

The Standard Bearer

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Thanks for the bread, the wine and oil

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop

A charge answered

Rev. Kenneth Koole

Judge

Rev. William Langerak

All things determined and
directed by our God

Rev. James Laning

Real repentance

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Shouting and
searching

Mr. Nathan Price



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Meditation

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop, pastor of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Standale, Michigan

Thanks for the bread, the wine and oil

“He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengthened man’s heart.”

Psalm 104:14, 15

Psalm 104 has been called a poet’s version of Genesis 1.

The psalm begins with a description of God as very great, clothed with honor and majesty, brilliantly covered with light. This beautiful picture of God arises out of His work as Creator. He works upon the waters above the firmament, making the clouds and the wind, and creating the angels. He also established the earth out of the water below the firmament, and then separated the waters from the dry land. The psalmist takes time to describe God’s creation of the waters on the earth: the oceans and seas, the springs, rivers and lakes. The psalmist speaks of the Creator’s purpose for the waters: “to give drink to every beast of the field” (v. 11). God waters “the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works” (v. 13).

Then comes our text.

After our text the psalmist speaks of Jehovah’s creation and use of trees, of high hills, of the moon and the sun, of the darkness of night and the light of day. Then he interrupts himself to praise Jehovah: “O LORD, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches” (v. 24).

At this time of the year, the people of God in the United States of America have a national holiday called Thanksgiving Day. Our fellow-saints in the more northern climes of Canada celebrated their Thanksgiving Day in October. We pause when the harvest is gathered to give thanks. As the spiritual climate in the United States deteriorates, the thanks is often not to the sovereign God who provided the harvest, but only a general expression of gratitude. Instead of blessing and thanking God, people use the Thanksgiving holiday as a time for feasting, family and friends, and football.

But the sincere and godly Christian knows that the bountiful harvest is from the God who made the seed and then made it to sprout, grow, and bear fruit. The sovereign Creator gave the harvest. In addition, the sincere and godly Christian sees the physical harvest to be a picture of the spiritual blessings of salvation.

Are you thankful? Are you thankful only now at the time of Thanksgiving Day? Are you thankful for some things but not all things? Are you thankful at all times and in every situation of your life?

Genuine thanks is not limited to good times, nor ought it to be restricted to a good harvest. Genuine thanks is to be given at all times and for all things. In heaven we will be praising God, not just for some things, but for who He is and for everything He did in history and in our earthly lives.

Our text declares that God “causeth the grass to grow.” He causes it to grow for beast and for man. This declaration humbles man. Man, for all the skills and talents he has been given, is unable to make anything grow. Man works to till the soil and plant the seed, but it is God who causes it to grow (cf. Mark 4:26-29). God causes the grass in the untended prairie and on the mountain side to grow. Man sows and ploughs in vain if God does not produce the harvest.

That the grass grows for cattle and man clearly demonstrates the extent to which God cares for His creatures along with His elect. God cares for each lowly sparrow, appointing to each his portion; and we ignore them. Divine power is used equally for the feeding of the beasts of the field as for the nurturing of His adopted children. Our heavenly Father not only provides for us, but also for our servants—the cattle and the grass that feeds the cattle, so that both can serve us. When we, with a devout eye, look at a field or a forest or examine a single blade of grass, then we are to see the Lord Himself walking in the fields and forests. Be thankful!

God's purpose for the grass is that "He may bring forth food out of the earth." Grass for the cattle; and cattle and grain for man. These are the foods God brings out of the earth. We, living on the earth, have our food right near us. The ground, which is well suited to bury us, is used by God to feed us. How great is the God who from the grave finds the support of man's life, and who out of the cursed ground brings forth the blessings of bread, wine, and oil!

The good things that God produces in abundance supply our needs and even our unnecessary desires. God provides "bread which strengtheneth man's heart" and "wine that maketh glad the heart of man."

First, God brings forth bread. Bread is the staff of life, the most indispensable and necessary means of nourishment for humans. In its great variety of forms, bread sustains human life. Bread strengthens man physically. And bread strengthens man's heart. It affects us psychologically and spiritually. Consider what happens when man is starving. His physical strength weakens, but his courage also dissipates. God made man to be one—physically, psychologically, and spiritually. Starving prisoners of war not only lost physical strength, but also were affected psychologically and spiritually. When bread is again received, strength is restored and spirits are revived.

Praise God for bread! May our mouths and hearts be full of His praises, both now and in eternity.

Besides the necessary bread, God also gives us unnecessary luxuries: wine and oil. He furnishes us often with a feast, which includes wine. Wine has the ability to cheer the heavy heart (Prov. 31:6). Wine, in moderation, can accompany celebrations, refreshing one's spirit.

We do pray that man would always be wise enough to know how to use this gladdening product of the vine. Man, also the Christian, can easily turn God's good wine to ill, and debase himself with it. When that happens, man, not God, bears the responsible blame. For this, man deserves to be miserable because he turns even good things into bad, and blessings into cursed addictions.

But when wine is used as God intends in creating it, then wine is something for which we are called to be thankful!

Along with wine, God gives us ornaments (outward adornments): "oil to make his face to shine." We learn that Easterners often used perfumed oils. The most familiar psalm praises God, for "thou anointest my head with oil" (Ps. 23:5). Reflect on the words of Solomon in Ecclesiastes 9:7, 8, "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy,

and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment." Naomi urged Ruth to wash and to anoint herself in preparation for meeting Boaz (Ruth 3:3). They put an oil on their faces to make them shine for beauty and as an indication of their joy.

Again, as with wine, so with oil, moderation is so very important. And just as important is motivation—not for self but to enhance what God has given.

When we use God's gifts aright, then He is to be praised and thanked for all the ornaments of joy and gladness.

The Psalm begins, "Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great." May harvest time provide us with a special opportunity to bless our God. Bless Him for the countless gifts He gives for the body and for the soul.

Let us realize how prone we are to forget Him as the source of all things. No wonder the previous psalm admonishes us not to forget all His benefits (Ps. 103:2). So easily we forget His continuous flow of gifts to us. Forgetting Him and thinking about ourselves, we make selfish and excessive use of His gifts. And we do that by using them as ends in themselves. We do that when we use them for our personal pleasure. The more bountiful God is to man, the more man ought to be grateful. Most of us are surrounded with bounties, with an abundance of things that are not basic to life and absolutely necessary. With our depraved natures, against which we have to struggle all our life long, we are most likely to abuse and pollute God's benefits. In lavishing upon us the more abundant supply of good things, God appoints the law of moderation. He puts our self-control and self-denial to the test.

The oil and wine are so that we may rejoice before our God (cf. Lev. 23:40). The oil and wine are so that our minds may be exhilarated under the sense of gratitude, and so that we may be rendered more active in the service of our God and Father. With the apostle Paul we have to "know how to abound" (Phil. 4:12). When we are bridling our lusts, then we know that God would have us to enjoy pleasures in moderation. Then we are able to use bread, the wine and oil with a free and good conscience.

While the ungodly wallow in pleasures without discerning the Giver, may we use the necessities and the luxuries with which we have been gifted with joyful and grateful moderation.



Editorial response

Rev. Kenneth Koole, minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches

A charge answered

(This editorial is an answer to the letter that follows it.)

Brother N. Langerak:

I find your letter with its allegations that my editorial of October 1, 2018 was an attempt somehow to resurrect charges of antinomianism against a protestant exonerated by recent synodical decisions more than a little baffling, to put it mildly.

In your opening comments you note that my editorial of October 1 made reference to the “issues being discussed in our churches,” to which phrasing you take exception (“an affront”) because such, in your estimation, minimized the weight of the charges made and the decisions that resulted. Be informed, I used the word “discussion” purposely. The editorial was not written with a view to militating against recent synodical decisions (in some surreptitious way) with its exoneration of a protestant’s name, but in view of the *discussion* amongst our membership to which the recent controversy about the relations between faith and good works and then to the preaching has given rise. The article minimizes neither the controversy nor the objectionable statements protestants appealed. Neither does the article in any way dissent from the recent synodical decisions. Nor does it encourage readers to do so.

But, who can deny that the recent controversy with its publicly published decisions by our broader assemblies over the past few years has been the occasion for much *discussion* amongst our membership? And the discussion continues. Not now over synod’s lifting the charge of antinomianism from the appellant, but over what is the proper understanding of the relation between faith and good works, law and gospel (an issue that goes back to the Reformation, stirring up no little debate back then.) But more particularly, what is the place of good works in the life of the believer, of what benefit are they? Little? Much? And even more specifically, what wording (phrases) may be used in the preaching (and by elders in their work of discipline) to prompt and promote good works (the call to repentance and godliness) in the life of the believer. In fact, what are they *called* by Scripture to use if the life of godliness (good works) is to come to evidence?

At least that is the discussion that I hear.

