

The Standard Bearer

A Reformed semi-monthly magazine

May 1, 2018 • Volume 94 • No. 15

The true church of Jesus Christ confessed

Prof. Russell Dykstra

Upon this rock Vision of Ezekiel (2)

Mr. Don Doezema

Fundamental Reformed critique of premillennialism

Prof. David Engelsma

Home missions: Casting our bread upon the waters

Rev. Audred Spriensma



The *Standard Bearer* (ISSN 0362-4692 [print], 2372-9813 [online]) is a semi-monthly periodical, except monthly during June, July, and August, published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc: 1894 Georgetown Center Dr, Jenison, MI 49428-7137.

Postmaster

Send address changes to the *Standard Bearer*, 1894 Georgetown Center Dr, Jenison, MI 49428-7137.

Reprint and online posting policy

Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting or online posting of articles in the *Standard Bearer* by other publications, provided that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; that proper acknowledgment is made; and that a copy of the periodical or Internet location in which such reprint or posting appears is sent to the editorial office.

Editorial policy

Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Reader Asks department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be signed. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

Subscription price

\$27.00 per year in the US, \$39.00 elsewhere
esubscription: \$27.00
esubscription free to current hardcopy subscribers.

Advertising policy

The *Standard Bearer* does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$10.00 fee. Announcements should be sent, with the \$10.00 fee, to: RFPA, Attn: SB Announcements, 1894 Georgetown Center Dr, Jenison, MI 49428-7137 (email: mail@rfpa.org). Deadline for announcements is one month prior to publication date.

Website for RFPA: www.rfpa.org
Website for PRC: www.prc.org

The Reformed Free Publishing Association maintains the privacy and trust of its subscribers by not sharing with any person, organization, or church any information regarding *Standard Bearer* subscribers.

Editorial office

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

Business office

Standard Bearer
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

- 339 Christ's voluntary sacrifice
Rev. John Marcus

Editorial

- 341 The true church of Jesus Christ confessed
Prof. Russell Dykstra

All around us

- 343 Teacher is dismissed for "misgendering" student
344 Teacher says, "God loves you" to a lesbian student—
She is reported as a terrorist threat!
344 Church of Scotland's "pastoral care" for "trans" people
Rev. Martyn McGeown

Search the Scriptures

- 346 Upon this rock (32)
Vision of Ezekiel (2)
Mr. Don Doezema

When thou sittest in thine house

- 349 News from Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church
in Singapore (CERC)
Rev. Arie denHartog

Things which must shortly come to pass

- 351 Premillennialism (19)
Fundamental Reformed critique of premillennialism
Prof. David Engelsma

Ministering to the saints

- 353 Psalter revision: Proposed new songs for Psalms 1-40
Prof. Douglas Kuiper

Pertaining to the churches...in common— Domestic Mission Committee

- 355 Home missions: Casting our bread upon the waters
Rev. Audred Spriensma

Bring the books...

- 357 *Holland, Michigan: From Dutch Colony to Dynamic City*
Prof. Douglas Kuiper

Activities

- 358 News from our churches
Mr. Perry Van Egdom



REFORMED
FREE PUBLISHING
ASSOCIATION



Meditation

Rev. John Marcus, pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta

Christ's voluntary sacrifice

Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

John 10:17-18

We must never in the whole of our Christian lives forget the suffering of our Lord and Savior. For without His suffering there is no salvation. If Jesus had never died on the cross in the way He did, nothing else would matter about His life. At most, He would have been a good example to humankind. But good examples cannot save. God's justice demands perfect obedience; but it also demands full punishment for sin.

We must see, then, that Christ not only obeyed His Father in His life but also in His death when He offered Himself the perfect sacrifice. He was not only the Priest who offered the Lamb; He was Himself also the Lamb. Christ's obedience involved giving Himself as a voluntary sacrifice. The more God gives us to understand Christ's voluntary sacrifice, the more we will rejoice that we are His sheep.

The sacrifice Jesus gave for us was nothing less than His own life.

What is life? We might define life as conscious activity. The most basic activity of life involves breathing. But, life also includes eating, sleeping, interacting, and adapting to the creation around us. The word used in our text (Greek, *psyche*) is the source of our word *psyche*, which points to the fact that, when Jesus says that He lays down His life, He is talking about more than just a body that breaths, eats, and sleeps. He is talking about a conscious life that shows itself in earthly relationships.

From an earthly perspective, the most precious thing we have is life. Gold and silver are meaningless to a dead person. So, too, the most precious thing Jesus was able to give was His life. "Greater love hath no man

than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

This life Jesus came to lay down.

That is not the same thing as taking one's life in suicide. Some feel unable to handle strife in the home. They do not see any meaning in life, lose all hope, and try to escape through suicide. Suicide is not a laying down of life in service to God. In fact, suicide is a selfish refusal to serve God and others. God gives life and various talents to each of us to use for His name's honor and glory. He calls us to present our bodies a living sacrifice to Him. Therefore, when someone takes his life in suicide, he does so without any authority from God.

