

The Standard Bearer

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The marks of Christians

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The Irish vote for abortion

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The Belgic Confession: A Commentary

Rev. Nathan Langerak



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Editorial office

Prof. Russell Dykstra
4949 Ivanrest Ave SW
Wyoming, MI 49418
dykstra@prca.org

Business office

Mr. Alex Kalsbeek
1894 Georgetown Center Dr
Jenison, MI 49428-7137
616-457-5970
alexkalsbeek@rfpa.org

Church news editor

Mr. Perry Van Egdom
2324 Fir Ave
Doon, IA 51235
vanegdoms@gmail.com

United Kingdom office

c/o Mrs. Alison Graham
27 Woodside Road
Ballymena, BT42 4HX
Northern Ireland
alisongraham2006@hotmail.co.uk

Rep. of Ireland office

c/o Rev. Martyn McGeown
38 Abbeyvale
Corbally
Co Limerick, Ireland

Contents

Meditation

- 435 God desires mercy, not sacrifice
Rev. Ronald VanOverloop

Editorials

- 437 • The marks of Christians
• Helping a sister congregation
Prof. Russell Dykstra

All around us

- 440 The Irish vote for abortion
Rev. Martyn McGeown

Dordt 400: Memorial stones

- 443 The Synod of Dordt (1)
Relevant dates
Prof. Douglas Kuiper

Believing and confessing

- 444 Of the providence of God
Second Helvetic Confession, 6c
Prof. Ronald Cammenga

Go ye into all the world

- 446 Protestant Reformed missions
The war years: Mission work flounders (1940-1946) (1)
Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

Strength of youth

- 449 To teach them war (21)
God's armor for us: The helmet
Rev. Brian Huizinga

Bring the books...

- 452 *The Belgic Confession: A Commentary*
Rev. Nathan Langerak

Activities

- 453 News from our churches
Mr. Perry Van Egdom



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Meditation

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

God desires mercy, not sacrifice

“For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”

Hosea 6:6

Hosea was a prophet sent of God to the true church in the northern kingdom at a time of great apostasy. The book of Hosea teaches the greatness of God’s faithfulness in light of the grievous sins of His spiritual wife.

The verses preceding our text describe God’s chastisement. God’s chastisement had the purpose of calling His people away from a sinful walk in the way of repentance. The chastisement was accompanied with the amazing promise that God would heal and bind up those His chastisement had torn and smitten (compare 5:14 with 6:1). His chastisement may be severe, but it was relatively short (2a). God’s goal in the chastisement was that they would live in His sight, that is, live godly, enjoying His fellowship (2b, 3a), with the assuring promise that as certainly as the morning follows the night, so He would come to them (3b).

There was fruit to the prophet’s preaching. They did turn from idol worship to the formal worship of Jehovah. But Israel/the church was not yet where she had to be, for the repentance they exhibited was shallow and brief—it vanished like the morning dew (4). God expresses through Hosea His grief at the lack of sincerity and depth to their spiritual and religious life. He sent His prophets repeatedly to proclaim His love and to warn them of His judgments (5), but to this point all His chastisements did not result in bringing Israel back to true and complete godliness.

Now in our text the inspired prophet declares that God desires of His people not just repentance but more. Specifically, God desires that His people show that they truly and deeply know and appreciate God’s love and mercy for them. When we really know and appreciate God’s boundless mercy to us, then our hearts are filled with love for Him and mercy toward others.

Their profession of love for God, if sincere, will be demonstrated in mercy for their neighbor.

Notice the Hebrew parallelism found in the text. “Sacrifice” is parallel with “burnt offerings” and “mercy” is parallel with “the knowledge of God.” The close relation between the knowledge of God and mercy is also found in 4:1, “Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is not truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.”

The knowledge of God is much more than having a correct intellectual understanding of who and what God is. It is far more than being able to pass a test on theology. In Scripture, to know is to love. When God declares that He foreknew those whom He predestinated (Rom. 8:29), He is declaring that He loved them before He predestinated them. His everlasting love is a powerful demonstration of His grace, for there are no works or merit on man’s part. It is all grace and mercy; an undeserved love and blessing! When God’s loved ones consciously receive His knowledge of them, they render “grateful returns of ardent love to Him” (Canons of Dordt, I, 13). They truly know Him! And this true knowledge of God is always demonstrated in being merciful to others. As the forgiven forgive (Matt. 18:23-35), so those who have true knowledge of God are full of mercy!

We are helped in understanding the truth of our text by considering how Jesus quoted this passage. Twice He used this passage in dealing with the Pharisees. In Matthew 9:13 He used it to condemn the Pharisees who had severely criticized Him for eating with those publicans and sinners who wanted to see Jesus. These publicans and sinners knew themselves to be sick and in need of the Physician. Jesus declared that the Pharisees were without a heart of love and mercy for their repenting neighbors. They were without a love that reflected God’s love. Those who know themselves to be in need of mercy and are receiving divine mercy will show mercy (Luke 6:36).

In Matthew 12:7 Jesus condemned the Pharisees for

condemning His disciples for harvesting grain on the Sabbath day. For the Pharisees, proper Sabbath keeping meant a literal keeping of the command not to do any work. Legalism buries the real law (to love God and the neighbor) under a mountain of man-made traditions (Matt. 15:3, 6; 23:23, 24). True Sabbath rest is the joy of rendering grateful returns of ardent love for the finished, perfect work of Jesus by serving God and serving the neighbor with unmerited mercy.

Jesus used Hosea 6:6 to teach the teachers (Pharisees) what God desires of His people, those with whom He has so graciously established the most wonderful relationship. He desires their hearts, their love, which love of Him is inseparably connected with their love of their neighbor.

God implies in this passage that it is possible to offer sacrifices all day long and not know that one's sinfulness required the sacrifice of God's beloved Son! Outward actions of worship can be easily performed without a right heart. Another prophet declared that outward activities of worship can easily be a rending of garments and not a rending of the heart (cf. Joel 2).

Israel was easily and quickly satisfied with their traditional worship, their rituals, their lip service, their legalistic obedience. We also can think that merely attending a worship service is all that God requires. The elders saw us in church—twice! We can think that our giving a per-family percentage of the General Fund budget satisfies the requirements asked of us. We can think that our loud singing or our singing in beautiful harmony is sufficient.

But “sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required” (Ps. 40:6). Mere acts of worship without a heart of love are rejected as displeasing to God and are abominations in His eyes. Samuel said, “Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (I Sam. 15:22). Jesus was saying to the Pharisees what Isaiah said to Judah:

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this of your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I can not away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons, and your appointed feasts my soul hateth:

they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood (Is. 1:11-15).

Now notice that God calls them to learn what He does require of them: “Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow” (Is. 1:17). He requires mercy of them!

Thus we find it also in the more familiar words of Micah:

Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 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? (Micah 6:6-8).

God declares that those who have true knowledge of Him who “delighteth in mercy” (Micah 7:18) will always give evidence of that in their loving mercy.

Just how absolutely horrible insincere acts of worship are is seen in the following verse. “They like men [literally, Adam] have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me” (Hosea 6:7). God had established a relationship with Adam and Adam seriously violated that intimate relationship when he consciously and deliberately chose to disobey the command of loving obedience to his God. The sins of God's children are far worse than the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah (Is. 1:9, 10). Nothing is worse than hypocritical actions of worship!

God desires mercy. Mercy is a fervent desire to bless, to be kind and useful to those who are in a most miserable condition and who are completely unworthy of receiving any kindness.

Those who know what it is to receive mercy—nothing but mercy (for His mercy is new every morning)—will show mercy (Luke 6:36). True mercy flows from a heart that knows God and how abundantly merciful He is to me, the sinner. Knowing God and being merciful to the neighbor always go together. Therefore, “let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and

righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD” (Jer. 9:23, 24).

When I am not merciful, then I am not thinking of God’s merciful heart toward me. And I cannot truly show mercy to others unless I, knowing my sinfulness, see God’s constant mercy to me.

Thus God desires a steadfast love, an intimate communion and fellowship. He wants my heart of love. A

heart that really knows God relieves the oppressed, the fatherless and the widow. “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).

Look at the heart of God (really know Him), and know how loved you are. This knowledge will move you to be merciful.



Editorials

Prof. Russell Dykstra, professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary

The marks of Christians

Previous article in this series: June 2018, p. 389.

The Belgic Confession in Article 29 lists the three well-known marks of the true church of Jesus Christ—the preaching of the pure gospel, the proper administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of Christian discipline.¹ The necessity of setting forth the distinguishing marks of Christ’s church was, first, the deformation of the church in the Middle Ages. When the Belgic Confession was written (1561), the church of Rome was thoroughly corrupt in doctrine and practice. In addition, the church of Christ had to be distinguished from radical groups that sprang up. These radical groups were formed by people who separated from Rome in the Reformation but soon manifested that they were of a different spirit. Sometimes these were labeled as Anabaptists, a group the Belgic Confession condemns by name in various articles. Therefore, to distinguish the true church from the false church, as well as from various other groups that assumed the name of Christ’s church, the Belgic Confession provides these biblical marks.

Less well known is the article’s instruction on the marks of the *members* of the true church. This also arose out of the circumstances of that day, specifically that the lives of many of the members of the Romish church were characterized by wickedness. How could it be any different? From the pope to the local priest, the clergy was steeped in greed and immorality. The love of money was the root that produced all evil. Vile

corruption dominated the lives of the clergy, and the people followed their example. Christian discipline was not exercised to root sin out of the church but rather to punish those who dared rebel against the clergy.