These are questions members sincerely interested in what is orthodox according to God’s Word and as spelled out by the confessions have put to me, and more than once. And others have been confronted by them as well, I understand.

So, once again, the article was not a passing of judgment on recent synodical decisions and its judgments. But *it was occasioned* by the discussion on the various issues raised by the controversy. And one of the large issues was (and continues to be) “What is to be judged as antinomianism?” Our members have a renewed interest in that age-old error.

And, hence the article.

There is value in our members knowing that one of the charges the Arminians brought against the Reformed fathers was that they were, if not “practical antinomians” then “doctrinal antinomians” (now commonly labeled as ‘hyper-Calvinists’). And there is value as well in knowing that the Canons of Dordt were written in part exactly to refute that calumny (false charge). The refutation of this charge loomed large as an occasion for writing the fourth head of doctrine in the manner it was. “No, our emphasis that salvation is all of a grace, that is, irresistible (including the faith that grace brings forth), and therefore is all of God, does not mean that we in the preaching turn the hearers, for all practical purposes, into stocks and blocks (like wooden pawns on a chess board).”

And the Canons explain, best it can, how this process (“mysterious, and ineffable,” III/IV, Art. 12) as worked by the Holy Spirit, takes place.

To these Canons we all subscribe.

That said, let us not imagine that publicly *subscribing* to the Canons necessarily frees one from being of antinomian persuasion. Anyone who knows anything about Reformed and Presbyterian church history knows that many have loudly subscribed to the Canons and then proceeded to trouble the churches with their antinomian sentiments again and again.

And that brings us to your taking exception to my statement that I fear that there are those in our churches who underestimate the truth of irresistible grace and the

power of the Holy Spirit, as if I meant by that this: “In light of the synod’s exonerating the appellant and other protestants, lifting the charge of antinomianism, it is evident that the work of the Holy Spirit who transforms is underestimated in our circles.”

You are mistaken.

Let me be clear. My fear is not occasioned by synod’s recent decisions and lifting charges from an appellant. My assessment and fear is based on forty-plus years as a minister in the PR churches. What I wrote I would have written at some point even if there had been no controversy of the recent vintage in our churches. If one does not think there have been those of an antinomian strain (what the late, highly-esteemed H. Hoeksema called “shades of antinomianism”) in our churches over the years, and that this error remains a real and present danger, well, all I can say is, he does not know our church history and what a number of our congregations have had to deal with over the years. I could direct you to more than one of our emeritus ministers, and they would tell you of having had to deal exactly with that spirit in their congregations (and even on broader assemblies). I chaired a classis in the West in the 1980s that dealt with exactly that error, an attempt to muzzle the preaching so the preacher was not free to explain texts of admonition and warning just as they stood (“Surely, they cannot mean what they appear to say. Surely, to direct commands with their dire warnings at congregations of believers, disturbing their comfort and assurance, implies salvation must be conditional!”). I have faced such a mentality and heard expressions of it here and there as I have been of service in various of our churches.

And so the expression of what I “fear.”

We refer to men full of misguided zeal, intent on protecting the doctrine of salvation *all* of grace, and therefore *all* of God (in reaction to Arminianism or work-righteousness), but doing so by insisting that the preaching emphasize simply what God has done for us (prompting the believer to gratitude) and that the preacher then steer clear of stressing also how the hearer is called to live if he will experientially know the salvation and the approval of his God.

My assessment is this: we are well educated and firmly grounded in our understanding of grace as the favor of God to sinners, contrary to what we deserve. We are not as well educated in understanding grace in its sanctifying power, grace as that by which the elect are transformed by the Holy Spirit and what as a result is to be expected of us as believers. You may disagree, as is your right. But as a life-long member of the PRC with forty years in the ministry, I maintain my assessment.

There is development in that area that needs to be done.

Further, your letter states, “No one on either side of this dispute has so much as whispered that the calling to faith and godliness should not be preached.”

But that is not really the issue, is it, whether all agree that preaching should call one to faith and godliness. The issue is, *what* may be (is allowable) and even *must* be preached to call faith into active expression and to prompt godliness in the life of the believer? What words and phrases are proper and orthodox, phrases that the Holy Spirit is pleased to use, and others not?

The last synod gave some direction to those questions, designating various objectionable statements and laying down a proper manner in which to use the phrase “in the way of.” The editorial in no way finds fault with their decisions and what they ruled on.

But synod did not and could not list and categorize all acceptable wording. This remains a matter of discussion amongst our members, such as, “In light of our recent decisions, is this way of exhorting members to faith and godliness acceptable and confessional? Is that?” Various sample phrases followed by questions have been put to me.

And one last reflection on your letter—and correction for the sake of various bodies’ good name. Having stated what “the issue in this controversy has never been about,” namely, “whether the believer must do, can do...or does good works,” you set forth what you evidently assess as being the issues and needing synod’s correction. You list three things. The first two can pass inspection, but the third? “Is salvation by faith and by the works of faith?” As if that was what Hope’s consistory was approving, what was being preached from their pulpit, and most of its members were oblivious to? And that this is what Classis East was willing to defend by its decisions? That is a serious misrepresentation. *That* was not the issue before synod. To indicate that it was is not honest or helpful.

As our churches go forward and my active ministry draws to a close, my earnest prayer is that the PRC’s response to synod’s recent decisions is not to over-correct, lest we slide towards the ditch of the antinomian perspective. Over-correction is always a danger. And the ditch on the right (antinomianism) is as real as the ditch on the left (work-righteousness).

The article of October 1 was written with that in mind. And nothing more.

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

Letter about “What Must I Do...?”

I am writing about the most recent editorial, *What Must I Do?*, by Rev. Koole (Oct. 1, 2018, p. 6-9). I find the editorial deeply disturbing for the connection that it makes with doctrinal dispute in our churches, specifically the editor’s, “fear that we tend to underestimate,” the truth of irresistible grace, and the editor’s connecting this to the, “issues being discussed in the PRC of late, namely, grace and godliness—the life of good works—in the life of the child of God.”

The editor’s reference is to the doctrinal dispute in the Protestant Reformed Churches over sermons preached at Hope church. I take issue with the editor’s characterization of this as “a discussion.” Rather, there were multiple protests and appeals filed, discipline carried out, a man deposed from office, many meetings were held, many decisions were made, some decisions overturned, and the last decision was made by Synod 2018, part of which involved a formula of subscription examination of a preacher. It is hardly “a discussion.” To describe it as such is an affront to all involved.

Further, I take issue with his characterization of the main subject of these disputes as “the life of godliness,” especially that in this dispute there is the potential to “underestimate...what *He, the Holy Spirit*, is able to make of a man.”

The editorial “What Must I Do?” is a case study in missing the point. The editorial perpetuates the same ineffective and irrelevant arguments that rendered Classis East impotent to settle the doctrinal issue raised by protests at Hope Church. Barrels of ink were spilled arguing that good works are necessary, that good works are the necessary way of life in the covenant of grace, and that the believer can do and does good works. All of those arguments were made because the controversy was inexplicably framed as arising—not with a minister’s *erroneous preaching* about the way of salvation and consequent compromise of justification by faith alone—but with the protestant’s *assumed antinomianism* stemming from his supposed denial of the necessity of good works and of the believer’s calling to do good works. That erroneously grounded argument was imposed on his protest, charged against him, used to depose him, repeated *ad nauseum*, and defended vociferously at the broader assemblies.

The editor perpetuates that assumption and with it

that view of the controversy. He does not use the word antinomianism. Instead he refers to those who deny the believer’s ability to do good works with the clear implication that they are in the Protestant Reformed Churches and were part of this controversy. His analysis merely adds to that erroneous view of the controversy because whether or not the Holy Spirit enables the believer to do good works was never a part of the original false charge of antinomianism. But the charge remains the same for the simple reason that if I cannot do good works, I will not, and you may not tell me to either. The editor is simply describing the supposed antinomianism according to one of its perceived doctrinal foundations.

That charge of antinomianism in this dispute has been rejected and with its demise went that erroneous characterization of the source of the controversy and the supposed threat of this controversy to our churches. No one on either side of this issue—not protestants, consistory, classes, or synods—so much as hinted at the idea that it is unnecessary for, not the calling of, or not within the ability of the believer to do good works. No one on either side of this dispute has so much as whispered that the calling to faith and godliness should not be preached. The editor’s unnamed and ill-defined individuals that supposedly believe the false doctrine the editor so vehemently opposes are of the same kind as the unnamed and ill-defined radicals that a previous editorial warned were lurking in the Protestant Reformed Churches. Both are caricatures and figments of the imagination in this controversy. Those same caricatures and figments are not only divisive and cast aspersions on those who stood for the truth, but also effectively confuse the whole issue.