Jesus did not take His life in suicide; He gave His life. Laying down His life is the antithesis of selfish taking.

Why did Jesus lay down His life? Jesus informs us: "This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:18). What was that commandment to Jesus? Essentially this: "Love me with all thine heart, and soul, and mind, and strength." The commandment was the same in Paradise, but Adam and Eve refused. They decided that they had the right to determine for themselves what is good and evil. They rejected God and sided with the devil.

In order to reconcile us to God, someone had to satisfy God's justice. In order to do that he must love God perfectly. Not only that, he must also experience the punishment of hell that each of us deserves for our sins. For this reason, Jesus must love the Father even in His descent into the torments of hell. That is why God sent Christ into the world. He sent Him with authority to take upon Himself our guilt and suffer reproach and shame and reviling, and thus to earn for us righteousness and life. Jesus had authority to lay down His life as a sacrifice because the Father sent Him.

That means Jesus did not go to the cross as a mere human individual. He went as our covenant Head and Representative. He went to the cross as the Good Shepherd who "giveth his life for the sheep." He did not give His life for all men; He gave His life for a specific group, whom He calls "My sheep," namely, the elect of

God given to Him before the foundation of the world. The Good Shepherd gave Himself as a sacrifice for His sheep.

Even more amazing than Jesus' powerful authority to lay down His life is His power to take it again. The life He laid down was His earthly, mortal, corruptible human nature subject to suffering and death. The life He took up again was His glorified incorruptible human nature. He tasted death in all its torments under God's wrath. But He did not remain under that suffering, indicating that His sacrifice satisfied God's justice. The fact that Jesus had the authority to take His life back again shows that His sacrifice fully covered all the guilt of our sins that had been imputed to Him.

Glorious sacrifice!

But, in order to be a sacrifice that makes atonement, Christ's suffering and death had to be completely voluntary. He received a command from the Father and He must obey it willingly.

People make sacrifices for others on different occasions. A soldier might die on the battlefield for the good of his country. But even that is not a pure act of his will. He does not go to the battlefield in order to die voluntarily.

When a lamb was taken to be sacrificed, that lamb did not resist. He did not open his mouth to complain; he was a picture of meekness in the face of suffering. But even that beautiful picture does not come close to what Jesus did for us. Why not? Because the lambs of the Old Testament never actively gave themselves to be sacrificed; their lives were taken from them. In contrast, Jesus gave Himself voluntarily.

It might seem as if wicked men took Jesus' life. The scribes and chief priests sought how they might destroy Jesus. Judas covenanted with the chief priests for thirty pieces of silver. The multitude came out against Jesus with swords and staves to capture Him. The Jewish counsel arranged the trial and the false witnesses to testify against Him. Annas and Caiaphas interrogated Jesus and declared Him guilty. The soldiers blindfolded Jesus and called upon Him to prophesy who hit him. Herod and his soldiers mocked Jesus by dressing Him in royal purple. Pilate refused to let Jesus go. The crowd chose Barabbas instead of Jesus. Pilate's soldiers pressed the crown of thorns upon Him. The soldiers pounded the nails through His hands and feet. The passersby railed on Jesus. Was it not the activity of so many wicked hands that crucified and slew Jesus?

Nevertheless, Jesus says, "I lay down my life." Everything about Jesus' sacrifice shows that it was completely

voluntary. His voluntary sacrifice began when Christ willingly made Himself of no reputation and took upon Himself the form of a servant. As the Servant of Jehovah, He remained in complete control of the sacrifice He offered.

Before it was His time, no man could lay a hand on Him. But when His time came, Jesus steadfastly set His face to go up to Jerusalem. The Jews specifically did not want to kill Jesus during the Passover; but Jesus sovereignly sent out Judas with the command, "That thou doest do quickly" (John 13:27). When the mob came to capture Jesus in the garden, as soon as Jesus identified Himself, "I am he," they all fell backwards; they could never have captured Jesus if He had not willingly given Himself over to them. Jesus never tried to convince Pilate to let Him go. Jesus even carried the cross to the place where He would be crucified; the only reason Simon of Cyrene had to help Him by carrying His cross was Jesus' physical exhaustion. No doubt, when it came time to pound the nails, Jesus did not pull away. On the cross, He refused to drink the wine mixed with myrrh because He knew He must suffer all the pain. The crowds mocked Him and called on Him to come down if He was the Christ, but Jesus willingly remained until He could say, "It is finished."

Christ's sacrifice of Himself was completely voluntary and in perfect harmony with the will of His Father.

What would motivate such a sacrifice?

People make sacrifices for many different reasons. A soldier sacrifices for his country. A mother sacrifices many comforts to care for her baby. A fellow citizen sacrifices to help a homeless person.

But who ever heard of a mere human being willing to die, and that for the good of his enemies? That is what Jesus did for us. He died for us when we were rebels against God and His Christ.