However, the problem of immorality was not limited to Rome’s members. When the people forsook Rome for the Reformation, their lives did not immediately rise to a high level of sanctification. Luther, in his visits to churches in outlying regions in Germany reported in dismay that

the common people, especially those who live in the country, have no knowledge whatever of Christian teaching, and unfortunately many pastors are quite incompetent and unfitted for teaching. Although the people are supposed to be Christian, are baptized, and receive the holy sacrament, they do not know the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, or the Ten Commandments, they live as if they were pigs and irrational beasts, and now that the Gospel has been restored they have mastered the fine art of abusing liberty.²

It would take many years for the teaching and preaching of Luther and other faithful ministers to change the lifestyle of the people. Along the way, an antinomian controversy erupted from time to time and continued even after Luther’s death.

Reformer John Calvin had a tremendous urgency with regard to the sanctification of church members.

1 That these are the three biblical marks of the true church was explained in the editorial of June 2018, pp. 389-391.

2 Theodore Tappert, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 338.

When he was pastor in Strasburg, Calvin required all the members of the church to meet with him before every administration of the Lord's Supper, so that it could be ascertained whether or not they were confessing the truth and walking in obedience to the Word. He worked tirelessly to bring the truth to bear on the lives of the members. Consistories and pastors labored long and hard to correct evils—admonishing, instructing, and disciplining errant members. The fruits were obvious in the city of Geneva where Calvin was a pastor from 1541 until his death in 1564. John Knox testified of Geneva that it was “the most perfect school of Christ that ever was in the earth since the days of the apostles. In other places I confess Christ to be truly preached; but manners and religion so sincerely reformed, I have not yet seen in any other place.”³

The Belgic Confession clearly follows the teaching of Calvin. This is evident from the marks of the true church, as well as its instruction on the marks of the members of the church.

The point that must be seen is that the walk and conversation of the members must be consistent with the truth that is preached and confessed. A church is not faithful to Christ merely because the truth of the gospel is preached, the sacraments rightly administered, and Christian discipline maintained. Christ demands that the church, the members, *live* the truth.

There is a clear relationship, therefore, between the three marks of the true church and the marks of the members. The characteristics of the members are the fruit of the work of the church through preaching, sacraments, and Christian discipline. That is immediately evident from the fact that the first and chief mark of the Christian is *faith*. Faith proceeds from the Holy Spirit who works faith by the preaching of the gospel, and confirms and strengthens it by the use of the sacraments (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 65). The first two marks of the true church are the Spirit's instruments to work and confirm faith! By this faith the Christian appropriates Christ, embraces and confesses Him, and receives all the benefits of salvation from Him.

That the members of the church of Christ would be distinguished by their *faith in Christ* might seem so obvious as to be unnecessary to mention it. But it is not. The historical situation was that Rome, even changing the wording of the Apostle's Creed, had for years taught her members to confess their faith *in the church*. The members ought to trust in the church to bring them to salvation. Members needed not to grasp the truth, but

only were told to believe that the church would deliver them from sin and hell and get them to heaven. And they were taught to trust that Mary and Peter and Andrew and a host of saints were there to assist them and bestow their excess merits on those who followed the church's path to eternal life.

In contrast to all that, the Confession insists that faith in Christ is *the mark* of the Christian. One trembles to think that still today there are churches bearing the name of Christ in which faith, that sure knowledge and hearty confidence, that belief in Christ as the only and complete Savior, is not what distinguishes the members. Churches where the ministers do not have faith in Christ. Churches that willingly forsake the Scriptures. Where the Sunday message is not Christ crucified along with the call to repent and believe in this Jesus, but rather the promotion of some social activism. The members do not know Christ, for the Spirit does not work in them faith in Christ.

In the true church of Jesus, faith in Christ is the *essential* mark, out of which the rest of the marks proceed. Faith in Christ produces fruit. The first fruit given is that Christians avoid sin and follow after righteousness—truly a distinguishing mark! Though living in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, themselves born dead in sin, Christians have the life of Christ in them. That life is holy and heavenly. Through the power of grace, the believer mortifies the old man of sin, crucifying his flesh, and he lives out of the new man in Christ. Sanctification is evident in the lives of the members. It is an abomination to God that a congregation confesses the truth but lives in or tolerates iniquity. Fleeing from sin and living in obedience are marks of the one who is united to Christ by faith.

In addition, believers demonstrate the power of faith that works by love. By the power of God's love poured out into their hearts, they love God. They offer their lives as sacrifices of love and thankfulness to God. And they love their neighbor—whomever God places on their path and whoever needs their help. They love their neighbor with the same love of God in their heart—a love to those unworthy; a love unconditional. In love they give of themselves and of their gifts when there is no possibility of being repaid. In this way they demonstrate the love of God that they know from experience.

Scripture repeatedly points to the importance of love in the church. A church that does not manifest love is completely unfaithful to the God who *is* love, and to the Savior who in the greatest possible demonstration of love, gave Himself to the death of the cross. Love, Jesus taught, is *the* notable mark of His disciples: “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). A congregation

3 W. Stanford Reid, *Trumpeter of God* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), 132 (spelling modernized).

that does not care for her own, or a congregation that greets a visitor with coldness and only desires doctrinal debates is not manifesting this mark. Love is what must greet the visitors and be clearly manifested to all members. Love for God, and love for the neighbor.

Article 29 warns that the members of the true church will not be perfect. Thus, when one looks for the true church, he must not expect to find perfection in the lives of the members. In fact, there will “remain in them great infirmities.” Gross sin. Vile iniquity. Shameful transgressions. There is no sin found in the world of the ungodly that does not also rear its ugly head in the church of Jesus Christ. But in the true church of Christ,

sin is condemned from the pulpit, and sinners are admonished and rebuked by fellow members and by the elders; and if there is not repentance, members are officially disciplined. God uses all this to strengthen and encourage the members to “fight against [their infirmities] through the Spirit all the days of their life.” Christians are continually driven to the cross where they take “refuge in the blood, death, passion, and obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom they have remission of sins through faith in him.”

[Having examined the marks of the true members of the church of Jesus Christ, it is important that we apply this article to the church today. That, D.V., next time.]

Helping a sister congregation

In an island country of some 5.5 million people, located over 8,000 miles from the nearest PRC, is a congregation of nearly 190 members that earnestly desires Protestant Reformed preachers to come to preach and teach. As all in the PRC know, at the end of 2017 Rev. Andy Lanning accepted the call to a congregation in the USA, leaving our sister congregation in Singapore vacant. Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church (CERC) loves the truth preached in the PRCA. When they became vacant, the session immediately began working with the Contact Committee towards obtaining another pastor. After considering all the options, it was thought best to return to the “Minister on Loan” (MOL) concept that had worked so well with Rev. Lanning. The 2018 Synod of the PRC approved the concept and appointed Grandville PRC as the calling church for the MOL. The earliest that an MOL could be established in Singapore and actively fill the work of the ministry is December of 2018. The actual date of arrival obviously depends on the Lord’s calling a man to the work.

In the meantime, the Contact Committee has been actively seeking to fill the pulpit and catechism lecterns of our sister congregation. Emeritus minister Rev. A. denHartog and his wife Sherry have enthusiastically worked in CERC for over seven months. The undersigned will take the next five Sundays. But starting August 26, other ministers are needed to preach in CERC.

The need for ministerial work is obvious. Covenant is a relatively young congregation, established in 1986. The elders are first generation Christians. The congregation has a desire and continual need for instruction. They have a solid catechism program and this instruction of the youth is vitally important, especially in a land where a Christian school is not available and might

not be for years. The need for instruction in the congregation also arises out of the blessing that God continues to lead people to CERC from various religious backgrounds. Many of these visitors become regular attendees and they join pre-confession classes in order to understand the Reformed faith.

The Protestant Reformed Churches have a hearty affection for all her sister churches, also the vibrant congregation in Singapore. As a denomination, the PRC demonstrates that love in its willingness to facilitate a minister serving full time in CERC, something for which CERC continually expresses heartfelt gratitude.

Now the individual churches have opportunity to express their love for this sister congregation. Love gives, and gives when it is not always easy or convenient. Local congregations can give their pastors to serve for some weeks in CERC in her vacancy. It may inconvenience the congregation—disrupting catechism, society, and family visitation schedules. But the local congregation is urged to demonstrate this love for CERC. I assure you, Covenant ERC will recognize your kindness and generosity, and thank God for it.

A measure of CERC’s appreciation is evident in her intention to finance all the travel and living expenses of the visiting ministers. It is immediately plain that this undertaking may well be a significant burden for this small, self-supporting congregation. They are willing even to pay for the expenses of the minister’s wife when he preaches for a minimum of three Sundays. Consider, however, that this could cost close to \$1,000 per Sunday—a heavy load.

It would help CERC much if consistories would allow their minister to stay for a longer period—four or five weeks perhaps. And then, what about the cost of the

wife's travel? In years gone by (I testify from personal experience), ministers in the PRC commonly left wife and family for four Sundays to work overseas. These days, the churches have started sending wives with delegations when it serves the good of the work overseas. However, the benefit for a wife accompanying her husband to CERC is the minister's, not much our sister's.

And I wish to drive home the point that it is a benefit for your minister to work in Covenant. Early in my ministry God gave me opportunity to preach and speak in Singapore and later in Ghana. These trips shaped much of my view of the church universal and of missions and certainly enriched my understanding. It was good for my ministry. I trust that the congregations

that I served benefited from that work overseas, and the benefits are ongoing yet today in my service to the churches in various ways.