This wrong view of the controversy perpetuated by the editor began at Hope Church and was a false conclusion imposed on a protest and on the whole subsequent controversy. This view was carried on by classes and at synods. This erroneous imposition on the controversy had massive and damaging consequences in our churches. Because of it, an officebearer was unjustly deposed from office for doing what Christ called him to do—supervise the preaching—and what he promised to do—refute and contradict all errors that oppose the creeds. Because of that view, Classis East in many meetings of that assembly and by its committees was totally unable to solve the issue, unnecessarily complicated and confused the matter, approved false doctrine, and finally

codified that erroneous doctrine in a doctrinal statement rejected by our synod in 2018. Because of it the issue—which was simple and involved the ABC’s of the Christian and Reformed faith—was allowed to fester to the great hurt of a minister, a consistory, protestants, a congregation, a classis, and a denomination. Because of it good names and reputations have been slandered and reproached.

This view of the controversy and the supposed threat that it poses to the churches has been rejected by synod when synod said the protestant was not an antinomian. His objection to the preaching did not arise out of a false view of the place of good works, the necessity of good works, the believer’s calling to do good works, or of the believer’s ability to do good works. The controversy arose out of the correct understanding of justification by faith alone and the unconditional covenant, a correct view of the *place* of good works in the believer’s life. The controversy arose out of a minister’s compromise of these truths by his preaching and a consistory’s persistent defense of that compromise.

The erroneous view of the controversy was rejected by synod when synod said the problem lay in an erroneous teaching about the *place* and *function* of good works that compromised the truths of justification and the covenant and when synod overturned decisions of previous synods based on that wrong view of the controversy.

That analysis of the controversy is patently wrong on the basis of the origin of the issue in Hope Church. The controversy originated in a sermon on John 14:6 in which it was declared that Jesus Christ is the way of salvation through the works that He works in us by His Spirit. The same doctrine of that sermon was later discovered in other sermons. That doctrine was properly analyzed and condemned by the Protestant Reformed Synod of 2018. Synod said the erroneous statements compromised the truths of justification by faith alone and the unconditional covenant.

Now the same discredited view of the issue that plagued our churches—a view that created so much confusion and caused so much damage—is trotted out again on the pages of the *Standard Bearer*. A warning is sounded against the very opposite threat that synod identified. The effect of that is to imply that synod in fact missed a vital part of the issue in its decision. The effect of that is to perpetuate the myth that antinomianism, a form of which the editor describes in his editorial under a different name, was and remains part of the problem, an unsolved problem in the churches.

The issue in this controversy has never been about

whether the believer must do, can do, will do, should be called to do, or does good works. But as synod said, *the place of those works*. Are they fruits of faith or do works along with faith obtain? Is fellowship with the Father by faith and by the good works that faith produces? Is salvation by faith and by the works of faith? The editor is speaking to the choir—all of whom arise and say amen—when he fulsomely describes the work of the Spirit to work in us both to will and to do of God’s good pleasure. But the whole article misses the point when it tries to connect this with the controversy in our churches and the editor sounds a false alarm when he warns about a threat to the doctrine of the calling and ability of believers to do good works.

The issue in this controversy has been whether the Spirit’s working in us both to will and to do of God’s good pleasure is part of the way to the Father that Jesus speaks about in John 14:6. That those works that the Spirit works in us are part of the way to the Father is the erroneous doctrine that was preached about that text and that was found in other sermons. This synod condemned.

To say that the way to the Father is not by works—especially not by the works that Jesus works in me by His Spirit—is not an incipient antinomianism. To insist on that works that the Spirit works in believers are not part of the way to the Father, vigorously to deny that works are part of that way, and strenuously to oppose the corruption of that teaching does not imply any weakening of commitment to or “underestimation” of the doctrine of the necessity, ability, or calling of the believer to do good works. Synod’s decision was defense of the gospel. The gospel synod defended is justification by faith alone which doctrine *alone* makes possible the proper teaching of the place of good works, because we received the Spirit—who works so mightily in believers—by the hearing of faith, and not by the works of the law (Gal. 3:2).

The editor’s efforts to frame the controversy as involving a threat to the doctrine that the Spirit works in us the ability to do good works, that there is calling to do good works, and that good works are necessary, however, begs for questions. Why does the editor of the *Standard Bearer* bring up again this debunked analysis of the doctrinal controversy that has so troubled us? To what purpose is this straw man set up again? Why is that view now raised again as though it had anything at all to do with the controversy that has bothered us? The issue is about synod’s defense of justification by faith alone—which is not by works. So why does the editor want to make the issue about the calling and ability of the believer to do good works?

Immediately after the stunning victory that defended the truth of justification by faith alone, why is there this “fear” that we “underestimate” what the Spirit makes of a man? In the matter of justification there is no calling, necessity, or ability of the believer to do good works. To insist on that is not a cause for “fear” that what the Spirit makes of man will be “underestimated.” The believer damns all his works because he believes that God is a God who justifies the ungodly and that his works can only be the ground for his condemnation if he brings them to the tribunal of God. So in a controversy where justification is compromised, why the insistence on the ability to do good works? After a decision in which justification was defended, why raise the fear that we underestimate the calling to do works?

Cordially in Christ,
Rev. Nathan J. Langerak

Balance, not radicalism

It took courage to write your editorial on radicalism in the PRC (Editorial, Sept. 15, 2018, p. 485), and I thank you for it. There is no doubt that your writing arose out of your love for our churches and their future welfare.

You rightly point out that these tendencies have been in our churches since their inception. I trace the origins to the existence of two very different worldviews that were imported by the Dutch (and a few German) immigrants who formed the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and subsequently the PRC. The Afscheiding group were known to be pietistic isolationists who simply wanted to be left alone. No doubt they loved the Reformed faith and were particularly zealous in bringing the church back to the Synod of Dordt. But, they did not engage society and the world around them. This was particularly evident in the Christian schools they established when they arrived in America. The purpose of these schools was to teach the Bible, the catechism, and the Dutch language. Then came the Kuyperians. Abraham Kuyper wanted the world opened up to the Christian believer. Even though he came up with the wrong answer as to how to do that—common grace, he wanted believing folks to live a full, God-centered, antithetical life on this earth. Two competing worldviews that, to my mind, exist to this day in our churches.

What is the solution? Balance in one’s thinking. Radicalism is extreme thinking, not balanced in its view of the church nor in its Reformed worldview. I had to learn that balance for myself. My early days in

the church might well have been characterized by radicalism. But I believe that God placed me with the right people at the right time to create that balance. I am grateful for it.

To our pastors (especially those recently ordained), I encourage you to develop that balance in your teaching and preaching. Work to develop an irenic spirit and to practice a biblical, Reformed ecumenism. Our churches will be better for it.

Blessings on your work in the seminary.

Jon J. Huiskens

The errors of dispensational premillennialism

As a subscriber and reader of the *Standard Bearer* magazine, I have read with interest your various articles on the errors of premillennialism as opposed to the truth of amillennialism. In this regard I enclose a pamphlet published some years ago entitled “Amillennialism Examined” by David McAllister, at that time a Brethren missionary in Zambia. He is now editor of *Assembly Testimony* magazine, which is published by the Brethren denomination, they being staunch adherents of premillennialism, as doubtless you know.

In this pamphlet he takes amillennialism to task, believing it to be contrary to the Bible. I thought you would like to have this. I have Rev. Angus Stewart’s “Covenant Reformed News” and am in contact with him from time to time. I have recently purchased the book *Behold, I Come Quickly*.

You may be interested to know that I am a member and deacon of the Gospel Standard Strict and Particular Baptists. We are completely detached from all other branches of the Baptist community and are not, as some in the PRC maintain, free-will Arminians nor Dispensationalists. We would subscribe to the five points of Calvinism.

One of our chapels (we use that term in preference to churches) is located (or should I say three) in the USA.

I leave with you. May the Lord be pleased to continue to grant to you His presence and help in the labor of love in which He has placed you until He comes or calls.

Lance Y. Morley
United Kingdom

Response:

With regard to the booklet, “Amillennialism Examined,” by David McAllister, that you sent me (which, I understand, is not your own theology), it is the standard premillennial and dispensational attack on amillennialism, and defense of itself.

All of its content I have examined in my series on the last things in the *Standard Bearer*. I hope that you have forwarded the series on the millennium to Mr. McAllister. If you have not, I ask that you do so.

I comment on one element of the booklet. This element, by itself, exposes premillennial dispensationalism, not merely as eschatological error, but as grievous heresy—denial of the gospel of salvation by Jesus Christ alone. This is the booklet’s defense of a future rebuilding of the Old Testament temple by the Jews for a right worship of God and, with this, a resumption of animal sacrifice (p. 29 of the booklet; all future references are to the booklet you sent me). Premillennial dispensationalism is compelled thus to interpret Ezekiel 40-48 by its insistence, fundamental to its theology, on interpreting the passage literally and by its denial that OT Israel was the type of the NT church as the spiritual kingdom of Christ.

