant Jehovah’s four-fold action of passing by transgression, not retaining his

anger, subduing our iniquities and throwing our sins into the depth of the sea (Micah 7:18-20). Are we merciful? This challenged me regarding my own attitude toward the ungodly whom I tend to condemn rather than pity. An excellent read and, to my mind, unsurpassed commentary on Micah. A helpful reading log bookmark with chapter divisions is included.



News from our churches

Mr. Perry Van Egdome, member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Doon, Iowa

Trivia question

Who was the first graduate of the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary to be examined by Synod? Perhaps you know when this occurred? Answers later in this column.

Denominational activities

Classis West met March 6 in Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Look for the report in the next issue.

Important information for future teachers and ministers: Information for the 2019 PR Scholarship Fund essay competition is now available. Interested individuals can email prcscholarship@gmail.com to receive the essay topics and submission requirements. Completed essays must be submitted by May 31.

Young people’s activities

Georgetown Young People’s Soup Supper was held in February. “Why cook? Join us for an evening of great food and great fellowship at our annual Young People’s Soup Supper,” is the way the announcement read. Menu included three soup options, plus chili, hot dogs, salad, and dessert. All proceeds to benefit the 2019 Young People’s Convention.

Seminary activities

The faculty and students of the seminary attended a Reformed conference on the Synod of Dordt (400th anniversary) at Westminster Seminary West (Escondido, CA) in January after Interim. They spent Saturday night and Sunday in fellowship and worship with the members of Hope PRC in Redlands, CA.

Sister-church activities

Rev. A. Spriensma spent time in the pulpit of Covenant ERC of Singapore in late January. He was followed by

Rev. Stephan Regnerus (Lynden PRC) for three weeks, and then Rev. Heath Bleyenbergh (Providence PRC) for four weeks. Rev. A. den Hartog (emeritus) plans to be there from April to June. We thank God for all His provision.

South Wales Lecture: Rev. Angus Stewart will speak on “The Canons of Dordt: The Original Five Points of Calvinism” in Margam Community Centre on the 21st of March.

Congregational activities

Southeast PR Church has published a book *Archives and Anecdotes: 75 years at Southeast Protestant Reformed Church*, which celebrates this anniversary with details from the church records and memories from past and current members. Of particular interest will be the history of the 1953 split and the related 1960s split. This approximately 250-page book is now available. The cost is \$5 (plus shipping). To make ordering easy, orders can be placed through the RFPA (616-457-5970 or mail@rfpa.org) and picked up at the RFPA.

From Providence PRC in Hudsonville, MI: their annual Chili Cook-off was held in February, followed by their Fellowship Dinner. But then this from their bulletin: “Our next church activity will be a ‘Dipapalooza’ night at church on Friday, February 22 at 6:30 P.M. Please read the flyer in the Post for all the details, and add your name to the sign-up sheet in the back of church if you can attend.” OK, we need help with this one. A good trivia question might be: What is a Dipapalooza night?

The Activities Committee at Calvary PRC of Hull, IA scheduled an event at the All Seasons’ Center in Sioux Center for ice skating, swimming, and games! A delicious BBQ pork supper was included in the fun-filled evening.

The last week of January/first week of February was termed “brutal” as far as weather in the central United States. The West Michigan area had about two feet of snow and below zero temperatures. School was cancelled for a week. In the Siouxland, or Tri-State area of the Midwest, the focus was on the cold. There was not so much snow, but the air temperature registered -25F one day and school was cancelled that day with bitter wind-chill factors. No one can stand before God’s cold! What a wonder that the small birds and outdoor animals survive! And I often wonder how the American Indians on the plains managed just a few generations ago!

Denominational activities

From the bulletin of First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI:

Advanced Notice: Synod 2019 will be held here at First PRC the week of June 10-15, the Lord willing. A pre-synodical worship service will take place at First PRC at 7 P.M. Monday, June 10. This is a worship service hosted by our congregation, therefore it will be a call from the consistory for the congregation to worship together that evening. In addition, the Lord willing, Thursday, evening, June 13, graduation exercises for our Theological Seminary will be held at First PRC for seminarians Matt Kortus and Jacob Maatman. Mark your calendar!

Mission activities

Years ago our missionaries used to preach in Gabaldon, in the province of Nueva Ecija, about 4 hours northeast of Manila. This practice ceased in 2014 due to the determination that there was a lack of potential

officebearers there. Upon the request of those in Gabaldon, a Bible study was begun there in 2016, led by Rev. Vernon Ibe, minister in the Berean PRC. Live-streaming of the Berean PRC services has been available in Gabaldon also. In January of this year the Berean PRC consistory decided to resume worship services in the Gabaldon location. Rev. Ibe travels once a month to preach for the group. Elders of the Berean PRC travel the other Sundays of each month by rotation to lead the services. Approximately 10 families attend the services. May God continue to bless the sending of the gospel in this manner.