I repeat, your minister's experience of working in Singapore will benefit your congregation. Having his wife accompany him will strengthen the experience and increase its long-term value. So, what I am suggesting is that your congregation not only be willing to release your pastor to work in Singapore for some weeks, but also consider financing all or part of the wife's travel expenses. You will not regret it. CERC will have the preaching and teaching that she so earnestly desires. And your pastor will grow, for the benefit of your congregation and the Protestant Reformed Churches as a whole.



All around us

Rev. Martyn McGeown, missionary-pastor of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland, stationed in Limerick, Republic of Ireland

The Irish vote for abortion

The referendum on the Eighth Amendment

On Friday, May 25, 2018, the unborn child in Ireland lost his precious, constitutional right to life because the Irish people expunged that right from the Irish Constitution. Prior to May 25, the Irish Constitution, Article 40.3.3, otherwise known as the “Eighth Amendment,” read as follows:

The [Irish] State acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect, and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right.

This subsection shall not limit freedom to travel between the State and another state.

This subsection shall not limit freedom to obtain and make available, in the State, subject to such conditions as may be laid down by law, information relating to services lawfully available in another state.¹

As a consequence of the referendum of May 25, the Eighth Amendment has been replaced with the following wording: “Provision may be made by law for the regulation of termination of pregnancy.”

Thus, Ireland writes the right to abortion *into* its

Constitution, removing the right to life for the unborn *from* the Constitution. When the infamous 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion in the USA, the justices, especially Henry Blackmun (1908-1999), had to *read* the right of abortion *into* the U.S. Constitution, something that is not actually *in* the U.S. Constitution. The Irish people, perhaps the first nation in the world to do so, have chosen to *put* the right to abortion *into* the Irish Constitution.

The last time the Irish electorate changed their Constitution was on May 22, 2015, when they redefined marriage to include same-sex relationships (the so-called “marriage equality” referendum). At that time, I wrote, “It will be much, much harder to convince the Irish people that women should be permitted to murder the unborn” (*SB*, vol. 91, no. 21; Sept. 15, 2015).

I was wrong—it was actually very easy. In fact, the “Yes” side enjoyed a landslide victory, while the “No” side suffered a shocking and humiliating defeat. The referendum passed by an over two-thirds majority of 66.4% to 33.6%, which translates as 1,429,981 to 723,632 votes, with a turnout of 64.1% of the electorate. That is a reversal of the 1983 referendum, when the people voted to include the Eighth Amendment by a similar margin of 67% to 33%, but with a lower turnout of just over half the electorate (54%).

¹ https://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Historical_Information/The_Constitution/February_2015_-_Constitution_of_Ireland_.pdf (accessed June 1, 2018).

The victory was also decisive geographically and across all demographics: the “No” side expected to do better in the more religiously conservative, rural areas than in the more secularized, urban areas, but the pro-life side was crushed everywhere, except in one county, Donegal, in the northernmost of the Republic of Ireland, and even there the “No” side scraped a victory of only 51.9% or 189 votes. In the various Dublin constituencies the “Yes” vote was consistently above 70%. The youth vote was overwhelmingly pro-abortion, but the older generation followed suit. Men and women alike (but especially women) voted in huge numbers for abortion. One report suggested that the turnout among Irish women aged 18-24 years was a whopping 94%, the majority of whom presumably voted “Yes.”²

When news broke of the referendum result, a large crowd of people had gathered in Dublin: they danced and sang, they hugged one another, and they wept tears of joy that now they will have the right to abortion in Ireland. Irish Taoiseach (prime minister), Leo Varadkar called it “a quiet revolution,” adding in a speech:

For me it is also the day when we said No More. No more doctors telling their patients there is nothing that can be done for them in their own country. No more lonely journeys across the Irish Sea. No more stigma. The veil of secrecy is lifted. No more isolation. The burden of shame is gone.³

Ireland's history of abortion

Many American readers might be unaware that until recently abortion was illegal in Ireland. The subject has a contentious history, which several high-profile cases will make clear.

First, in 1992, nine years after the passage of the Eighth Amendment, a 14-year-old Irish girl, named in court documents only as “X,” became pregnant through rape. She desired to travel to the UK to have an abortion, but the then-attorney general sought an injunction to protect the unborn child, which decision was then overturned by a ruling of the Irish Supreme Court. The court ruled that abortion is permissible only when there is a “real and substantial risk to the life of the mother, including a real and substantial risk of suicide.” Sadly, “X” suffered a miscarriage after the ruling, so no abortion needed to be carried out. Although the Irish courts deemed the risk of suicide of the mother a valid reason

for abortion, the Irish government at that time did not pass any further legislation.

No further laws were passed until the sad case of Savita Halappanavar, who died in Galway on October 28, 2012. Mrs. Halappanavar was an Indian dentist who was found to be miscarrying her seventeen-week baby. When she requested an abortion, she was refused because there was still a fetal heartbeat and, as one nurse allegedly remarked, the hospital could not provide an abortion because “this is a catholic country.” The Halappanavar case gave impetus to pro-abortion activists in Ireland, who viewed the Eighth Amendment as the cause of Savita Halappanavar’s death; but an investigation ruled that Mrs. Halappanavar died of sepsis, *not* for any lack of access to abortion. Savita Halappanavar was a victim of medical malpractice, not Ireland’s strict anti-abortion laws.⁴ Following Mrs. Halappanavar’s death, however, the Irish government passed the “Protection of Life in Pregnancy Act” (2013), which allowed for abortion if there is a real and substantial threat to the life of the mother, *including the threat of suicide*.

The third case, the “Y case” of 2014 tested the new law. A foreign national, named only “Y” in legal documents, sought asylum in Ireland in March 2014. She claimed that she had been raped in her home country and requested an abortion, which was denied, and since she could not travel to the UK, she declared herself suicidal and went on hunger strike. The Irish courts ruled that she had no right to abortion under the 2013 law, and her baby was finally delivered in August 2014 against the wishes of the mother, who subsequently sued the Irish State.

PP vs. HSE was a fourth tragic case, in which a pregnant mother suffered severe head trauma and was pronounced brain-dead in December 2014. The medical staff placed “PP,” who was twelve weeks pregnant at the time, on life support against the wishes of her family, in order possibly to preserve the life of the unborn child until it could be delivered. The family sued for the right to turn off her life support, an act that led to the death of the mother and her unborn child. The Court ruled that

the ongoing somatic support for the mother is causing her body increasingly to break down and that overwhelming infection from various sources will, as a matter of near certainty, bring the life of the unborn to an end well before any opportunity for a viable delivery of a live child could take place.⁵

2 <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/una-mullally-young-women-already-being-written-out-of-the-story-of-repeal-1.3516216> (accessed June 1, 2018).

3 <https://www.irishexaminer.com/breakingnews/views/analysis/referendum-vote-is-irelands-second-chance-leo-varadkars-speech-in-full-845292.html> (accessed June 1, 2018).

4 <https://www.irishexaminer.com/viewpoints/columnists/victoria-white/savitas-death-is-not-about-abortion-it-is-about-medical-negligence-247993.html> (accessed June 1, 2018).

5 <http://www.courts.ie/Judgments.nsf/OpenDocument> (accessed June 1, 2018).

Tragically, both the woman and her unborn child died on December 27, 2014.

The “Repeal the Eighth” campaign

As reported in the *SB* (vol. 94, no 8; January 15, 2018), an *Oireachtas Éireann* committee (or committee of the Irish legislature) recommended on December 13, 2017 the repeal of the Eighth Amendment and unrestricted abortion up to twelve weeks. The twelve-week limit was chosen because of the large number of Irish women who take unregulated, and until recently illegal, abortion pills in Ireland, seriously risking their health in so doing.

The “No” side hoped that the Irish people would balk at the Irish government’s proposal of unrestricted abortion up to twelve weeks. This proposal was supported by high-ranking Irish politicians, including the Irish Taoiseach (prime minister) Leo Varadkar, the Tánaiste (deputy) Simon Coveney, the Minister for Health, Simon Harris, and (ironically) the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Katherine Zappone. Influential voices from stage and screen, such as actor Liam Neeson and rock band U2 with their frontman Bono, added their support to the “Repeal the Eighth” movement.

The “Yes” side concentrated on having Irish women tell their stories: women who had been forced to travel to England to avail of abortion services; women who had been raped; women who had received the devastating diagnosis of a so-called “fatal fetal abnormality”; and, of course, Savita Halappanavar, whose face was featured on posters all across Ireland and whose parents advocated for a “Yes” vote in her memory. (In fact, the law legalizing abortion might be called “Savita’s law” in her honor). Such women said that they felt abandoned by their own country.

Their stories resonated with the Irish people, who were not told what abortion actually *is*. Pro-abortion activists are always careful to avoid describing an abortion procedure, and they are equally careful to concentrate on the minority of difficult cases (less than 2%) instead of mentioning that most abortions are performed on healthy, but unwanted, babies conceived as a result of consensual intercourse, not rape.⁶ The “Yes” side’s

slogans of “Care, compassion, and change” and “Trust women” had a greater impact than the “No” side’s plea to “Love Both.” In fact, the Irish diaspora, especially young people, flocked in droves from far afield to vote in the referendum, which is what they also did in 2015 when they voted for “same-sex marriage.”⁷

Then too, during the campaign the Roman Catholic Church failed to make any significant impact. Rome’s moral authority in Ireland is dead, for the Irish people will no longer listen to celibate clergy whose treatment of children and subsequent cover-up by the Catholic hierarchy have been scandalous. Meanwhile, the Evangelical and Reformed churches in Ireland are so small that their voice was hardly noticeable.⁸

As soon as the result was announced, the call was issued to change the law in Northern Ireland, which now remains the only place in the British Isles where abortion is still illegal. Two prominent politicians, Mary Lou McDonald and Michelle O’Neill, held up a sign, “The North is next.” British Prime Minister, Theresa May, whose fragile government is propped up by the pro-life Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) of Northern Ireland, stressed that any legislation in Northern Ireland is a matter for the legislative assembly there, which is currently in abeyance. The law in Northern Ireland, therefore, is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future, but we can expect many women from Northern Ireland to travel south.