A rebuilding of the material temple of God, even though for a restored nation of Israel, is, as such, denial of the work of Jesus Christ of building the church as the house of God, as taught in Hebrews 3:1-6 and in I Peter 2:4-10. Then to teach that in this material building there will be a resumption of animal sacrifice is, as such, denial of the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ, contrary to Hebrews 7:26-28; Hebrews 9:11-28; and the New Testament in its entirety.

That a renewed earthly priesthood is contrary to Hebrews’ teaching that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the OT priesthood, so that there can be, and may be, no earthly priesthood ministering in a material temple as a resumption of the typical service of the OT priesthood, would go without saying, were it not for premillennial dispensationalism. Hebrews 5-10 teaches nothing if it does not teach that the high priesthood of Jesus Christ fulfills the earthly priesthood of the Old Testament with all its merely earthly ministrations in and around a material building.

Reformed, indeed, Protestant, Christianity makes two additional comments that expose premillennial dispensationalism’s eschatology. First, Ezekiel 40-48 does not describe a temple service of merely “memorial” sacrifices. This is the standard dispensational dodge of the charge that resumption of animal sacrifice is a denial of the one sacrifice of Christ. Ezekiel describes sacrifices that (typically) atone for sins (see Ezek. 43:18-27; 44:11; 45:17-25; 46:12-15).

The desperate attempt to justify this resurrection of the sacrificing of animals for sin is itself condemnable. The explanation is that the sacrifices will be *symbols* to Israel of the death of Christ: “the system of sacrifices will continually be a memorial to them

[the Jews in the coming millennium—DJE] of what the death of God’s Son has done for them. Thus, as a commemoration, they will not be inappropriate at all” (p. 29). This defense of a restoration of animal sacrifices for sin is grievous error in two respects. First, the age of animal sacrifices as symbolic (typical) of the death of Christ is over, is once-and-for-all in the past. The reality has happened. Jesus died for sin. The only way in which this sacrifice for sin, once having been accomplished, is taught and remembered is the preaching of the cross as the message of the gospel (Gal. 3:1).

The second error is that animal sacrifices as memorials to the Jews puts Israel once again back into its immaturity in the Old Testament. The true Israel of God, whether believing Jews or believing Gentiles, has grown up. It no longer lives in the age of shadows, adapted to infants. When the church (not the fundamentally different nation of Israel) was a mere child, in the Old Testament age, its members were “in bondage under the elements of the world” (Gal. 4:3). Restoring animal sacrifices, even as memorials, is a deliberate return to infancy and its bondage. It is worse, much worse, but at best it amounts to having a doctor of theology devote himself to reciting the “A, B, C’s.” The coming of Christ does not bring His people back into infancy. It takes them into maturity.

On this one, fundamental issue, namely, what dispensationalism does with the prophecy of Ezekiel 40-48 concerning a rebuilt temple and its services, premillennial dispensationalism is cross-denying heresy. By this one, fundamental doctrine alone, every Christian must conclude that premillennial dispensationalism is denial of the gospel of the cross of Christ.

The issue in the controversy that the Reformed faith has with this recent theology (dating from the nineteenth century) is not so much its false, absurd doctrine of the end-times—the church as “interim,” a rapture; and two or more comings of Christ. The issue is denial of the once-for-all redemption of the cross of Jesus Christ.

—DJE



A word fitly spoken

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

Judge

One pernicious lie often told is that Christ forbids us Christians to judge. This ‘whopper’ persists in part because it seems to be based on Scripture. Rightly, the godly mother may tell her disparaging child, “Judge not, that ye be not judged;” or the caring teacher ask the critical student, “Who are you that judges another?” (Matt. 7:1; James 4:12). Certainly not falsehoods. But neither are such Scriptures the final word of God about judging, discernment, condemnation, and critical thinking; nor do they imply, must less teach, that Christians may not judge.

The truth is that Christ calls every Christian to judge, and refusal is dereliction of duty. Judgment belongs to our office of king and authority Christ gives to each of us to rule a part of His kingdom (Ps. 67:4). The Lord Himself is Judge because He is King (I Kings 10:9; Is. 33:22). And He calls us kings to sit on thrones of judgment and by judgment establish the land (Prov. 20:8; 29:4). To the extent elders, teachers, or parents refuse to judge their given domain, the peace, justice, and good of Christ will not reign there, but only warfare, injustice, and evil.

What Christ forbids is *unrighteous* judgment. It is unrighteous to judge rashly and not carefully, to judge on sight or rumor and not fact, to judge after the flesh and not spirit, to judge for reward and not duty, to judge for our sake and not God’s, (Heidelberg Catechism, LD 43; John 7:24; II Chron. 19:6; Micah 3:11). Christ forbids those He receives in mercy to judge without mercy, and forbids those He frees from the law to judge another’s liberty (Rom. 14:3; I Cor. 10:29; Col. 2:16). Christ forbids us to judge outside our jurisdiction, judge matters that belong to God alone, or judge beyond our capability (I Cor. 5:12; 11:31). For example, since the secret parts of the heart are unknown to us, we are forbidden to judge in an unfavorable manner those who make an external profession of faith and live regular lives (Canons of Dordt, III/IV, 15).

Christ must qualify or equip us to judge because our nature is incapable of righteous judgment. Judgment concerns right and wrong with God, and requires spir-

itual skills to discern, establish, reveal, and vindicate that right (Rom. 2:1-2). Christ qualifies us by giving Himself—by imputing His righteousness by faith and imparting His Word and Spirit of truth, love, wisdom, and knowledge (II Chr. 1:10; 6:23). He that is spiritual is thus equipped to judge all things—ourselves within the church, earthly things, and even the world and angels (I Cor. 2:15; 6:2-5). Yet, in this life, our judgment is always subject to error, limitations, and the judgment of Christ Himself.

Christ is *the* Judge (John 5:22). Although He said, “I judge no man and came not to judge the world,” He shall come again to judge the quick and the dead (John 5:30; 12:47). Behold, this Judge stands at the door (James 5:9). He shall judge in righteousness everyone, including us, according to what we have done, whether it be good or evil, judging even the thoughts and every idle word, and disclosing the secrets and hypocrisy of men (Rev. 11:18; 20:12). He that showed no mercy in judgment, shall receive judgment without mercy (James 2:13). Those who judged Him or His Word false, shall be convicted by the testimony of that word in their own conscience, and be condemned to everlasting hell-fire (John 12:48; Ps. 9:19; 96:10-13; 110:6; Micah 4:3).

This judgment, terrible and dreadful to the wicked and ungodly, is most desirable and comfortable to the elect. For He will judge us by the perfect law of liberty according to His imputed righteousness (Ps. 7:11; 135:14; II Chr. 6:23; James 2:12). Jesus, our Judge, shall confess our name before God His Father, and reveal that our cause, condemned now by many earthly judges, is His cause; and for a gracious reward He shall crown us, His judges, with glory and honor, even with the crown of righteousness He shall give in that day to us and to all them that love His appearing (Belgic Confession, Art. 37; Ps. 10:18; 72:4; II Tim. 4:8).

So judge. Not unrighteous judgment. But remember with what judgment you shall be judged, and so judge (Matt. 7:1-2).



God's wondrous works

Rev. James Laning, pastor of Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa

Foundational principles (13)

All things determined and directed by our God

In our greatest trials we are comforted when we remember that our Father in heaven has all creatures in His hand. Indeed, without His will they cannot so much as move. Our Father has planned everything that happens to us in this life. Even when He sends evils upon us, we know that it is in His love for us. Believing this, we remain patient in trying times, looking to Him with confidence for all that we need.

God's providence refers to His everywhere-present power by which He upholds and governs all creatures, so that every event takes place precisely as He determined that it would. God is the sovereign ruler over all. He always accomplishes His purpose, directing all things to His glory, for the good of His people.

Determining and directing

Before the foundation of the world, our God determined every event that will occur. God's counsel refers to the good pleasure of His will according to which He decreed all that will happen in time.

Every event was eternally determined by God and also directed by His hand. The same God who created by His word is continuing to govern all things. He performs what He decreed. This was true in the beginning when He created all things, and it continues to be true throughout history. Always it is His counsel that stands and the counsel of the ungodly that comes to nothing (Ps. 33:6-11).

Shortly after the resurrection, a group of praying saints praised God and said that they now understood that those who crucified Christ did "...whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done" (Acts 4:28). They understood that God determined the cross, and that He directed it by His hand. Yet, it is not just the crucifixion, but every single event that is determined and directed by our God.

Few believe this. Many deny that there is a God who is governing the creation. Of those who profess faith in God by far the majority speak of luck and entertain the notion that many things happen by chance.