Only the everlasting love of our covenant God can explain Christ's sacrifice of Himself for sinners like us. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Only the everlasting love of God can explain why He holds us in His hand so that none can snatch us away.

How can God have such love toward us? Only as we are in Christ. First, we must know that the Father loves Christ in His human nature because He was perfectly obedient. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again" (John 10:17). The Father loves the Son because of His perfect obedience. Then, we who are in Christ must enjoy that same love. If the Father loves the Shepherd, He also

loves the sheep. If the Father loves the Head, He also loves the body of Christ, the church.

Christ's voluntary sacrifice on the cross points to God's great love toward us. He sees us in our misery and sets Himself to deliver us and give to us abundant life. He came so that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. Abundant life is nothing less than the fullness of joy in the Father's presence,

ultimately life in eternity. That is what the cross is about.

Now when we see Christ crucified, we must know He is not like the hireling who does not care for the sheep. Rather, let us see Him as our Shepherd who loves us and gave Himself for us. Christ's voluntary sacrifice manifests His everlasting love to us.

What wondrous love is this!



Editorial

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

The true church of Jesus Christ confessed

I believe an holy, catholic church.

This simple yet profound statement is the confession of countless believers around the world Sunday after Sunday, using the words of the Apostles' Creed. The churches that use the Nicene Creed fittingly add "...and apostolic..." to their confession. The Heidelberg Catechism beautifully expounds this confession in its fifty-fourth answer as follows:

That the Son of God, from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to Himself by His Spirit and Word, out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith....

The Catechism does not include that the believer loves this church because the focus is rightly on the work of Christ; it is *His* church. Yet the words breathe love for the church, as the believer gratefully confesses, "and that I am and for ever shall remain, a living member thereof."

The church is the glorious work of God in and through Jesus Christ. The church is "the company of the elect," wrote John Wycliffe 700 years ago, and the Reformation heartily affirmed the same truth a century and a half later. God eternally knew and loved every member of the church, and in that love God chose each one. (Rom. 8:29, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate....") God loved these, and these only, not because they were good, holy, noble, intelligent, or athletic. In fact, God's choice was not rooted in the individual at all. Rather, the

selection is rooted in God Himself, in His sovereign and free good pleasure (Eph. 1:5).

Eternally, God loved His people and predestinated them unto the adoption of children. Accordingly, He chose them in Christ (Eph. 1:4). Himself eternally chosen, Christ is the Mediator, the Word who also is God, and the revelation of the glory of God in whom all fulness dwells (Col. 1:19). In the perfect plan of God, the church is added to Christ as His body in order that the glory of the Head should radiate through each and every member of the body in a unique and personal way. One can compare the glory of the church to a chandelier with so many carefully shaped cuts of glass, perfectly positioned to reveal the dazzling beauty of the light at its center.

Divine election is the explanation for the church. God planned a church, *one* church. This church would be gathered from the dawn of time to the end. Believers in every period of history are part of the same church. Adam and Paul; Isaiah and Luther; Sarah and Lydia—all members of one church. Old Testament Israel was a type of the church, but she also *was* the church of God, into which, as a living tree, the believers after Pentecost were graphed, forming one tree (or church, Rom. 11:17-24). Stephen, a man full of the Holy Spirit, called Israel of old "the *church* in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38).

I believe *one* church, chosen eternally in love.

That church is *holy*. The holiness of the church can be understood from three points of view. First, from the point of view of eternity, God's goal for His church is that she will be holy. Ephesians 1:4 speaks of the pur-

pose of election, namely, “that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” God determined that the church will dwell with Him in the sphere of His love. Only a *holy* church can live in covenant life with the Holy One.

Second, the holiness of the church is real because Jesus Christ, the Head of the church, is holy. As is the Head, so is the body. As I Corinthians 1:30 states, Christ is “of God made unto” the church “sanctification.”

And finally, the Holy Spirit of Christ works sanctification in each believer. This work of the Spirit begins in regeneration when the Spirit makes an elect, though dead, sinner come alive with the holy, resurrection life of Jesus Christ. The Spirit continues to make that life work in the believer, causing him to love God and to produce good works.

I believe one, holy church...

...which church is also *catholic*. These two attributes (holiness and catholicity) are related in that holiness knows no national or race boundaries. The omnipotent God makes an Italian holy as easily as a Russian; a black woman as easily as an oriental. That is God’s eternal plan, namely, to gather a church catholic—a church with members from every people, nation, tribe, and tongue (Rev. 5:9; 7:9). Currently, we see so little of this beauty of the church—a church made up of members of all races and languages, existing in a variety of cultures all over the world. What a breathtaking sight it will be to behold that church in glory!

I believe one, holy, catholic church...

...which is also *apostolic*. Apostolicity is important because it follows that the church can trace its “line” back to the apostles—not a line of *men*, but the line of the *truth*. The church is founded on the truth of the apostles, as Paul writes of the church in Ephesians 2:20, “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”

I believe one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.