Make no mistake—abortion is murder. God’s judgment is on a nation that murders the unborn. In fact, this decision of the Irish people is *in itself* judgment, for God is hardening the people of Ireland and giving them over to greater expressions of sin (Rom. 1:24-32).

May 25, 2018 was not a day for jubilation, but a day for mourning.

“Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law” (Ps. 119:136); “O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy” (Hab. 3:2).

6 The (British) National Health Choices website defines abortion as “the medical process of ending a pregnancy so that it doesn’t result in the birth of a baby.” The same website explains some of the medical procedures, carefully avoiding the word “baby.” “[Vacuum or suction aspiration] involves inserting a tube through the entrance of the womb...the pregnancy is then removed using suction.” (Actually, a baby is dismembered and then sucked out of his mother’s womb—MMcG). “[Dilation and evacuation] involves inserting special instruments called forceps through the cervix and into the womb to remove the pregnancy.” (Actually, a baby is removed piece by piece from his moth-

er’s womb, often after being poisoned or given a lethal injection. This is a wicked act perpetrated against an innocent, defenseless child—MMcG). Other surgical options for late-term abortions are even more grotesque, but are rarely explained to the one seeking an abortion. As far as possible, the procedure is described euphemistically, while the victim of the procedure, the baby, is depersonalized (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/abortion/>, accessed June 1, 2018).

7 <http://time.com/5288341/home-to-vote-ireland-abortion-referendum/> (accessed June 1, 2018).

8 The Limerick Reformed Fellowship sponsored a speech, “The Bible and Abortion,” on May 19, 2018, <http://sermons.limerick-reformed.com/sermon/10843-the-bible-and-abortion>.



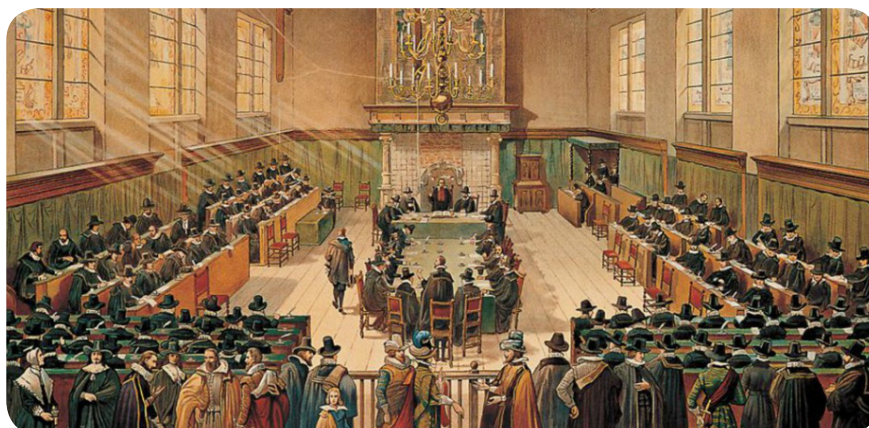
Dordt 400: Memorial stones

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

The Synod of Dordt (1) Relevant dates

...These stones shall be a memorial unto the children of Israel forever.

Joshua 4:7c



The Synod of Dordt met from November 1618 to May 1619. To commemorate the Synod's 400th anniversary, the editorial staff asked me to write twelve short articles on various aspects of the history of the Synod of Dordt. This first article lists relevant dates.

- **1604:** Two professors at Leiden, Jacobus Arminius and Franciscus Gomarus, publicly debate the doctrine of predestination.
- **1607:** Church delegates gather for a national synod to settle the issue. The national government refuses to call a national synod, in part because it is preoccupied with war against Spain. At this time, the national government sympathizes with the Arminians.
- **1610:** Some Arminian sympathizers write five position statements. The statements are called the *Remonstrance*, and the Arminians became known as “Remonstrants,” because the word “remonstrate” can mean to present a written demonstration of error or protest. The five heads of the Canons correspond to these five statements.
- **1611:** A conference between Remonstrants and Counter-Remonstrants (representing the truly Reformed position) fails to help settle the issue.
- **1617, Nov:** The national government, now op-

posed to the Arminians, approves calling a national synod.

- **1618, Oct. 17:** The national government designated this day one of fasting and prayer for God's blessing on the synod.
- **1618, Nov. 13:** Synod begins. It treats matters of Bible translation, Heidelberg Catechism preaching, baptism of slave children in the Dutch East Indies, and the training of ministers.
- **1618, Dec. 6:** Synod begins treating the Arminian controversy.
- **1619, Jan. 14:** President Bogerman dismisses the Arminians with a memorable speech.
- **1619, Mar. 25-Apr. 16:** Synod recesses while a committee drafts the Canons of Dordt. The word “Canons” refers to a rule or standard; the Synod of Dordt adopted the Canons of Dordt as the standard of orthodoxy regarding the five contested points of doctrine.
- **1619, May 6:** The date on which the Canons were officially adopted in their final form.
- **1619, May 9:** The foreign delegates are dismissed. Synod adopts the Church Order, an official translation of the Belgic Confession, the liturgical forms, and the Formula of Subscription. It also gives its pronouncements regarding Sabbath observance.
- **1619, May 29:** Synod adjourns.



Believing and confessing

Prof. Ronald Cammenga, professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary

Of the providence of God

Second Helvetic Confession, chapter 6c

Previous article in this series: May 15, 2018, p. 373.

Means not to be despised

Nevertheless, we do not spurn as useless the means by which divine providence works, but we teach that we are to adapt ourselves to them in so far as they are recommended to us in the Word of God. Wherefore we disapprove of the rash statements of those who say that if all things are managed by the providence of God, then our efforts and endeavors are in vain. It will be sufficient if we leave everything to the governance of divine providence, and we will not have to worry about anything or do anything. For although Paul understood that he sailed under the providence of God who had said to him: “You must bear witness also at Rome” (Acts 23:11), and in addition had given him the promise, “There will be no loss of life among you...and not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you” (Acts 27:22, 34), yet when the sailors were nevertheless thinking about abandoning the ship the same Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers: “Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved” (Acts 27:31). For God, who has appointed to everything its end, has ordained the beginning and the means by which it reaches its goal. The heathen ascribe things to blind fortune and uncertain chance. But St. James does not want us to say: “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and trade,” but adds: “Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and we shall do this or that’” (James 4:13, 15). And Augustine says: “Everything which to vain men seems to happen in nature by accident, occurs only by his Word, because it happens only at his command” (*Enarrationes in Psalmos* 148). Thus it seemed to happen by mere chance when Saul, while seeking his father’s asses, unexpectedly fell in with the prophet Samuel. But previously the Lord had said to the prophet: “Tomorrow I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin” (I Sam. 9:16).

Providence or chance?

The only real alternative to providence is chance. Either God sovereignly rules over all things, or all things happen by chance. Then no one is in control; everything that happens just happens. “The heathen ascribe things to blind fortune or uncertain chance,” the SHC says. These two alternatives—providence or chance—are placed side by side in I Samuel 5 and 6. These chapters relate the outcome of the capture of the ark of God by the Philistines in the days of judge Eli. Eli’s wicked sons, Hophni and Phinehas, took the ark of God into battle against the Philistines, supposing superstitiously that doing so guaranteed a victory for the army of Israel. But the army was not victorious and instead was smitten. Hophni and Phinehas were killed and the ark was captured. After God plagued the Philistines (I Samuel 5 and 6 speak repeatedly of the fact that “the hand of the Lord was heavy” upon the Philistines), they determined to return the ark to Israel. They sent the ark back on a new cart, pulled by two oxen whose young calves were left behind. If the oxen pulled the cart containing the ark out of the land of the Philistines and into Israel without turning back, the Philistines would be sure that what had happened had not happened by chance, but by the hand (providence) of God. They said: “If it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Bethshemesh [in Israel], then he [God] hath done this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us; *it was a chance that happened to us*” (I Sam. 6:9). The hand of God or chance—these are the alternatives.

This is the popular explanation for events that take place in the world. Does something good happen that brings great joy? A promotion, a successful business venture, an investment windfall, an unexpected opportunity, a narrow escape from danger, a loved one lost in the mountains found, or a successful surgery? These things are merely a matter of chance—good luck, many would say, and always well-deserved. On the other

hand, does something hurtful happen? A diagnosis of cancer, the death of a young wife and mother, a house fire, the death of a small child, a downward turn in the economy, a hurricane, or a pandemic—these are all bad luck. They happen quite at random, for no apparent rhyme or reason. “That’s the way the ball bounces,” or, “That’s how the cookie crumbles,” according to popular wisdom.

This is the implication of the teaching of evolution. As it is merely chance that accounts for the origin of the universe, so everything that now happens in the universe is due to random chance. For those committed to the teaching of evolution, there is no fatherly hand of God governing all things and working all things together for good. In the end, the alternatives are not providence or chance; the alternatives are God or being without God and without hope in the world. Bullinger (the author of the SHC) quotes James 4:13 and 15 as an example of the proper outlook of the Christian who possesses a living knowledge of the providence of God. He does not say, “Today or tomorrow we *will* go into such and such a town and trade, and get gain,” but rather, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and we shall do this or that.” That is the attitude of the Christian who lives in the knowledge of the providence of God.