It is not uncommon to find someone who thinks like the Philistines of old. When the Philistines were

plagued, they concluded that Israel's God might have sent the plague. But they also thought that it might have happened by "chance" (I Sam. 6:9). This same thinking is common among professing Christians. When something they view to be very bad or especially good happens to them, they may wonder whether God was involved. But normally they do not think of God having anything to do with the common occurrences of the day.

Scripture, however, is very clear that all events down to the smallest detail are determined and directed by the Almighty. He is the One who...

- Does all His pleasure (Is 46:10).
- Works all things after the counsel of His own will (Eph. 1:11).
- Does as He pleases in the heavens, the earth, the seas, and all deep places (Ps. 135:6).

These verses teach that God not only could do as He pleases, but that He actually does as He pleases. He directs all things so that His purpose is always accomplished.

Providence and specific events

That God is doing this is, of course, invisible to the eye of man. When a man casts the lot or throws the dice, the outcome appears to be subject to chance. But God says that He is the one who determined what the result would be: "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD" (Prov. 16:33).

When two people cross paths who did not intend to meet, it is commonly thought that this happened by chance. If the will of neither of the individuals was involved, it is thought that no one willed it. Yet we know from Scripture that God willed it. He was the One who had determined that these two people would meet. A believing husband and wife often think of this. Looking back at how they met, they give thanks to God for bringing them together.

By our God's providence we experience many joys, but also sorrows. Occasionally, something happens

that we dread, such as when a believer unintentionally harms or kills a person, say in a car crash. Though obviously the child of God did not desire it to happen, Scripture says that God willed it. Scripture specifically refers to such an event: “He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death. And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee” (Ex. 21:12-13). God appointed cities of refuge to which saints were to flee if they had killed someone unintentionally. Here we take note of the fact that when something like this happened, it was because God determined and directed it. The person who died is said to have been “delivered” into the hand of the one who unintentionally killed him. It is a comfort to us in such extremely difficult trials to remember that what took place was something that our Lord willed.

Miracles and the laws of nature

If you drop an apple and it falls to the ground, was that event directed by God? Or was it directed by the laws of nature? Or are both true?

Some may admit that God created all things, yet still insist that the movement of creatures is sustained and directed by some energy or laws that were infused into the creation at the beginning. Man in his pride looks at the movement of non-living creatures and declares that they move without God directing them, being governed by laws that operate without God’s involvement.

Scripture, however, speaks differently. The wind appears to blow with no one directing it, yet God is the One who commands and raises the stormy winds. Then, at His word, those winds become calm again: “For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof.... Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still” (Ps. 107:25-29).

Repeatedly, we read that God by His word is causing the movement of the creatures that man thinks are moving only due to what is called gravity: “Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the dayspring to know his place” (Job 38:12).

When the sun’s shadow went backward ten degrees in the days of Hezekiah, it was very clear that God did that. But every moment the sun is moving at God’s

command. Such miracles briefly manifested this ongoing invisible reality: all creatures are moving as directed by the sovereign hand of our God.

Though the miracles ceased when the Scriptures were completed, the reality they signified continues. Those today who seek “miracles” fail to recognize God’s hand in all the events that are taking place. Believing that our Father is governing all things, we are comforted knowing that all creatures are in His hand.

Applying this doctrine

Believing this doctrine of providence we continue to show concern for safety, for eating healthy, and more. We do not say: “Well, seeing as God has determined and is directing all things, and if I’m going to get sick or injured there is no way for me to avoid it, I might as well take no thought about health and safety.” We do not say this, for we understand that God has appointed means for us to use to promote health and safety, and that we are called not to reject but to make good use of these means out of a concern for ourselves and a love for our neighbor.

Believing what God says about His providence, we also continue to make plans for the future. Yet we do so keeping in mind that what we plan will take place only if the Lord wills. We often say: “Lord willing,” when talking about

what we intend to do. This manifests a God-glorifying belief in the doctrine of providence.

Another manifestation is our prayers. Why would we look to our God for bread unless we believed that He is the One who provides it? Why would we pray to Him for deliverance from evil unless we believed that He is the One who sovereignly controls it? As we bow before our Father in prayer, we think on His providence. Remaining patient in adversity and thankful in prosperity, we go to Him to express our thanks and to bring our petitions. Praising and relying on Him, we have peace and joy as we go through each day, conscious of His fatherly hand lovingly directing us and all His people.

Those today who seek “miracles” fail to recognize God’s hand in all the events that are taking place. Believing that our Father is governing all things, we are comforted knowing that all creatures are in His hand.



Strength of youth

Rev. Jon Mahtani, pastor of the Cornerstone Protestant Reformed Church in Dyer, Indiana

Real repentance

“But now [God] commandeth all men everywhere to repent.”

Acts 17:30

A good coach is one who goes back to the fundamentals. In any sport (basketball, for example), the trainer brings the players, as experienced as they are, back to the basics of passing, boxing out, defensive positioning, etc. Likewise, a good teacher never allows his or her pupils to stop practicing and executing the fundamentals. One of the foundational parts of the Christian life that we may never neglect to teach and regularly practice is real repentance.

Everywhere in the Bible we find the calling to repent. Throughout the Old Testament, the Spirit reveals to us fallen mankind the necessity of repentance. In the Garden of Eden, in the time of the Flood, through the wilderness wanderings, under the judges and then the kings of Israel, before and after the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, sinners of all kinds were called to repent. All through the time of the prophets, the command came repeatedly: “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Is. 55:7). “Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings” (Jer. 3:33). “Oh Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity” (Hosea 14:1).

Transitioning into the New Testament, we see the last of the Old Testament prophets, John the Baptist, with his main message: “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 3:2). At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, we hear Him set the tone of His preaching: “The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:16). Commissioning His disciples at His ascension, He called them to preach the same message: “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among the nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47). These apostles did not disobey, as Luke records in Acts 2:38, “Then Peter said unto them, Re-

pent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

Young people, this is the need of the hour! It is what the world needs, it is what churches around us need, and it is what the members of the Protestant Reformed Churches need. “[God] commandeth all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30). Not only seasoned adults but also young people must heed this command seriously, and continually.

Here is the urgency: “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). You might do well in catechism, go to church twice, have the approval of others, and get good grades, but those who do not repent will perish.

Although repentance be not to be rested in, as any satisfaction for sin, or any cause of the pardon thereof, which is the act of God’s free grace in Christ; yet it is of such necessity to all sinners, that none may expect pardon without it (Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 15, Art. 3).

Defined simply, repentance is a drastic change of mind about my sin and about my God. The Greek word for repentance literally means “change of mind.” It is not a mere change of the brain’s thinking, nor a change of mood, but it is a radical change of the heart’s mind. Repentance is a 180-degree turn from liking lust to hating lust. It is turning from the enjoyment of worldly entertainment to being repulsed by it. In real repentance, the heart drastically turns from imagining a God that winks at my sins of gossip, cheating, self-righteousness, and laziness and comes to the shocking realization that the Holy God hates my sin—and with even more intense disgust when I minimize sin’s greatness.

Real repentance fills the heart with sorrow. The Hebrew word for repentance means “to be grieved.” Scripture describes it as the breaking, tearing, or piercing of the heart in sadness for my sin. Repentance is not *saying* sorry; it is *being* sorry. It is not change of *behavior* (though that will be the result); it is change of *heart*. It is not a crying of the *eyes* necessarily, but the mourning

of the *soul*. It is not sorrow for *some* sin or *most* sin, but *all* my sin. It is not a sad demeanor only in front of *people* but in real private prayer before *God*. The heart of true repentance sorrows not merely over the grounding I got, the dirtying of my reputation, the sinful reaction of others against me, or any other consequence. True repentance feels more hurt for *my* sin against God and others than for *others'* sins against me. True repentance does not wait until *later* (after tomorrow's last hurrah), but *now* beats upon his chest crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13).

The humblest person needs to stop defending himself self-righteously. The defense lawyer inside of us (a.k.a. the old man) constantly seeks to blame others, deflect accusations, minimize sin, point out how others are worse, and refuse repentance. Television, Internet, and many counselors (even the Christian kind) constantly lie, saying, "Man's greatest problem is not enough positive thinking about himself." There is a remnant of truth in that lie, as there always is. But God's Word shows everywhere that, contrary to this, man's greatest problem is, in fact, not enough negative thinking about his sin. "And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye

shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed" (Ezek. 20:43).

No repentance proves no living faith. You say that you have faith? Then you will repent. This is not just a warning, but an aid unto genuine repentance. You *will* repent if you truly believe in Christ and Him crucified. For why did thorns pierce His skull? Why did whips shred His back? Why did hands and spittle smite His face? Why did nails pierce His hands and feet? Why did scorn and denial cut His heart? Why did hellfire fill His soul? This is the answer of faith: "My sin! My beloved Lord would not have had to suffer such agony if it were not for my sin!" True believers *must* repent at the foot of the cross. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn" (Zech. 12:10b). Living faith will result in a life of repentance.