Minister activities

On February 10 Rev. Joshua Engelsma declined the call from Trinity PRC, Grandville PRC called Rev. Carl Haak to be Minister-on-loan to Singapore, and Immanuel PRC of Lacombe called Rev. James Laning to be their next pastor. Trinity has formed a new trio of Revs. E. Guichelaar, W. Langerak, and J. Mahtani.

Trivia answer

Rev. John A. Heys graduated from seminary in 1940. He was examined by Synod in that year, the first year a PRC synod was held. Previously, the broadest assembly was a Classis, and the Classis examined the students. Rev. Heys went on to minister to the congregations at Hope PRC of Walker, MI; Hull, IA PRC; South Holland, IL PRC; and Holland, MI PRC. Rev. Heys became emeritus in 1980. God used him to proclaim the gospel for 40 years!

“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.” Ecclesiastes 3:3

Announcements

Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of First PRC of Edmonton extend their Christian sympathy to Rev. Tom and Jan Miersma, Christopher Miersma, Jon and Elsie Miersma and family, and Matthew Miersma in the death of Rev. Miersma’s father, **Calvin Miersma**. May we find comfort in Philippians 3:20, 21a: For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.”

Rev. John Marcus, President
Albert Nieuwenkamp, Clerk

Resolution of sympathy

The Ladies Bible Society of Hudsonville PRC expresses their sincere sympathy to Brenda Hoekstra, her husband, and her family in the sudden loss of her father, **Mr. Harold Plaiser**. May the words of Scripture bring comfort and hope for the life to come. “I fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing” (II Timothy 4:7, 8).

Rachel Dykstra

DORDT 400

Safe-guarding the Reformed tradition

A three-day conference sponsored by the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary

Illustrating and Recommending the Grace of Election—Dordt's Doctrine of Reprobation

PROF. RONALD CAMMENGA served four congregations in the PRCA before his appointment in 2005 as the professor of Reformed Dogmatics and Old Testament Studies in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary.

Assurance: Sovereign Grace's Speech to the Heart

PROF. BARRETT GRITTERS served two congregations in the PRCA before his appointment in 2003 as the professor of Practical Theology and New Testament Studies in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary.

Warring a Good Warfare with the Canons

REV. BRIAN HUIZINGA has been the pastor at Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, California since 2011.

The Doctrine of the Covenant in the Canons

PROF. DOUGLAS KUIPER served as the pastor in three congregations. He was appointed by Synod 2017 as the professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary.

The Polity of Dordt: Om Goede Orde in de Gemeente Christi te Onderhouden (Maintaining Good Order in the Church of Christ)

REV. WILLIAM LANGERAK has been the pastor at Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Wyoming, Michigan since 2003.

The Call of the Gospel

REV. MARK SHAND was ordained in 2001 as a minister in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, and from 2009 to the present he has been the minister of the Launceston congregation.

The Canons as the Original "Five points"

REV. ANGUS STEWART is the pastor of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church (CPRC) in N. Ireland and chairman of the British Reformed Fellowship.

Held at Trinity PRC April 25–27, 2019 | dordt400.org

Announcements continued

Resolution of Sympathy

The Council of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church (CPRC), Ballymena, Northern Ireland and the Steering Committee of the Limerick Reformed Fellowship (LRF), Limerick, Ireland extend their Christian sympathy to Rev. and Mary Stewart in the passing away of Mary's dear mother, **Ruth Hanko** of Faith PRC, on February 8, 2019. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory" (I Corinthians 15:55).

Brian Crossett, Clerk

Rev. Martyn McGeown (CPRC Missionary)

PRC Synod 2019

All standing and special committees of the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as individuals who wish to address Synod 2019, are hereby notified that all material for this year's synod should be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than April 15. Please send material to:

Rev. Ron VanOverloop
11243 8th Ave. NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49534
(rvanoverloop22@gmail.com)

Teacher needed

The Edmonton PR Christian School is in need of a full-time teacher for the 2019–2020 school year. The school will be starting with grades 1–4, and the board is willing to work with the teacher on a curriculum suited to their preference. Please contact Gord Tolsma at gr.tolsma@gmail.com / 780-777-5780 or Scott Ferguson at s_r_ferguson@hotmail.com.

THE ROYAL SUFFERER

by Herman Hoeksema

Christ is and was the king...

...whose kingdom is not of this world, and who rejected all the glory that this world offers.

...who refused to allow the Jews to crown him king, though he was the King of the Jews.

...who fought alone, without an army.

...who was arrested by his own people, and mocked by the representatives of the Roman Empire, the great earthly kingdom of that day.

...who was crucified *because* he was King, and remained King when he died.

...who, being risen and ascended, is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

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