The use of means

The main concern of this third and last paragraph of the SHC’s chapter on providence is to underscore the important place that means have in the execution of God’s decree of providence. A distinctive feature of the Reformed faith is its emphasis on the use of means. God is a God of means. God has sovereignly ordained everything, but He has also ordained the means by which all that He has ordained will come to pass. For this reason, “[w]e do not spurn as useless the means by which divine providence works, but we teach that we are to adapt ourselves to them in so far as they are recommended to us in the Word of God.... For God, who has appointed to everything its end, has ordained the beginning and the means by which it reaches its goal.”

This paragraph of the SHC contains both a warning to the people of God and a response to a malicious charge against the Reformed doctrine of providence. On the one hand, the centuries’ old charge of the enemies of the sovereignty of God, whether in salvation or in providence, is that such a horrible doctrine (in their view) cannot be true because, if it were, it would rule out our responsibility. We would have no calling inasmuch as everything has been ordained by God and there is nothing that we can add to or take away from

what God has determined. If God has determined all things, we do not need to work, take necessary precautions, use doctors and medicine, or plan for the future. Therefore, so the accusation of the enemies goes, the Reformed doctrine of providence cannot be true. Because it undermines our calling and responsibility, divine providence must be rejected.

On the part of certain “radicals” within the Reformed camp itself, there might be an inclination to misapply the doctrine of providence. There might be an inclination on the part of some to use the truth of providence to make men careless and profane. These radicals, then, justify indifference and unconcern as regards their natural life on the basis of the doctrine of providence. Such disdain of the use of means is promoted by some as a distinct act of piety and demonstration of trust in God. On the contrary, the Reformed reject such a perversion of the truth of God’s providence. “Wherefore we disapprove of the rash statements of those who say that if all things are managed by the providence of God, then our efforts and endeavors are in vain. It will be sufficient if we leave everything to the governance of divine providence, and we will not have to worry about anything or do anything.” This abuse of the doctrine of providence the Reformed faith rejects.

Bullinger appeals to Scripture in this paragraph of the SHC in order to show that this wrong and radical view of divine providence ought to be rejected. He makes reference to the life of the apostle Paul, specifically, the apostle’s shipwreck on the way to Rome. God had informed Paul that He had determined that he would arrive safely in Rome and preach the gospel there also (Acts 23:11). At the time the storm arose, He had further informed Paul that there would be no loss of life (Acts 27:22) and that “there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you” (Acts 27:34). Did that result in a careless or profane attitude on the part of the apostle? Did he, then, not pray for the Lord’s safekeeping in the storm? And did he not take every precaution as the ship was battered by the wind and the waves? Of course he did, as the account in Acts 27 makes very plain. Paul understood, as every Christian ought to understand, that God’s ordering of all things does not rule out the way in which He will carry out what He has ordered.

This is true spiritually. Spiritually, God’s sovereign ordination of our salvation does not rule out the means by which He is pleased to accomplish that salvation. We even refer to the “means of grace,” which are chiefly the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. These means and others are used by God for our comfort, for the assurance of our salvation, and for our preservation in holiness. Included

in these means, besides those designated as the “means of grace,” would be prayer, the singing of the Psalms, the fellowship of the people of God, and the reading of good books and magazines. God has ordained an end, but He has also ordained the way and means unto that end. These may never be divorced from each other. To despise the way and means is to despise the God who has ordained not only the end but the way and the means to that end. No one who despises the way and means of salvation can be saved.

What is true in the spiritual realm is also true in the natural realm. This is verified by our experience and is something that we observe on a daily basis. God is pleased to use means in the execution of His providence. He supplies us with our “daily bread,” but He does it ordinarily by our working. He shelters us from the cold of winter and the heat of summer, but He does it by our building a house in which to live and either by our making or buying the clothes that we need. He gives us our livelihood, but He does so by our driving to and from our place of employment daily. He makes us better when we are sick, but ordinarily He makes us better by means of the doctor and the antibiotics that he prescribes. He who despises the means and the way in which God is pleased to exercise His providential care over us despises the will of God.

God’s use of means is something that we observe daily in the world around us. God cares for the birds of the air and the flowers of the field. But God does not care

for the birds by dropping worms out of the sky every morning and evening. Instead, He is pleased to care for them in the way of their own searching and gathering. And even the flowers of the field are equipped by God with the means for transforming the light of the sun and the nutrients in the soil so that in this way the plants grow and flower. What is true in the brute creation is also true in the case of God’s rational, moral creatures.

In this way, God works out in His providence that which He has decreed eternally. In the case of the wicked, of course, God uses them in spite of themselves. They do not consciously employ God’s established means recognizing that they are God’s means, the means that He has appointed. Their health and strength, their job or business, their home and automobile are not God’s means, but their own, as they suppose. And therein is their sin. They make use of the means God has established in the creation without acknowledging that they are His means and without giving thanks to Him for supplying them. Nevertheless, they serve God’s purpose and fulfill that which He has ordained. Even sin and evil accomplish God’s purposes in providence.

Bullinger’s quote from Augustine is an appropriate conclusion to the chapter on the providence of God: “Everything which to vain men seems to happen in nature by accident, occurs only by his Word, because it happens only at his command.” This is the Reformed doctrine of the providence of God.



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) (1)

Previous article in this series: February 15, 2018, p. 230.

During the late 1930s empty wallets were again filling and the gaunt faces of stressed husbands and fathers were again beginning to smile. But out of the ruins of the Great Depression our nation faced another grave threat. Due in part to the Great Depression in Germany, the Nazi party rose to power with Adolph Hitler, a powerful orator, at its head. The Third Reich seized

control of Germany in 1933 blaming the economic crisis on Jewish financiers and the Bolsheviks. In 1939 Germany invaded Poland. On May 10, 1940 Germany invaded and conquered the Netherlands, a strategic country adjacent to her northwestern border. In September of that same year President F. D. Roosevelt established the first peacetime draft in the

United States. In the next five years forty-nine million men registered for the draft and ten million men were inducted into the armed forces of our land. When Roosevelt declared war against Japan and Germany in 1941, our churches were suddenly robbed of their youth. Most of our “boys” were sent off to bootcamp, and many of these, in turn, shipped overseas to join the war effort in Europe, North Africa, and the south seas in the war against Japan.

What Jesus teaches us is indeed the case: the church, although not *of* the world is, nevertheless, *in* the world. What God in His great providence effects in the nations of this world touches God’s saints who are a part of those nations. Just as the Depression impacted our homes and families, so also did the war. It was a time that diverted the attention of many from the work of missions. Of course! The sons of the church were missing from church life! What would become of them? They were the number-one focus of the family.

As a result, missions during this time floundered. In 1941, Missionary Bernard Kok accepted the call to our Hudsonville, MI church. We were without a missionary, and the sentiment of some was to put the calling of another missionary on hold until after the war. The Mission Committee (MC) approached the Synod of 1942, therefore, with the following pointed recommendation:

We may state that the opinion has been expressed by some that the present war situation makes the calling of a missionary inadvisable. However, we feel it is exactly these conditions that forcibly demonstrate the total inadequacy of any gospel that does not stand foursquare on the basis of the absolute sovereignty of God. It is the opinion of your committee, not only that the work of the kingdom may not come to a standstill whatever the world situation be, but also that these very serious times represent a challenge for us to declare the sure sovereignty of God whose blessing is upon His people, and whose curse is upon the wicked.... Brethren, in these times that try men’s hearts, we must not be found retrenching and withdrawing, but moving forward. The word of the Lord to Moses challenges us: “Say unto the children of Israel that they go forward.” We must testify of sin and grace, and hold forth the Word of God to the utmost of our ability also outside our own denomination, whether men hear or forbear.

The Synod of 1942 agreed with this opinion and instructed Fuller Avenue (First Church of GR) to proceed to call a missionary. Despite the many calls extended, no man accepted the call during the war years. The MC several different times during these years presented a

new gross list of ministers to First PRC from which the Council could call a missionary, but to no avail.

The MC was running out of men to place on their list from which to call a missionary. In April 1943 the MC went on record as favoring putting the names of candidates for the ministry on the list. But synod of that year did not agree. “We are of the conviction that the practical objections against such a decision are too great. Work of that nature demands the experience of a man who has already spent some time in the ministry.”¹ Personally, having served on the mission field, I believe that synod made a wise decision. A novice to the ministry of the Word does not yet have the wisdom that comes with the hard knocks of experience in the ministry. The work of home missions is a roller coaster that requires of the missionary steadfastness but also patience to deal with people who oppose themselves. Although a new man in the ministry of the gospel might be able to exercise these, the wisdom that comes from experience is needed to shelter a man from the disappointments that are very real on a mission field.

There are a number of reasons that missions floundered during this period of our church’s history. The first one, as was mentioned, was the war effort. The focus of many was on our sons who had gone off to war. Neither must we forget that many of the members of our churches had close friends and relatives that yet lived in the Netherlands. Especially when any correspondence between them and their relatives was silenced by the Nazis, our saints anxiously waited to hear word if their loved ones were dead or alive. But there was another development among many in our churches in connection with the war that could not be observed so much with the eye. It was a spiritual malady. Gertrude Hoeksema noted in hindsight:

There was also a lethargy among those who sat in the pews. Many members of the churches seemed to have lost their first love and enthusiasm for scriptural and Reformed preaching. They had little interest in developing the Reformed truth, and little initiative to live within the guidelines of the Reformed faith in their family lives and the organic life of the church. This was a foreboding change hovering over the unity of the denomination, a special problem which God had sent to the churches during World War II; for these rumblings surfaced during the war and immediately thereafter.²

During the years of the Depression people had little in

1 *Acts of Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches*, 1943 (p. 67, III, B, 2).