Two things more, closely related, Scripture emphasizes about the church. The first is her *unity*. All the biblical figures emphasize that the church is a unified whole. The church is a tree, a vine with branches, and the temple of God. The church is the body of Christ and the bride of Christ. Though comprised of an uncountable number (as the stars in heaven and as the sand of the seashore), the church is a living, unified whole, not an unorganized mob. Accordingly, each member has a God-ordained place and function in the church.

Second, Christ is the essential unity of the church. He is the Foundation (chief corner stone), the Root of the tree, the Vine supporting the branches, the Head of the body, and the Bridegroom of the church, His bride. Each

member is united to Christ by the spiritual bond of faith, through which flow His life and all spiritual blessings. Besides, His Spirit dwells in each member. As Paul writes to the Ephesians (4:4-6):

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

A most glorious work of God is the church of Jesus Christ.

Because it is His masterpiece, God loves His church.

Do we love this church?

Before we answer, “Yes, of course,” without much thought, let us consider briefly how much God loves His church. It is a profitable exercise to search the Bible to see how often it speaks of God’s love for the church. It will fill pages. We can only quote a few verses. Not only is it true that “the LORD loveth the righteous” (Ps. 146:8), but also “the LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob” (Ps. 87:2). God created all things for His glory in heaven and earth. Yet, Moses testified to Israel, “the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day” (Deut. 10:14, 15).

The Song of Songs is a poetic description of the love of Christ for His church, and the church’s loving response. In 2:4-5 the bride sings: “He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love.”

The New Testament continues this testimony. John’s first epistle testifies of God’s marvelous love for His own: “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (4:9-10). And who can forget Paul’s soaring declaration that nothing, absolutely nothing “shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:35-39).

I once read that if a human being living on the earth could be lifted up into heaven for a short time, be able to hear and see what is happening in heaven, and there could observe God’s love for His church and tender care for each member on the earth, he would be utterly dumbfounded. Why does God so love this church? It is of no account in the eyes of men. Truly, not many noble, rich, or mighty are found there. Worse, it is made up of members who steal, lie, disobey and dishonor parents and presidents alike, seem prone to continual fighting, and who backbite and slander *each other*. Why does God love such a miserable lot?

He does. For His own name's sake. He sees His church according to His own plan. He knows what that church will become, in principle is already, in Jesus Christ: the cleansed bride adorned for her Husband, reflecting the glory, wisdom, power, and majesty of God Himself for an eternity.

I ask again, do *we* love this church? This may not be the love of a kind of abstraction—"Yes, I love that one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church which I cannot see, but confess that it exists." For that church is manifest in a local congregation. Do we love that church of Jesus Christ?

True love manifests itself chiefly as the Savior's did—in giving. Loving the church means giving of self for her good. And the church is not the building, it is the company of the elect, believers and their seed. Love manifests itself in praying for her peace and concretely seeking her peace (Ps. 122). Love is revealed in using our gifts, natural and spiritual, for the advantage and salvation of

the members of that church. Love manifests itself in a strong desire to worship with the saints. Love delights in the diversity of the church, and yet in her oneness. Love delights in the church's foundation, truth. Love for God, love for Christ, is manifest concretely in love for the church. As John put it, "every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him" (I John 5:1).

For, you see, there is a real relationship between the church of Jesus Christ we confess every week and the local congregation of which we are a member, or ought to be a member. There are discernible marks of God's church that are present in the local congregation.

Next time we will consider the marks of that true church of Jesus Christ, as set forth in the Belgic Confession Article 29.

[The next article in this brief series will not appear until June 1, since the next editorial will give a summary of the agenda for Synod 2018.]



All around us

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

Teacher is dismissed for "misgendering" student

Two recent stories from the United Kingdom (UK) involving teachers caught my eye; both of them illustrate the liberal agenda in public schools and the intolerance of the "LGBT community."

The first is the story of Joshua Sutcliffe, Christian pastor and math teacher in Oxford, England. His "crime"? He "misgendered" a student! Expect to see that word, "misgendering" in the future. (You will soon find "misgender" as a verb in the dictionary: the word means to address a transgendered person contrary to his/her preferred gender). Mr. Sutcliffe addressed a group of students, one of whom is a biological girl who identifies as a boy, with the encouraging remark, "Well done, girls." For such "gross misconduct" the teacher faced disciplinary action from the school after the aggrieved student complained that her preferred pronoun ("he," or perhaps "they"—or even "ze" or "zir") was not used.¹

Appearing on the ITV show, "Good Morning" with his lawyer, Andrea Williams, from the Christian Legal Centre, Mr. Sutcliffe attempted to explain his position to Philip Schofield and Holly Willoughby, something I would not recommend. Sutcliffe said that he had been calling the student by her preferred name (Ben instead of Betty, let's say), but on the day in question, he had praised the group of girls, which included the girl who identified as a boy (it is complicated even to describe these things!). Immediately, when the student became angry, Sutcliffe apologized for his "slip of the tongue." The TV presenters' hostility to the Christian position was clear throughout the interview. Willoughby quoted from the school's three-day investigation:

The investigation concluded that the misgendering of the pupil and the avoidance of using gendered pronouns contravenes the school's code of conduct with regard to demonstrating an awareness of sexual and cultural diversity of students, and the use of insensitive comments towards young people, and the

¹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-41966554>

use of religious comments in math lessons, demonstrate a failure to comply with school policy.