Only in the way of heart repentance is there true comfort, joy, and change! For the Christ you have distressed by your sin makes you righteous before God and then also holy by His Spirit. Dear young believer, you must practice the fundamental of real repentance.



Go ye into all the world

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Protestant Reformed missions The war years: Mission work flounders (1940-1946) (2)

During the first half of the decade of the 1940s, the Protestant Reformed Churches began the work of organizing its synodical committees under constitutions. In 1940 the Emeritus Committee presented its Constitution to the synod for approval. The Synod of 1941 adopted the Constitution of the Theological School Committee. The Synodical Committee's Constitution was approved at the 1942 Synod. It was time for the Mission Committee to draw up and adopt its own constitution as well. This task was also brought to its completion by the Synod of 1942. For the interested reader, this original Constitution of the Mission Committee is found in the 1942 *Acts of Synod*, pages xxiv-xxix. The changes synod made to this draft

are found on pages 26 and 27. The motion to adopt the Constitution with its changes is found on page 31, Article 20.

Constitutions are good and necessary. A constitution defines the committee, sets forth the goals and purposes of that committee, outlines its duties, places bounds on that committee, and ultimately generates decency and good order in the function of that committee. This is why our churches insist that every standing synodical committee adopt a constitution under which it must labor. It only stands to reason, of course, that the contents of these constitutions might change according to circumstances and the needs of the churches. This has happened several times with the Constitution that

now governs the Domestic Mission Committee (DMC) and its labors. As the emphasis of our mission labors changed, so also did the Constitution. For this reason, the Mission Committee Constitution we have today as churches is different from the one originally adopted in 1942.

A few observations regarding this first Constitution are worthy of note.

First, the scope of mission work remained the same as the report defining the task of the Home Mission Committee adopted by Synod of 1932, ten years earlier: “We are convinced that our present duty lies primarily in the field of church extension and church reformation.” That this particular verbiage was intentional is evident from the cover letter the Mission Committee sent to Synod of 1942 with its draft of the Constitution. In the second paragraph of this letter we find, “may we state that this constitution has been drawn up with a view to the regulation of the missionary activity as now conducted by the Protestant Reformed Churches *in the form of church extension work*” (emphasis mine).¹ That the Mission Committee itself was of a mind to limit its labors to church extension and church reformation is evident too from the proposed draft of the Constitution submitted to the Synod of 1942, the wording of which was changed by synod. “We conceive our present field to be among our Reformed brethren that are deviating from the old and beaten paths of our Reformed heritage.”² The scope of home missions, therefore, remained narrow.

Second, this original Constitution authorized the Mission Committee to supervise and carry on the mission work in the various fields of labor. For example, Article 1 defined the work of the Mission Committee as follows:

The Mission Committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches is a committee chosen by Synod, to regulate and supervise all missionary activity prescribed and delegated to it by Synod. Hence, the Committee is a Synodical Committee, and responsible only to Synod for its actions.³

This definition seems simple enough, but it has serious implications concerning *who* must carry on mission work: the synod or the local church. In the mid-seventies this definition, along with other articles of the Constitution, was part of serious debate. It was contended in an overture that the Constitution gave to the Mission

Committee “the authority which is the exclusive prerogative and domain of the autonomous local consistory of the instituted church, an authority which Synod itself does not have and therefore cannot delegate to one of its committees.”⁴

The result of this debate is that synod expressed agreement with the overture and the Constitution was changed to the one we have presently. We will write more about this debate when we study the work of missions in the 1970s. It is good to note, however, that constitutions do determine the work of various committees, in this instance that of the Mission Committee.

A third observation regarding this original Constitution is that of the makeup of the committee. We mentioned in a former article that synod decided to form two divisions of the Mission Committee, one located in the West and the other in the East. The Constitution lays out carefully the relation of these two divisions and how they are to function with one another. Today the DMC is made up of 10 men out of Classis East, while the Foreign Mission Committee is made up of 10 men out of Classis West. The original division of the Mission Committee is worthy of note because it led to problems between the eastern and western branches, as we will find out.

By the year 1945 the Mission Committee had little to do in the way of mission work. It reported to synod that year, “The report of your committee will be necessarily brief this time for the reason that very little work has been performed in this last interim.”⁵ In response, the synod reminded the Mission Committee of the mandate that had been given it by the 1944 Synod. The consistory of the Manhattan, Montana PRC overturned synod through Classis West:

The Consistory of the Manhattan Protestant Reformed Church requests that Classis overture Synod to investigate the possibility of establishing an outlet for Foreign Mission endeavor in the way of supporting some reputable Mission now, and, in case this proves to be impossible, that a fund be established for this work in order that when the opportunity presents itself, either to support some reputable mission or to establish our own Foreign Mission, we will be prepared to make use of it.⁶

Classis West forwarded this overture to synod with its approval. Synod neither approved nor disapproved of this overture but simply passed it along to the Mis-

1 *Acts of Synod 1942*, xxiv, Appendage V.

2 *Acts, 1942*, xxv.

3 *Acts, 1942*, xxv, Art. 1: Definition.

4 *Acts, 1975*, Supplement, 103.

5 *Acts, 1945*, 59. Mission Committee Report.

6 *Acts, 1944*, 51, Supplement I.

sion Committee. The Mission Committee had done nothing with this in the interim between the Synods of 1944 and 1945.

At the September meeting, the eastern branch of the Mission Committee, after much discussion, enthusiastically immersed itself into finding a foreign mission work. The decision was made to consult the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and Dr. H. Beets of the Christian Reformed Church to gather information concerning the foreign mission work of these churches and that of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands. A letter was also to be sent to the western branch of the Mission Committee for further suggestions concerning the mandate of synod. Two months later, having heard nothing from the western branch of the Mission Committee, the eastern branch plowed ahead with further decisions regarding foreign work.

The committee approved a number of recommendations.

First, it recommended that our churches establish a fund with a view to seeking and establishing a foreign mission field of our own. The initial amount of money to be raised for this fund was set at \$10,000. Second, the Mission Committee advised that the fund be used to support some reputable existing foreign mission endeavor (of another denomination of churches), in case it becomes impossible to establish our own foreign mission work. Third, that a committee be set up to contact Dr. J. DeKorne (of the OPC) to gather as much information as possible for a future labor in China. Then, finally, the Mission Committee decided to make its intentions known to the denomination (though still not having heard word from the western branch of the committee) via the *Standard Bearer* and the *Concordia*, the church periodicals.⁷

The eastern division of the Mission Committee again met in December of 1945. The western branch sent a couple of pieces of correspondence expressing concerns it had with beginning a work in China.⁸ The secretary of the eastern branch was instructed to answer these questions. But the eastern branch was on a roll and it decided to push on with this new venture. The committee to meet with Dr. DeKorne reported:

China is a large field. The Chinese are generally an intelligent and noble people. The language can be studied in this country or in language schools in China. The latter is most favorable since one remains in contact

with the language everyday. After about 1 year or 1½ years an individual should be able to acquire enough knowledge of the language to give testimony. The ideal method of work, according to DeKorne, would be to send 2 or 3 families together to work out of from a central post where the families could live together. This has several advantages. The many rivers and canals in China make it possible to work with a houseboat and move from place to place. It is not difficult to arouse interest among the Chinese and an audience is soon gathered willing to listen. Several items of expense were mentioned which would require a minimum of \$10,000 to start a work in China with a single family in the field.⁹

The eastern branch of the Mission Committee was impressed by this report. The possibility of a foreign mission work in China, it felt, was within grasp! For that reason, in Article 8 of the Minutes of the December 3, 1945 meeting, the eastern branch of the Mission Committee (despite the questions and concerns of the western branch) moved to advise synod to consider China as the best field to work at this time. They believed the grounds to this motion were convincing:

1. Preliminary investigation among mission leaders indicate that China is an “open-door” for the gospel and that a work may soon be begun there.
2. Testimony of missionaries having served in China is that generally the Chinese are of greater than average mentality.
3. China is densely populated and audiences can be gathered without great difficulty.
4. Many portions of China have not heard the gospel.
5. A work in China would not be too great a financial burden for our churches.

Other motions were raised concerning China at this meeting, but these decisions are not available due to a missing page (129) in the Minute book. This advice was sent to the Synod of 1946 without the concurrence or input of the western division of the Mission Committee. This, among other factors, created a rift between the East and the West in the matter of missions. We will attempt to document the dispute over China missions and other factors that led to this division in a future article.

⁷ Mission Committee Minutes of the November 12, 1945 meeting.

⁸ Two supplements from the western branch were read at this meeting. These supplements are not available. Their content, therefore, is not known.