2 Gertrude Hoeksema, *A Watered Garden*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association), 130.

the way of possessions, but their faith flourished. With the coming of World War II, jobs had become plentiful again. Prosperity prevailed. Prosperity can have a way of making God's people self-centered, sapping them of interest in the church and the things of God's kingdom. This had its impact on the work of missions. Very little interest was shown in the life of the church as organism for the spread of the gospel. Fervent prayer was no longer raised for the gathering-in of the church. So, missions floundered!

The church today must always examine herself over against the church of the past. Some in our churches today believe that now too the home mission work of our churches is a failure. They will question whether the Domestic Mission Committee and our missionary are simply not getting the job done. Others believe that missions among the people of our land is hopeless and see no need for preaching the gospel to those outside our churches any longer—unless, of course, it is in foreign lands.

We need to understand that the work of the missions *flows out of the life of the churches*. If there is a lack of interest in the truth God by His grace has entrusted into our care as churches, or “little initiative to live within the guidelines of the Reformed faith in the family lives and the organic life of the church,” God will not bless the work of missions. When members of the church are more interested in the entertainment of this world than the gospel, we may not expect more of our home mission work. When we are not interested in talking with each other about the blessed gospel of grace, much less talking about it with others; when there is a lack of fervency in our spiritual lives, will anyone be attracted to the gospel we preach as churches? This is why missions floundered during the war and the years following it.

A second reason our churches struggled in their mission work is found in the makeup of the MC itself. Classis West overtured Synod of 1940 “in respect to choosing members for various committees.” Classis West desired to be involved in the matters of the churches in general. It proposed, therefore, that members from both Classis East and Classis West serve on these various committees, especially the MC, since much of the mission work was done west of the Mississippi. Synod supported this overture and mandated the following.

First, the MC should now consist of five men from the East and three men from the West. The reason for this uneven balance between East and West was “that the eastern members of the committee may constitute a quorum for immediate action.” One other decision in this regard made by synod must be added: “That the labors of this committee be so arranged that as much as

possible they can be carried out by correspondence so as to avoid unnecessary traveling expense.”³

The reason for splitting the labors of the MC between East and West was noble. Yet, when examining these decisions of the 1940 Synod, we find a formula for disaster! First, they pitted the eastern branch of the MC against the western. The eastern branch of the MC was given the quorum. This means if there was any disagreement between the eastern branch and the western (and there was!), the east would trump the west. This would only serve to create strife and tension between east and west. Second, if the combined labors were carried out by correspondence through the mail, such labors would be slow and highly inefficient. The eastern branch, who first acted on all matters, might grow impatient and make decisions with no regard to the late reply from the west. This too happened—further creating tension.

The result in this split in the membership of the MC was that months would go by before the MC in the east would meet. The minutes of the eastern branch reveal some lengthy lapses of time between meetings. For example, the minutes show that a meeting was held on August 17, 1944 but that the next one was not until September 10, 1945. That was over a year between meetings. At that time the MC was not mandated to meet regularly each month as today. This too only served as a setback for missions.

This is not to say that nothing positive took place during these years. The MC continued to follow the methods developed in the first two decades of our existence as churches. First, the committee encouraged the consistories and their ministers to labor in new fields. The report of the MC to the synod of 1943 states, “This committee favors that every effort be put forth by the mission committee to open and to labor in new fields *through the consistories in various communities*. These consistories should be requested to grant their ministers leave to labor in a suitable field for a number of weeks at a time.”⁴ This was advised because Oak Lawn PRC was showing much initiative in this regard. In May of 1942 Rev. Cornelius Hanko requested of the MC financial assistance to pursue labors in Randolph, Wisconsin. The MC approved of this request and Oak Lawn, in connection with the MC, began labors in this small mid-west town. After Rev. C. Hanko labored personally in Randolph for several months, he reported to the MC

3 *Acts of Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches*, 1940 (pp. 26-30, Arts. 49-59).

4 *Acts of Synod*, 1943 (p. 67, III, B, 2). Committee of pre-advice on the report of the MC.

that this was definitely a field for mission labor. Rev. Hanko was sent back for a couple more weeks. The MC then made up a preaching schedule. In October of 1942 a Bible study was also formed in Randolph. At the Synod of 1943 the MC recommended to continue these labors. The synod adopted the advice of its committee of pre-advice that also recommended that “intensified efforts be put forth toward organization as soon as possible. We feel that merely preaching there without personal visits to those interested can only prove detrimental if continued indefinitely.”⁵ This piece of sage advice must always be kept in mind when performing any kind of mission work. Intensified labors by a particular man or men must be performed to develop a mission field. Pulpit supply by various ministers is not enough.

On August 17, 1943 the congregation of Randolph, Wisconsin was organized with eight families.

⁵ *Acts of Synod*, 1943 (p. 67, III, A, 1). Committee of pre-advice on the report of the MC.



Strength of youth

Rev. Brian Huizinga, pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, California

To teach them war (21) God's armor for us: The helmet

Previous article in this series: July 2018, p. 422.

“And take the helmet of salvation....”

Ephesians 6:17

Defense, defense, defense. How important is defense! The one and only offensive weapon—the sword—is very important, as we shall soon see. But so important is the individual believer’s *soul* in which God has deposited eternal riches in Christ, and so important is the *defense* of that soul, that God has ordained yet another piece of defensive armor in addition to the breastplate and the shield—the *helmet*. For what it is worth, a legendary American football coach once underscored the importance of defense in sports when he famously quipped, “Offense sells tickets. Defense wins championships.” While the importance of defense in sports is debatable and ultimately the debate is trivial, the importance of defense in spiritual warfare is indisputable on the basis of God’s provision of a three-piece defensive armament pictured to the Ephesians in the armor of the Roman soldier. From one point of view, the whole of the Christian life is one arduous march through time to heaven striving to defend the precious soul from relentless spiritual foes. For this daily battle in which defense is crucial we must have on our breastplate, take our shield, *and* take the helmet. I hope your helmet is strapped on.

The helmet itself

Having taken the shield in one hand, and before he takes his sword in the other, the Roman soldier would take his helmet and press it snugly upon his head. The helmet was made of thick leather overlaid with metal plates. For distinctive flair there was often an ornamental red plume fixed to the top of the helmet, something like a mohawk of thick, red feathers running down the middle of the top of the helmet from front to back. One good strike to the head could be fatal. Head-protection was critical.

In our spiritual warfare we must have a helmet to withstand the attacks of Satan. Even as the breastplate of righteousness refers to the spiritual breastplate that *is* righteousness, and the shield of faith refers to the spiritual shield that *is* faith, so also the helmet of salvation refers to the spiritual helmet that *is* salvation. While “salvation” is a very broad concept, the inspired apostle more narrowly defines our spiritual helmet as “the hope of salvation” in I Thessalonians 5:8—“But let us who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.”

The helmet of the hope of salvation refers to activity of the believer in which he, with his renewed mind, hopes for the full realization of his salvation.

Hope is an ardent longing for and sure expectation

of some future good that was promised. We do not have an earthly hope that shames us, like the wicked who hope for what ultimately will never make them happy. We hope for full salvation, and because God promises it, we shall surely possess it. Salvation is deliverance from the greatest evil and deliverance unto the greatest good. Salvation is God's work—accomplished by our crucified and resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, and applied by His Holy Spirit—whereby He delivers us from our sins and the curse due to us for them and delivers us unto everlasting life with Him in His covenant consummated in heaven. Thanks be to God for the great salvation we enjoy today as we have been delivered in principle!

But, we do not yet possess full salvation. We do not yet experience everything that God has prepared for us in Christ Jesus. We have not yet heard the trump of God and beheld with wonderment the majestic Christ in His personal, visible, bodily descent from heaven with all His holy angels. We have not yet experienced the complete, personal victory over sin that will occur when our deceitful old man of sin is abolished in death and when in the final resurrection we are clad with the immortal robes of salvation that are a thousand times more dazzling than the sun. We have not yet been summoned with the millions of angels and the throngs of worshiping brethren out of all the nations of the earth to God's throne in Paradise to sound together His praises through endless ages. What satisfaction we will enjoy when all the weary night is past and we awake with Christ to view the glories that abide! For it we hope. For it we long. Of it and our possession of it we are confident. Hope!

With our renewed mind we hope. The helmet covers the head, representing the believer's spiritual *mind*. When the Holy Spirit makes His abode in us, our dark and carnal mind is illumined and made heavenly so that we do something no ungodly young person can do: we can think upon and then desire gospel realities. Colossians 3:1-2, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on [literally, "set your mind on" or "think on"] things above, not on things on the earth." If we will hope for heaven, then we need the grace of a renewed mind to think about heaven, Christ, and the treasures above rather than the world, man, and the fleeting things of this earthly life.

We need a helmet. If we do not hope, then we go to battle bareheaded. If we hope for earthly glories, then we go to battle with a paper helmet. If in this old life of corruption the principle of heavenly life has been planted in our hearts so that we eagerly set our mind upon

and seek those things which are above, then we wear a helmet. God be praised for giving us this helmet!

The importance of it

Consider two attacks of Satan that demonstrate the importance of having the helmet of the hope of salvation in our spiritual warfare.

First, there is the threat of being swallowed up by worldliness.