Citing the suicide rate of transgendered children, Schofield referenced the remark of one parent of a gender-confused child to her husband: “You can support your daughter or you can bury your son” (the child in question was a boy [son] who identified as a girl [daughter]). Williams responded rightly that the suicide rate in children who have “transitioned” (through hormonal therapy or surgery) to their “preferred gender” is just as high as those who have not, and that it is kinder and more compassionate to help children to live in the body in which they were created, instead of allowing them to live in confusion. Attempting to trap Williams, Schofield cited the guidelines of Church of England Schools that “[their 4,700 schools] should not require children to wear uniforms that create difficulty for trans pupils,” arguing that Williams is in conflict with her own church. In the same interview, Schofield snapped, “It doesn’t seem very Christian to me for you to be so intransigent,” called the views of Sutcliffe and Williams “utterly abhorrent,” and ended the interview with the comment, “Well, we’ll get back to the show and back to 2017 and not medieval Britain in just a moment.”²

Teacher says, “God loves you” to a lesbian student—she is reported as a terrorist threat!

In July 2016, Svetlana Powell, a teacher in Bristol, England, was dismissed from the T2 Apprenticeship Academy, and reported to the British government’s counter-terrorism strategy group, *Prevent*, for being a “radicalisation threat.” What did she do? Did she make terrorist threats; did she advocate violence; did she advocate overthrowing the government? No, she expressed her belief that homosexuality is against God’s will, and she told a lesbian student that God loved her! While we would question telling an unbeliever that God loves him/her (for God loves only elect, believing sinners), it hardly constitutes a fireable offence—never mind a terrorist threat—to speak about God’s love! In modern multicultural, “tolerant” Britain, however, it does.

According to reports, Mrs. Powell answered a student’s question about faith and evolution, which led to further questions, one of which was about the teacher’s personal views on homosexuality. Mrs. Powell gave her view that homosexuality is “against God’s will” (that is, sin), adding that God loves everyone unconditionally. When asked whether the lesbian student would “go to hell,” Mrs. Powell responded that God loved her, had

provided a way of salvation for everyone, and that in the way of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ anyone can go to heaven. After the discussion ended, five students reported Mrs. Powell to the Academy manager. After her disciplinary hearing, the teacher was dismissed. It should be noted that the student who initiated the conversation and the complaint against the teacher was a professing *Christian*.

The treatment of Mrs. Powell stands in stark contrast to the treatment of another teacher, “an outspoken left-wing atheist,” called Andrew Spargo, who, according to students’ complaints, spent a lot of his lessons railing against the British establishment and mocking Christianity. On one occasion, Mr. Spargo is alleged to have shown the students a sketch of a naked woman. The atheist teacher was not reported to “Prevent” as a radicalism threat. Instead, Mr. Spargo received a reprimand and an extension of his probation period.³

Radical, outspoken, anti-government atheistic views are acceptable in modern Britain, but Christianity is borderline terrorism!

Church of Scotland’s “pastoral care” for “trans” people

At the 2016 General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (CofS), the following motion was proposed from the floor and approved:

Instruct the Council (Mission and Discipleship Council) working with the Church and Society Council and others, where appropriate, to promote congregational learning and awareness of the issues transgender and gender non-conforming people experience, in order to better facilitate pastoral care to and inclusion of transgender and gender non-conforming people at a local level.⁴

The fruit of that resolution is the distribution in February 2018 to all CofS congregations of a publication, “Diverse Gender Identities and Pastoral Care,” sponsored by Scottish Trans (the Scottish Trans Alliance). The booklet does not contain “any academic essays” or “debates on theological positions.” Instead, it allows “transgendered people” to speak, allowing them to indoctrinate the reader without any attempt to correct the claims with the truth of God’s Word. Iona’s story is representative:

3 <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/christian-teacher-referred-to-anti-terrorism-agency-for-telling-lesbian-stu>

4 http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/48866/Web_PDF_Diverse_Gender_Identities_and_Pastoral_Care.pdf

2 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_9_b49s-xVg

When I went to [university] I met lots of new people, people who had more progressive or affirming understandings of the Bible. I started reading Queer Theology and Trans Theology, which opened up new ways to think about God. I grew up thinking about God as He—Father and Son—but I learnt that God encompasses the genders of all people. God is beyond our understanding of gender. I am trying to think about God in the broadest way I can. God is in everyone and in everything and God is love, so I can't just think about God as narrowly as I was first taught. This journey has definitely enriched my faith; it hasn't transformed my faith but it has enriched it.