⁹ Mission Committee Minutes of the December 3, 1945 meeting.

Shouting and searching

My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.

Proverbs 2:1-5

Each of God's children, desiring to know and serve our heavenly Father, receives His Word and commandments. Yet it does not stop there; our ears are inclined to wisdom. When it comes to knowledge and understanding, we cry out after them and we even shout for them! Still, there is more in the believer's experience: we seek after knowledge and understanding. This is the reason for the Reformed Free Publishing Association's (RFPA) existence. This is why we are gathered here at this annual association meeting: we are shouting out for and searching for knowledge and understanding. What follows then, in this report, is an explanation of our shouting and searching in the past year.

We will begin with our book publications. We are thankful to have several newer and younger authors who have heard our shouts for knowledge and understanding. These men have written several new and upcoming books. The I Corinthians commentary by Rev. Nathan Langerak, *Walking in the Way of Love* (volume one), was published this year, and we plan to release the second volume in this coming year. Additionally, Rev. Langerak's Bible story book, *God's Mighty Acts*—the first volume in the series *Tell His Wonders*—will be published in the coming year, the Lord willing. Rev. Martyn McGeown has been writing prolifically as well. *Grace and Assurance: The Message of the Canons of Dordt* was very recently published in connection with our celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Synod of Dordt. We are also anticipating the release of *Micah: Proclaiming the Incomparable God*, Rev. McGeown's commentary on the prophecy of Micah. To pique your interest in this publication, I provide you with the title of the first chapter: "Mountain-Melting Judgment," and of the last: "Jehovah: The Incomparable, Sin-Pardoning God."

The RFPA was also privileged to publish an expand-

ed version of the speeches delivered at the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary's 2017 Reformation 500 conference. The title of this publication is *Here We Stand*, and it features six different writers on various Reformation topics, including the crucial issues of justification by faith alone, the authority of Scripture, and proper worship.

Professor David Engelsma continues to provide the RFPA with excellent and profitable material for publication. This past year we published volume one of *The Belgic Confession* commentary. We plan to publish volume 2 of this comprehensive work in the coming year. Professor Engelsma also has several other writing projects in the pipeline. Our prayer is that God will continue to grant Professor Engelsma the ability and desire to write for the RFPA. On this note, the RFPA, and we association members in particular, shout out for and seek after understanding by encouraging more writers to take up the pen and to write doctrinally sound, spiritually edifying materials.

In our children's book division, we published *T is for Tree: A Bible ABC* by Connie Meyer. This book with its beautiful artwork and covenantal theme is an excellent beginning for us. There are still some copies available, and they make great gifts for our youngest readers. We have several other book projects for younger readers—both children and young people—which we are planning to publish within the next two years. The next release will be *His Mercy Endureth Forever*, a picture book for young children on Psalm 136. The illustrations are done by Kathleen DeJong, a member of Peace Protestant Reformed Church.

We are also pleased to announce that the RFPA has a team of people working on Professor Herman Hanko's monumental writing, *Christ's Church through the Ages*, a comprehensive study of church history for personal and academic study. The extent of this work includes general editing and consists of the acquisition of additional images, charts, and diagrams; captioning these visual details; adding sidebars; and inserting text boxes. Although the fruits of this project will not be realized for some time, we are excited to be making good progress on it.

There are also several translations in progress at the RFPA. Dr. H. David Schuringa continues to translate

The Lord's Supper Form commentary by Baastian Wielinga. This is a long-term project, and at last report the translator is about one-third of the way done. Another translation that you heard about in last year's report is the Tagalog translation of Gertrude Hoeksema's Bible story book, *Come, Ye Children*. Last year, interested and able individuals were encouraged to donate to this project. As this project nears completion—with the majority of the cost still being carried by our brothers and sisters in the Philippines—please consider donating to the Philippines Book Fund to help cover the publishing costs of this worthy cause.

The RFPA continues to publish our magazine, the *Standard Bearer*. We are thankful for the continued work of the *Standard Bearer's* editorial committee, writers, and staff. Alex Kalsbeek continues the *Standard Bearer* advertising campaign and, as a result, we have grown by a net of 50 subscriptions since this time last year. We are also pleased to report that no subscription cost increase is necessary for this coming year. In our opinion, the updated appearance and increased readability of the *Standard Bearer* is well worth last year's cost increase!

The book and *Standard Bearer* committee continues to shout out for knowledge and to search for understanding on behalf of the association. This committee is almost constantly reviewing manuscripts and interacting with authors, both old and new. This committee also has been breaking new ground with the children's book division. Similar to the situation our committee faced two decades ago when the RFPA began consistently to publish Reformed books for its readers, we continually encounter unique questions to be asked and answered about the scope and daily processes of publishing children's books.

The membership and marketing committee serves to promote our publications through advertising, book reviews, and blog posts. If you are not a subscriber to the RFPA blog, you ought to consider it. Many timely subjects are addressed through the blog posts, some newly written, some from our own history and before. Some popular posts from the last six months include Mike Feenstra's series on the connection between Christian education and the Reformed Baptism Form, Rev. McGeown's series on the Bible and Israel, and Rev. Joshua Engelsma's series on the duties of active church membership. This committee is busy working closely with Alex to explore new markets for RFPA publications.

The finance and operation committee's main task is to oversee the monies and other assets of the RFPA. [Andy Bylsma gave the annual report on finances at this meeting.] This committee also oversees the maintenance

of the RFPA building and grounds. A new server was installed recently and is working well. Some new LED lighting was installed earlier this year and all other building maintenance is also up to date.

The 2017–2018 fiscal year has been a busy time of settling in for the RFPA Board and staff. As you might recall, in 2017 we hired Miriam Koerner to be our children's book coordinator and Alex Kalsbeek as our new business manager. After a little over two years on the job for Miriam, and one year for Alex, we report that they are settled in and doing fantastic work! Paula Kamps has taken up the work of book coordinator along with her work as office administrator; she does a fantastic job as well. Alex manages the warehouse and the business aspects of the RFPA, including a lot of work on promotions, marketing, and sales. The Board has observed that Alex, Miriam, and Paula all work quite well together.

Even with the settling in and changes that have recently taken place, the RFPA Board and staff continue to shout out on behalf of the association. We continue to search for the understanding and the knowledge that has its source in God's Word alone. We do this by publishing Protestant Reformed writings and good material written in the Reformed tradition. We ask you, the association, to pray for us in our work, to encourage our professors, ministers, and educators to write, and that you pick up and read what is written.

HIS MERCY ENDURETH FOREVER

— PSALM 136 —



O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy endureth for ever.

—Psalm 136:1, 5

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Guest article

Mr. Don Terpstra

Peace PRC relocates to Dyer, IN

This November Peace PRC will celebrate her 30th year as an organized church. Peace is the elder of two daughters of South Holland PRC (now Crete PRC) and was organized November 11, 1988. We began worship services in the local Christian high school in Lansing, Illinois. We worshiped in the chapel of Illiana for seven-plus years. In 1995 the Lord blessed us with our own brand-new building in Lansing. Even then, we anticipated needing expansion later as we grew, possibly adding a sanctuary to the west. The Lord did bless us with growth, along with three pastors, many young families, and many baptized children. Today, we have 100 baptized children, over half the number of our entire congregation.

During those years it became more and more apparent we would outgrow our Lansing building; it also became apparent that the trend for the area's Protestant Reformed people was moving south. Our South Holland congregation formed a second daughter church, Cornerstone PRC, which located in Dyer, Indiana. South Holland PRC also relocated south to Crete, Illinois, and eventually our school was relocated to Dyer, Indiana.

At our last service in the Lansing building our current pastor, Rev. R. Barnhill, had a sermon on “The Eternal

God Our Dwelling Place” from Psalm 90. Rev. Barnhill brought out the truth of that passage that everything here on earth is temporary; there is constant change through history, but the only constant is that God is our “real” and eternal home, as Psalm 90:12 explains: “so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts into wisdom.”

Providentially, on October 5, 2018 we dedicated our second church building, now 30 years later, in Dyer, Indiana. Providently, the Lord blessed us again by making available to us an existing building in close proximity to our school that, with extensive remodeling, would suit our needs and be affordable. This building has a separate, larger sanctuary, a large lobby area, several classrooms, and other rooms for our use. It stands on five acres with room to expand if future growth demands.

As we continue to worship our God, now in our new location, we pray with the psalmist in Psalm 90:16, 17: “Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children, and let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.” May the Lord continue to bless Peace in her new home. We give all the glory to God alone.

Our new address is 14864 101st Ave., Dyer, Indiana. If you are ever in our area, we would love to have you come and worship with us in our new home.



Exterior of Peace PRC, Dyer, Indiana (interior picture—next page)



News from our churches

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

Trivia question

How many years has our sister church, the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore, been an organized congregation? Answer later in this column.