Matthew 6:19-20, Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

I John 2:15-17, Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

How do we triumph when according to our sinful flesh we are not merely interested in but basely enslaved to earthly pleasures? How do we stand when we are surrounded by men and women whose god is their belly, or their name, or sports, or fashion, or money, or vacations, or all the flashy stuff continually paraded before us in online advertisements that hunt us like prey? How do we stand in this selfish, self-centered, self-serving age of entitlement, where every one assumes all of reality must be bent into conformity with his personal dictum, "No good thing shall be withholden from me!"? How do we stand in an age of affluence in which we do not know what lack means because so many possessions, opportunities, privileges, and vacations are afforded us? Laying up in our mind loving thoughts for the world is a grave threat like a sharp arrow or spear to the soldier's head.

Hope is the defense. With the helmet of the hope of salvation the Christian goes through life thinking about and setting his heart on heavenly things and longing for that which eye has never seen, tongue has never told, no app has ever been created, *Apple* has never imagined, *Uber* has never transported, *YouTube* has never shown, and *Amazon* has never sold, because it is the glory of Christ that shall be revealed in us. The Christian does not flee the world and look askance at the things of earthly life as an ascetic, but he keeps his feet from getting entangled while his eye is always looking

for the better country upon which he has set his heart. No wonder the apostle says (Rom. 8:24), “We are saved by hope....”

Secondly, there is the threat of fainting in adversity.

Psalm 34:19—Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

Acts 14:22—Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

John 15:19—If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

How does the Christian go on when his losses are so many, when his bodily pain is so severe, when his opportunities fly away one after another, when his disease and the management of it are so wearisome, when his poverty is so great, when his home is so broken, when his heart aches continually, when his soul sorrows so deeply over a deceased loved one? How does he survive, much less daringly go forth in valiant exploits, when he is tempted again and again to despair and cry with old father Jacob that all these things are against him (Gen. 42:36)? Hopeless it all seems.

How does the Christian stand confident in this antichristian world with antichristian leaders and antichristian institutions paving the way for *the* Antichrist who will come with devilish inventions of torture to defy the living God and His church? How does the young Christian soldier not succumb to dread terror when he looks around or hears about nations aligning themselves for war and blasphemous men and women jockeying for positions of leadership on the world stage? How does the Christian stay on his feet in this world when helicopters with news cameras descend on his little hometown to capture the cleanup after yet another massacre by terrorists?

The Christian certainly does not set his heart upon the hope of a future earthly millennial kingdom. With his helmet, the soldier not only thinks about what is seen and heard and felt and experienced—painful as it is—but he has the power to think about how all his tribulation is working an eternal weight of unseen glory (II Cor. 4:17-18). He has an unshakable hope that following this momentary trouble he shall be called home to heaven where the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will feed him, and shall lead him unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from his eyes (Rev. 7:17). With our helmet we stand

amid the fray and all the temptations singing reassuringly, “O why art thou cast down, my soul? And why so troubled shouldst thou be? Hope thou in God, and Him extol, who gives His saving help to me”! (Psalter 114, stanza 10).

Having on his helmet, the Christian looks to Christ clothed in sovereignty and ruling the universe with a scepter of righteousness. He contemplates with deep longing the future heavenly kingdom of peace that is coming in the day of Jesus Christ, when spears shall be beat into pruninghooks, and nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid (Micah 4:3-4). Let Satan come at us breathing out threatenings and slaughter through the Antichrist, for we will stand triumphantly with our helmets and sing, “Uplifted on a rock, above my foes around, amid the battle shock, my song shall still resound. Then joyful offerings I will bring, Jehovah’s praise my heart shall sing”! (Psalter 71, stanza 5).

The taking of it

Take this helmet. “And take the helmet of salvation...” (Eph. 6:17). This action calls to mind the image of a captain holding or setting out a helmet, and the soldier taking the helmet from his captain and placing it on his head. “Take” refers to the activity of faith, though not in the corrupt Arminian sense in which God supposedly presents salvation to us but it is up to us to exercise our free will in the acceptance of His well-meant offering. Faith is a saving gift. God gives us the salvation we now enjoy in principle. God gives us *complete* salvation. God gives us *hope*. God also gives us *faith*, by breathing into us the power to believe His promises, which are the substance of things hoped for (Heb. 11:1). By the faith He graciously gives we take the helmet of salvation.

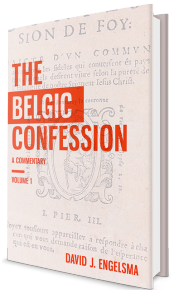
Take it! Take it now in these words. Take it when the hope of the gospel is preached (Col. 1:23). Take it when you open your Bible and read those things that were written aforetime for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope (Rom. 15:4). We have hope. Have hope. Have hope till the day your helmet is exchanged for a crown.



Bring the books...

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

The Belgic Confession: A Commentary, (Volume 1), by David J. Engelsma. Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2018. 348 pp. \$31.95, hardcover. [Reviewed by Rev. Nathan J. Langerak.]



The author of the Belgic Confession and Reformed pastor, Guido De Brès, wrote the Confession in 1561 in part as an apology for the Reformed faith, seeking to relieve confessors of that faith who were brutally persecuted at that time in the Low Countries, then under Spanish rule. The ruler of the Low Countries, what is today Belgium and the Netherlands, prior to that

time was the fanatical Roman Catholic, King Charles V. Despite his fanatical Catholicism, Charles ruled the Lowlands with a relatively light hand because the area was economically important to his empire and to a war-hungry and frequently cash-strapped Charles. His son Philip II had no such shrewdness. With the folly of a fanatic, he attempted the destruction of the Reformed faith in the Netherlands and, in the end, failed to stamp out Protestantism there and lost his possessions.

In the dedicatory epistle to the Confession of Faith De Brès wrote to Philip:

We thank our God that the blood shed by our brethren for our cause and suit, or rather for the cause of Jesus Christ, cries out in witness to the truth. The banishments, prisons, racks, exiles, tortures, and countless other persecutions plainly demonstrate that our desire and conviction [are] not carnal, for we would lead a far easier life if we did not embrace and maintain this doctrine. But having the fear of God before our eyes, and being in dread of the warning of Jesus Christ, who tells us that he shall forsake us before God and his Father if we deny him before men, we suffer our backs to be beaten, our tongues to be cut, our mouths to be gagged, and our whole bodies to be burnt, for we know that he who would follow Christ must take up his cross and deny himself.

The Belgic Confession was the confession of those who were harried and persecuted, and it bears that character in its moving expressions of hope in eternal life, a fact that makes all the more perfidious the willingness of many of their nominal offspring to remain ignorant of, to suffer nothing for, or to forsake the faith of their fathers for which they gave their lives.

De Brès showed no such treachery against the truth, but suffered under the Spanish persecution and showed that the words of his dedication were not blustering bravado but the conviction of his heart out of which he spoke with his mouth. He became a pastor in the Lowlands in 1552 and suffered exile in 1556. Shortly after being called to pastor the Reformed congregation in Valenciennes, he was captured and imprisoned in April 1567. His crime? Administering the Lord's Supper. He was condemned to death and hung along with his fellow minister Peregrin de la Grange a month later. He left behind a wife and five children and a grieving congregation.

The Belgic Confession was sealed with the blood of its author and countless other Reformed Christians in the Low Countries who willingly died for their faith and now reign as butchered saints with Jesus Christ, whose names and numbers only God knows, who now cry out from under the altar of God in heaven, and who will hear Jesus Christ publicly declare in the last day: "Their cause, which [was] condemned by many judges and magistrates as heretical and impious [was] the cause of the Son of God" (BC, Art. 37). That cause is the cause of the Reformed faith as summarized in the Belgic Confession. Because it is the cause of Jesus Christ, it is worthy of the believer's careful study.

Prof. Engelsma's commentary on the Belgic Confession is a gift to the English-speaking world. There are excellent commentaries in English on the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt, but to date there is no such substantial commentary on the Belgic Confession. This volume fills that lack. This volume is the first of a planned two-volume series and covers the first twenty-one articles of the Confession. The author includes a valuable introduction about the place of the creed in Reformed churches and a brief but stirring ac-

count of the life of Guido De Brès and of the value of the Belgic Confession.

Because the Confession is a systematic treatment of all the doctrines of the Reformed faith, the commentary provides the reader with a complete theological education. The commentary is characterized by concision, clarity, and interpretive discipline. Engelsma treats the Confession article by article, with each chapter in the commentary devoted mainly to the truth contained in one article of the Belgic Confession. Throughout the commentary the language of the Belgic is explained fairly and plainly. This makes the commentary eminently accessible. As a result, the lay person will find that he or she is able easily to understand and to delight anew in the truth of the Confession.

Engelsma's love for—and proper intolerance of deviation from—the truth of the Confession comes out clearly. The Confession itself is polemical, and an especially important feature of the commentary is that the truth of the Confession is applied to the errors that afflict the church world—especially the Reformed church world—today, whether they are contemporary errors or long-standing errors mentioned by the Belgic Confession itself.

The entire commentary is a fresh, lively, and thrilling exposition of the Reformed faith, but especially important are the explanations and applications of the Confession's large section on the doctrine of Scripture. The Belgic Confession's doctrine of Scripture is one of the most complete and thorough in any creed. Here Engelsma gives a moving defense of the Reformed understanding of Scripture as the inspired and infallible

Word of God. He does so over against the contemporary and faithless wounding of Scripture in the houses of its supposed friends, especially by the adoption of the false doctrine of evolution as a legitimate, indeed, *the* legitimate, explanation of the origins of the world. Adoption of this false doctrine necessarily entails the denial of large portions of Scripture as the Word of God, especially the first few chapters of Genesis. Adoption or toleration of this false doctrine makes vain one's profession of the inspiration of the Word of God. That false doctrine will eat like an acid until it eventually dissolves all of Scripture as the Word of God.