Iona is allowed to spout her heresy and even blaspheme God—her position is closer to pantheistic paganism than Christianity. But who would dare question her experience? The booklet closes the section on Iona with these thought-provoking questions: “How has what Christian culture says about transgender people affected Iona's journey?” “What are the possible advantages and risks of someone telling their family?” “Does learning about diverse interpretations of the Bible have a place in pastoral care?” There are no questions about the Bible, for what does the CofS care about the Bible?

Another individual, Jo, is also given a platform to twist the Scriptures:

When I read the two creation stories in Genesis, I see that ‘male and female created he them.’ I know that these people read that as ‘male, and separate to that, female’ but the Hebrew is much more ambiguous than that. Perhaps it is ‘male together with female.’ It might mean that the first being was androgyne. Indeed the work of Jung would suggest that we all have female and male energy in us. Trans people are part of God's creation. It says in Isaiah that I named you in the womb. God's word is full of texts that talk about the mercy and compassion of the creator.... We even have the passages in Matthew (19:12) where Jesus directly talks about eunuchs. That is me. He is talking about me. I am a eunuch. Look at the beautiful story of Phillip and the eunuch in Acts (8:26-40). Even the passages in the Old Testament refer to specific cultural contexts that aren't around anymore.

There is nothing ambiguous about the Hebrew—“and” means *and*. Jesus is crystal clear in Matthew 19:4, a passage Jo does not quote, although it is in the same chapter as the passage about eunuchs. A “trans person” is not a eunuch—a eunuch is a castrated male! In the context of Matthew 19:12, a eunuch is one who voluntarily abstains from marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven!

Another contributor to the publication is Kaden, who writes,

I am an 18-year-old demi-boy, which basically means I mostly identify as a boy, but that there is a bit of me that could be a third gender, but isn't: it is feminine, I suppose, but not in a girly way. I don't really know; it is just a thing. I'm definitely non-binary which is under the umbrella term of trans.

Kaden is afforded the opportunity to misinterpret and misapply the Scriptures:

I believe that God created us all, so that means He created me to be this way. It's like what 1 Corinthians 10, verse 13 says—God won't test you more than you can handle. He is not going to make a trans person and then condemn them to be a sinner. That's not the act of a loving God. God loves all of us just as we are. It doesn't matter how you present, so long as you're happy. That's what He wants; He wants us to be happy people.

Suffice to say that 1 Corinthians 10:13 does not teach that God “won't test you more than you can handle” and, therefore, you should just try to be happy; rather, it teaches that God provides a way of escape from any trial (temptation), which way of escape is repentance from sin. In addition, God does not want us to be happy, but to be holy, part of which is self-denial and bearing the cross.

Another member of the CofS is Brian, who is secretly “Judith,” dressing up as a woman at home, but going to church (in a rural community) as Brian. He writes,

I have struggled over the years with my faith—what does God think about Judith and what does the Bible say about gender dysphoric people like me, but I have come to terms with it. I can't find anything in the Bible that says that transgender people aren't welcome. I think that our traditional translations of the Bible are from a time where views were limited. I am comfortable with God and feel personally that God is comfortable with Judith. If God didn't want me to be doing it, then I wouldn't be doing it. I don't see God as saying ‘Don't be like this.’ I see God saying get out there and help others do what you have done: to accept themselves and be confident.

Brian's opinions about Judith are just that—opinions, with no basis in the Word of God. Transgender people are welcome if they repent, which is the case with all sinners. The only sin that excludes from the church is impenitence.

Andrew, who “transitioned” to his current gender in his 50's, writes,

We live in a very binary world; even our theology is binary. But now I think I align myself more with Queer

Theology. For example, in Queer Theology we would look at the story of Jesus and the woman at the well and we would note that she was an outcast, a Samaritan, and we would see that the parable is actually about Jesus reaching out to the outcast of that society. Transgender people are the outcasts of our modern society. That parable is about us.

Andrew fails to notice that the Samaritan woman was living in adultery, a sin that Jesus was not afraid to

expose: “Thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband” (John 4:18). Therefore, the Samaritan repented, something that Andrew, who wants the Bible updated to reflect his understanding of God, does not do.

It is a sign of the apostasy of the Church of Scotland, as if further proof were necessary, that such a booklet can be distributed with minimal controversy in a church founded by the great John Knox!



Search the Scriptures

Mr. Don Doeze, member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Wyoming, Michigan

Upon this rock (32) Vision of Ezekiel (2)

Previous article in this series: April 15, 2018, p. 320.

The prostitution to idolatry that Ezekiel had already seen, by vision, in the temple of God in Jerusalem must have seemed incredible to the prophet. But then, astoundingly, the Lord says, “Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do” (8:13).