Mission activities

In late September, the area where our missionaries labor in the Philippines dealt with Typhoon Ompong. But according to Rev. Daniel Kleyn, the affect they experienced was minimal. They did have high winds and about five inches of rain in a 24-hour period so that catechism was canceled in Provident Christian Church of Marikina. But so far as we know there were no injuries due to the storm, for which we thank the Lord.

Congregational activities

The congregation of Southeast PRC successfully made the move to Adams Christian School as their temporary facility, as their Long-Range Planning Committee actively seeks new accommodations.

A new photo was taken recently of the congregation at Kalamazoo PRC.

Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI held their progressive dinner in mid-October.

From the Randolph (WI) PRC bulletin: "After 60 years of service, Jeanne Buteyn has retired from organ accompaniment for worship. We would like to take this

opportunity to thank her for her time, commitment, and willingness to share her gift with the congregation in this way. We appreciate the many years she has led us in song. Thank you, Jeanne!" We can only echo those sentiments here! And thanks to all our accompanists. You perform a valuable service to your congregation!

The Ladies' Circle of First PRC of Edmonton, AB was planning the annual Remembrance Day Car Rally.

School activities

Eastside Christian School recently sold their well known Dutch banquet, while Hope School Circle sold pig-in-the-blankets.

The Heritage Christian School Fall Children's Clothing and Toy Sale was held on Saturday, October 6 from 9 A.M. - 12:00. Items for sale included infant to teen clothing, winter gear, snow boots, outdoor/indoor toys, books, games, shoes, baby equipment, maternity, and more. Delicious baked goods were also for sale! This event was located in the large gym at Heritage Christian in Hudsonville.

All current, retired, and prospective teachers were invited to the Protestant Reformed Teachers' Convention on Thursday, October 18 and Friday, October 19. The annual convention was hosted this year by Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, MI.

Minister activities

The congregation of Grandville, MI PRC voted October 7 to call a minister-on-loan to the CERC of Singapore. The trio consisted of Revs. G. Eriks, W. Langerak, and S. Key. Rev. W. Langerak (Southeast, Grand Rapids PRC) received this call.

The consistory of Immanuel PRC of Lacombe, AB presented the congregation with the following trio from which to call a minister: Rev. E. Guichelaar (Randolph, WI), Rev. N. Langerak (Crete, IL), and Rev. M. VanderWal (Wingham, ON). Voting took place on the 23rd of September with Rev. Nathan Langerak receiving the call. In God's wise plan, He led Rev. Langerak to decline this call. After forming a new trio of Revs. J. Engelsma, E. Guichelaar, and M. VanderWal, on October 28 Immanuel voted to call Rev. J. Engelsma.

On September 23 Rev. Nathan Decker announced that God had led him to accept the call to Grandville, MI PRC. He was installed by Rev. K. Koole on October 28. May God bless his labors there! And may God provide for Trinity PRC another pastor soon. Their Council formed this trio: Revs. J. Engelsma, B. Huizinga, W. Langerak. On October 28 Rev. B. Huizinga received this call.

The consistory invited the congregation of Kalamazoo, MI PRC to a celebration commemorating Rev. Michael DeVries' 40 years in the ministry. A short program and light supper took place after the evening service on October 7. We join with the congregation in thanks to God for this faithful servant!

Evangelism activities

The evangelism committee of Kalamazoo, MI PRC made arrangements to sing at the New Friends assisted-living building.

Bethel PRC held its annual Reformation Day Lecture on Friday, October 12 at 7:30 p.m. Professor Ron Cammenga spoke on the subject: "Getting the Gospel Right: Celebrating the 400th Anniversary of the Canons of Dordt."

Fall Reformation lecture: Rev. Andrew Lanning spoke on the topic "The Reformation's Defense of Scripture's Authority" on October 26 at Southwest PRC. Those who were unable to attend could participate via live-stream.

The Reformed Witness Committee of the five Siouxland area churches scheduled a lecture for Friday, October 26, in Hull PRC. Prof. Doug Kuiper spoke on the topic "The Controversy Regarding Sovereign Grace: The Synod of Dordt and its Relevance for Today."

From the bulletin of First PRC of Edmonton, AB: "Advance notice: The evangelism committee has sched-

uled a public lecture for Friday, November 23, at 7:30 p.m., entitled 'Fighting for Sexual Purity: The Battle Against Pornography.' Please mark your calendars and invite your friends." The evangelism society also purchased copies of *Behold I Come Quickly* containing speeches from the 2016 BRF Conference regarding the coming of our Lord. They encouraged their members to take a copy for personal use and to give out copies in their personal witness to others.

Sister-church activities

When Rev. Angus Stewart from Northern Ireland visited the USA recently, he gave a presentation of the work in Northern Ireland to the congregation in the Wingham, ON PRC. He also spoke for Eastside Christian School, the RFPA, and gave a Reformation lecture in Pittsburgh PRC. He preached in Wingham PRC, Southeast PRC, and Zion PRC. While Rev. Stewart was in the U.S., Rev. K. Koole made the trip to Northern Ireland and preached and taught catechism in the Covenant PRC for two Lord's Days. He also traveled to Limerick, Ireland to preach there one Sunday.

Singles conference

There was an invitation to join for a weekend Singles Conference November 9 and 10, in Grand Rapids, MI, geared toward single members of the church (ages: mid-20s and up). A game night was planned for Friday November 9, with two speeches on Saturday, the 10th. Lord willing, speeches were to be given by Rev. R. Van Overloop and Rev. N. Langerak on the topic "Single Members in the Church."

Young people's activities

The annual PR Young People's Thanksgiving Mass Meeting was to be held at First PRC on November 11, from 2 to 3 p.m., with a speech given by Rev. C. Griess. Young people were encouraged to attend for a good time of fellowship! Refreshments followed the meeting.

Trivia answer

From the September 23 Covenant ERC bulletin: Today we celebrate 31 years of the Lord's faithfulness towards us as a congregation. As we look back upon the past 31 years, and especially the past year, we confess once again with our hearts, "Our help is in the name of Jehovah, who made heaven and earth" (Ps. 124:8). More trivia next time.

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." Ecclesiastes 3:1.

Announcements

Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express their sincere sympathy to Gary and Rachel Bouwkamp in the death of their father, **Rhine Lubbers**. It is our prayer that they and their extended family may receive comfort from the Holy Spirit in Psalm 17:15: “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.”

Rev. Carl Haak, President
David S. Miedema, Clerk

Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express their sincere sympathy to Dean and Donna Wassink and family in the death of their mother, **Mrs. Florence Haveman**. We pray that they may receive comfort and assurance from the Word of God in Revelation 14:13: “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their work do follow them.”

Rev. Carl Haak, President
David S. Miedema, Clerk

Wedding anniversary

With thanksgiving to God, we rejoice with our parents **Andy and Mary Brummel** who will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on November 29, 2018. We are thankful for the godly example they have set for their children and grandchildren and pray that God will continue to bless their marriage in the years to come. “The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea thou shalt see thy children’s children, and peace upon Israel” (Psalm 128:5-6).

Bob and Shelley Cammenga
Josh and Jolynn Cammenga, and Halee
Nick, Shane, Blake
Joel and Kristi Engelsma
Claudia, Megan
Tim and Julie Pipe
Alycia, Olivia, Ella, Aiden, Chloe
Mike and Tricia Brummel
Drew, Gerrit, Sydney, Lewis
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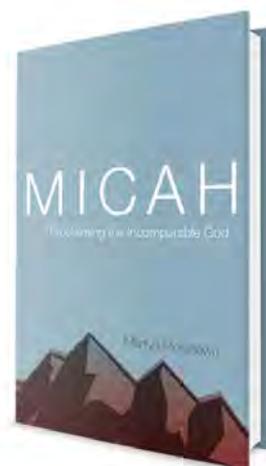
by Martyn McGeown

Christians want to know Christ from the Old Testament, from Micah, and the other minor prophets. And yet for many of us the minor prophets are like a sealed book. The inspired writing of the minor prophets are addressed to the people of God and addressed to us also in the New Testament church. As inspired scripture they indeed speak of Christ: Micah does so extensively, and not only in the obvious reference to Bethlehem in chapter 5:2.

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Announcements continued

Teacher needed

Loveland Protestant Reformed Christian School (Loveland, CO) is seeking applicants for an additional High School teacher for the 2019-20 school year. Interested candidates may contact the Administrator, BJ Mowery at (970) 218-3420 or bmowery@lovelandprcs.org or the Education Chairman, Joe Ophoff at (970) 818-6790 or joe@scotthomeinspection.com.

Index

The *Standard Bearer* digital index (Volumes 1–94) is now available for purchase. The cost is \$10.00. To order, visit www.rfpa.org.



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