Engelsma's explanation of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in connection with his explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity is a must read. Indeed, his treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity as a whole is exciting and convincing, doing full justice to both the oneness of God and His threeness, especially the unique personal property of each person that makes them distinct, speaks of their relationship with the others, and guards the Trinity from modalism. The Reformed believer will come away with a renewed sense of wonder and love for this fundamental doctrine and the triune God therein revealed.

I heartily recommend this book. It is the mature fruit of a lifetime of theological instruction and reflection. The result is a faithful proclamation of the Reformed faith of the Belgic Confession for the believer today and a stirring call for Reformed believers to hold fast to this confession, believing it with their hearts and confessing it with their mouths.



News from our churches

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

Trivia question

With the engagement of Pastor-elect Jon Langerak to Sarah Kleyn, daughter of Rev. Rodney Kleyn, this event spurred a reader to ask: How many daughters of ministers are married to Protestant Reformed ministers themselves? An interesting question indeed, and one that we attempt to answer later in this column.

Congregational activities

The quiet, meandering streams called the Rock River

and the Little Rock River in northwest Iowa became swelling, raging torrents of water under the hand of the King of the earth in June. Approximately 11 inches of rain fell in as many days, inundating the roads and some homes of the congregations there. The compromised conditions led to the derailment of 32 cars of a Burlington Northern oil tanker train just a mile south of Doon, Iowa. Crews worked day and night to restore rail traffic within three days and recover spilled oil from 14 leaking railcars. The flooding reminded

area residents of the 2014 “hundred-year flood.” Now the waters have receded again in God’s plan. But not until we once again witnessed His Almighty power!

Evangelism activities

The Synod of Dordt held its first meeting on November 13, 1618. Crete PRC invites you to commemorate the 400th anniversary of this great event in church history by attending a special lecture given by Professor D. Kuiper on Wednesday, October 31, 2018.

The Reformed Witness Hour has a new, updated website. Visit reformedwitnesshour.org to watch an introductory video, view pictures and audio from the broadcast’s history, and read and listen to almost twenty years of past radio broadcasts. Now is an excellent time to become familiar with this important Reformed radio/Internet ministry.

The Cornerstone PRC Word and Deed committee has partnered with the Reformed Witness Hour to air her sermons and the RWH messages on the radio in the Chicago area. The broadcast can be heard every Sunday at 4:00 P.M. on WYLL 1160AM or on the Internet at www.1160hope.com.

Seminary activities

The internships of Seminarians Matt Kortus and Jacob Maatman have officially begun. Sem. Kortus is interning at Trinity PRC under Rev. N. Decker and his Council and Sem. Maatman at Hudsonville PRC under Rev. G. Eriks and his Council. The internship program runs from July 1 to December 31. May the Head of the church use these internships further to prepare these men for the gospel ministry.

School activities

Hope School Foundation Bass Fishing Tournament is scheduled for Saturday morning August 18th at 7:00 A.M. at Fisherman’s Landing on Muskegon Lake. Sponsor a boat, bring the kids, and enjoy a great morning out on the water! Be sure to try a Shim-E-Stick worm, hooked in the middle. The ones permeated with salt work best.

Church news

The PRCA now has an official sister-church relationship with the PRC in the Philippines (PRCP), confirmed at this year’s synod! We rejoice in this evidence of the Lord’s blessing on the work in the Philippines and of the unity of Christ’s church, which He gathers from all nations, tribes, and tongues. May the Lord grant us a mutually edifying and God-honoring relationship.

Synod approved the calling of a minister-on-loan to provide a pastor for our sister church in Singapore, Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church. Grandville PRC was again appointed the calling church for the calling of the minister-on-loan. On July 15 the Council of Grandville announced their trio: Revs. G. Eriks, S. Key, and R. Kleyn. The congregation will call on August 5.

Young people’s activities

The Young People’s Society of Crete PRC sold butter braids as a fundraiser, while Faith PRC sponsored a beach volleyball tournament at Holland State Park. Byron Center PRC young people held a car wash and bake sale.

Mission activities

We are told that Rev. Leovy Trinidad, pastor in Maranatha PRC in the Philippines very much enjoyed his travels to the USA and the meeting of synod of the PRCA. As he excitedly told acquaintances back home about his trip, he referred to being in “the land of the giants.”

Rev. Daniel Holstege and family, at the time of this writing, are in the middle of their six-week furlough to the USA. One stop was in Doon, IA, where he preached in the congregation of the calling church there. A presentation was given in Calvary PRC of Hull on July 1. Rev. Holstege was also able to meet with the Philippine sub-committee of the Doon Council and enjoy a delicious meal at the Doon Steakhouse! From Doon, the Holsteges headed back to Michigan and then on to Colorado before returning to the labors in the Manila area.

Sister-church news

Pastor Arie and Sherry denHartog left the CERC of Singapore on July 16 after about six months of labors there. A farewell dinner was held for the denHartogs in the church. Prof. and Carol Dykstra arrived there on July 19, with plans to depart again for the USA on August 21.

Young Adult advance notice

The Lynden, WA PRC is planning a Young Adults Retreat to be held July 1-5, 2019 in beautiful northwest Washington! All post high young adults are welcome and future announcements are forthcoming.

Trivia answer

As far as we are aware the following seven pastor’s daughters themselves married PR ministers:

Lael (Galardi) Griess
Lori (Kortering) Gritters
Cherith (Cammenga) Guichelaar
Lisa (Gritters) Holstege
Sharon (Hanko) Kleyn

Stephanie (Key) Lanning
Keri (Haak) Mahtani

Perhaps we have missed one? If so, let us know.
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 Dan and Lindsey Boverhof in the death of their father, **Gerrit Boverhof**. 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 Grandville PRC extend their Christian sympathy to Barbara Bomers, John and Lori Schipper, Bill Huber Jr., Mitchell Huber and Blake and Mackenzie Willett in the death of their mother, grandmother, and great grandmother, **Mrs. Johanna Bomers**, charter member of our Hope PRC. “Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living” (Psalm 116:7-9).

Rev. Kenneth Koole, President
Doug Dykstra, Asst. Clerk

Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of Grandville PRC extend their Christian sympathy to John and Judy Bouma in the death of Judy’s father, **Minard Vanden Top**, member of our Hull PRC. “Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy council, and afterward receive me to glory” (Psalm 73: 23, 24).

Rev. Kenneth Koole, President
Doug Dykstra, Asst. Clerk

Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of Randolph PRC express their Christian sympathy to the Jake and Rene Soodsma family, the Jack and Sue Regnerus family, the Steve and Ev Oosterhouse family, the Rich and Jan Regnerus family, the Norb and Sandee Alsum family and George and Connie Vroom in the death of a mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and sister, **Mrs. Rena Regnerus**. May their comfort be found in God’s word where we read, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die” (John 11:25-26).

Rev. Erik Guichelaar, President
Kent Hoksbergen, Clerk

Classis West

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Peace PRC on Wednesday, August 29, 2018, at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Peace’s consistory.

Rev. Joshua Engelsma, Stated Clerk

Classis East

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 12, 2018, at 8:00 A.M., in the Grace Protestant Reformed Church, Standale, Michigan. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 13, 2018.

Gary Boverhof, Stated Clerk

Seminary convocation

The Seminary Convocation is planned for September 5, 2018, at 7:30 P.M., in Providence PRC. Prof. B. Gritters will give the message.

Announcements continued

Needed

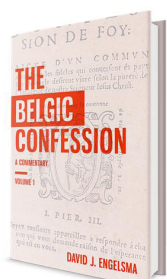
Reformed Heritage Christian School is accepting applications for an administrator/teacher and a part-time teacher. Teaching openings are for the early elementary split classroom and junior high and high school history and Bible. RHCS is also accepting applications for a part-time elementary music teacher/choir director. We are committed to teaching from a distinctively Reformed perspective. Interested candidates may send a cover letter and resume to:

Reformed Heritage Christian School
Attn: Board President
700 N. Fletcher Ave.
Kalamazoo, MI 49006
Or email board@refhcs.org

THE BELGIC CONFESSION

— VOLUME ONE —

DAVID J. ENGELSMA, author



How great is the importance of the Belgic Confession! It authoritatively defines the truth of scripture. Explicitly and by implication, it also defines heresies and identifies true churches of Christ in the world. It is a document of instruction containing biblical truths professed by members of Reformed churches and their children. It is the guide of Reformed preachers concerning the doctrines they must teach and defend. It is the defense of the Reformed faith against errors by which the faith is threatened, whether by heretics within the churches or by the winds of false doctrine blowing upon the true church from without.

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REV. ANGUS STEWART will speak on:

"The RFPA, the CPRC,
and the Spread of the Truth"

September 27, 2018 at 7:30pm
Grace Protestant Reformed Church

(This meeting provides the opportunity for men to join the Association.)

Teacher needed

The Edmonton Protestant Reformed Christian School is in need of a full-time teacher for the 2018-2019 school year. The school will be starting with grades 1-3, 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.

Reformed Witness Hour

Rev. Carl Haak

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| August 5 | "Prayer from a Fish's Belly" Jonah 2 |
| August 12 | "The Conversion of Pagan Sailors" Jonah 1:13-16 |
| August 19 | "The Second Time" Jonah 3:1-4 |
| August 26 | "The Wonder of Nineveh's Repentance" Jonah 3:5-9 |