This time, the Lord brought Ezekiel to “the gate of the LORD’s house which was toward the north.” And there he saw women sitting, “weeping for Tammuz” (8:14). Nothing more is said here or elsewhere in Scripture about Tammuz. A reputable, recently published Bible dictionary identifies Tammuz as the Samaritan deity of spring vegetation. The cult of Adonis in Syria and Osiris in Egypt had rites similar to those connected with Tammuz, and some commentators even identify the latter with one or the other of those deities. The rites had their origins in ancient heathen mythology, according to which, in this case, Tammuz was a handsome youth who died, spent some time in the underworld, and then came back to earth—his death and resurrection being associated, respectively, with the long dry season, followed by the reviving of nature with the spring rains. Annual rites (in the then-fourth month of the year) involved the weeping mentioned in 8:14 (mourning the death of Tammuz), followed by a time of rejoicing (at his resurrection).

Even if that were the whole of it, such idolatrous worship, in the very temple of Jehovah God, should already have been considered repulsive. But very likely it involved more. This cult, as practiced in the nations around Judah, involved also licentious rites. That is, not only *spiritual*, but also *corporeal* whoredom. Calvin, among other commentators, almost takes for granted that the weeping for Tammuz at the gate of the temple included the latter. Women “offering themselves,” he writes, “to debauchery.... Who would think this could occur, that women should be reduced to such a pitch of defilement, when they had been taught in the doctrine of the law from their early childhood.”

“Hast thou seen this, O son of man?” the Lord asks Ezekiel. But “turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these” (8:15).

Ezekiel is then brought in vision “into the inner court of the LORD’s house” (8:16). The prophet takes pains at this point to reveal not only *what* he saw there, but also *exactly where*. Not just in “the inner court,” the domain of the priests, but “at the *door* of the temple of the LORD,” that is, the door of the temple proper, the very sanctuary itself. And then also this: “between the porch and the *altar*.” Ezekiel knew this place well. He himself was a priest (cf. 1:3). He could not help but

view the altar of burnt offering as, second only to the sanctuary itself, the most sacred spot in the whole of the inner court. And, with all of the godly priests of the Lord in his day, he understood that the placement of the altar before the porch, the door, of the entrance to the house was hardly an arbitrary matter.

More can undoubtedly be said about how much the Jews of Ezekiel's day understood of the *typical* significance of the temple and the altar and the burnt offerings. Suffice it to say, for now, that they well understood that this house was *God's*. They knew their history. They knew that at the dedication of this building "the glory of the *LORD* filled the house" (II Chron. 7:2), and that when their fathers "saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the *LORD* upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshiped" (7:3). They understood that Jehovah God was pleased to dwell with His people, in this house, in the Holy of Holies, behind the veil.

And they understood why access to this place was so restricted—only the *priests* in the inner court; only priests by appointment in the Holy Place; and only the high priest, once a year, with the blood of atonement, in the Most Holy Place. It was because their God, the only God, was *holy*. And they were not. The altar of burnt offering, and its location, spoke to them of that. No access of *sinner*s to *God*, but by way of the *altar*, the *sacrifice*, the *blood*, the blood of *atonement*. And the people of Israel were not left simply to *surmise* that that was the case. In Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers there is repeated reference to the need for and the way of atonement for sin. Leviticus 17:11, for example: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."

Now, what does Ezekiel see transpiring in the inner court of the house of Israel's God? He sees twenty-five men, likely representatives of the twenty-four courses of priests (cf. I Chron. 24:1-19), with the high priest at their head. The twenty-five men stand between the altar and the door of the temple. They have their "*backs* toward the temple of the Lord." They have "*their faces* toward the east." And they "*worshipped the sun!*" (Ezek. 8:16).

Ezekiel did well, at that moment, to take note of their very *position*. Backs—to the temple. Faces—to the sun. That spoke volumes about what they were *doing*. "For," as Calvin writes in his commentary on this passage in Ezekiel,

When they turned their back upon the sanctuary, they made a laughing-stock of God. It hence appears, that

they were of so daring a front, that they openly boasted in their superstitions, and purposely polluted God's temple...when they turn their back, this is not only a foul denial, but a contempt of God, as if they had said, that he was unworthy of their respect.... Now we know this to be a sign of lawful adoration, when the faithful turned their eyes to the sanctuary and the ark of the covenant, but when they turned their backs upon it, there is no doubt that they professedly wished to boast in a contempt of God and the law.

But, we might ask, did they, those priests, really *do* that? Had they 'given up' on Jehovah, abandoned His worship, and turned instead to idols? When they turned their backs to the temple, were they really "resolvedly forgetting it and designedly slighting it and putting contempt upon it"? (Matthew Henry).

Truth is, if the twenty-five priests had been able to read John Calvin's and Matthew Henry's characterizations of their worship, they would have vigorously denied both of them. "What do you *mean*," they would have asked, incredulously, "that we have contempt for the temple, and for God, and for God's law? Do you not know how we burn incense to the God of heaven in the temple's Holy Place? Do you not know that we offer all of the required sacrifices at the altar of burnt offering in the temple's inner court? And all of it exactly how, and where, God's law requires! Far from holding them in *contempt*, we honor God, and His law, and His house!"

Ezekiel would not have doubted that for a minute. He had been captive in Babylon for six years already, but he must have remembered Jerusalem and its temple worship well. He did not have to be told that these priests could make room for an "image of jealousy" at the gate of the altar, allow women to weep for Tammuz at the door of the outer court, themselves worship the sun as they stand between the altar and the entrance to the sanctuary—all the while being scrupulous in their careful adherence to every letter of the laws relating to the rituals of the Jewish religion—willfully oblivious to the incompatibility of the latter with the former. Far better, it would have been, had they left the worship of God out of the mix.

One cannot help but wonder how the worship of Jehovah God could ever have come to this. Especially so, perhaps, when we consider the clarity with which God had made known His will with respect to that worship. We think, for example, of Deuteronomy 17, which is but one example of many:

If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the *LORD* thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the *LORD*

thy God, in transgressing his covenant, and hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded; and it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and inquired diligently, and, behold, it be true, and the thing certain, that such an abomination is wrought in Israel: then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, even that man or woman, and shalt stone them with stones, till they die (17:2-5).

What, we would ask, could possibly be more clear? Worship of the sun was, *specifically*, declared by God to be an *abomination*—an abomination that, when it is practiced secretly by a common Israelite, must be searched out, investigated, and punished by *death*. And what does Ezekiel see now? Not just common people but the *priests*; not only right out in the open but in the inner court of the house of God; and not in some obscure corner of the inner court but between the porch of the sanctuary and the great altar of burnt offering, with their *backs* to the temple...*worshipping the sun!* How, we ask, could it ever have come to this in...Judah? How can we account for a blindness that surpasses stupidity?

The answer, we think, can be found in a prophecy of Isaiah. A familiar prophecy it is, made so, perhaps, because of its application by Jesus to the Jews of His day. “Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?” the scribes and Pharisees asked, “for they wash not their hands when they eat bread” (Matt. 15:2). Talk about scrupulosity! The leaders of the Jews at the dawn of the new dispensation were strict in their adherence not only to the ceremonial laws laid down by Moses but to a host of traditions of men besides. But that adherence *defined* their holiness. They thought to honor God... by an outward show. “Naked,” “frigid” ceremonies, Calvin calls it in another place. Their profession was outward. Their service was of the lips. Their godliness was feigned. Holiness, to them, was not integrity of heart, but the practice of external ceremonies. One thinks immediately of the second commandment. “The sum therefore,” writes Calvin in his comments on Matthew 15:7-8, “is that the worship of God is spiritual, and only that is pleasing to Him when there is inward sincerity of heart, so that they are hypocrites who set holiness in external display.”

Hence, Jesus’ application to the scribes and Pharisees of the words of Isaiah: “Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias

prophecy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me” (Matt. 15:7-8).

A ‘prophecy’ it was, in the sense that the condemnation applied with equal force to succeeding generations of Jews; but Isaiah was targeting, first of all, the Jews of his own day. And the words are telling. They are found in Isaiah 29:13-14: “Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: therefore [and notice, now, especially this], behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.”

“I will do a marvelous work among this people.”
“The wisdom of their wise shall perish!”

What is it, then, that accounts for the folly in Israel—the folly, that is, that could be seen in the day of Isaiah, and of Jeremiah, and of Christ? And that can be seen in our own day?

Ezekiel must have been appalled by what he saw, in vision, in the temple of God. Who would *ever* have thought it possible that there would *ever* be, in the temple of God in Jerusalem, women prostituting themselves for Tammuz, elders burning incense to every god under the heavens printed on every square foot of the walls

of a secret chapel, priests doing homage to a heavenly luminary? Well, Isaiah provides the answer. God did it.

“This stupidity,” writes Calvin, “is a just punishment which the Lord inflicts on them on account

of their unbelief.”

“They are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of a deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered” (Is. 29:9, 10).

Not, says Isaiah, just the common people, those who, it might be thought, would be more likely to be persuaded of such folly, but the *prophets* and the *rulers*, “whose duty it was to enlighten others, will be altogether senseless so as not to know the road, and, being covered with the darkness of ignorance, will shamefully go astray, and will be so far from directing others that they will not even be able to guide themselves” (Calvin).

Next time: My people love to have it so.

...the worship of God is spiritual, and only that is pleasing to Him when there is inward sincerity of heart, so that they are hypocrites who set holiness in external display. [J. Calvin on Matt. 15:7-8]



When thou sittest in thine house

Rev. Arie denHartog, minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches

News from Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore (CERC)

We count it a special privilege to be in Singapore working among our sister church here for a few months. This is all happening in the years of our retirement—pretty amazing! May the Lord strengthen us for this great task. We have over the years of our ministry spent about ten years serving the church of Christ in Singapore. Our close bond with the saints who are her members includes many who were with us from the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s, as well as those whom the Lord has added to the church over more recent years during the ministry of my colleagues. It is such a great joy to see many grown up now in profound faith and steadfast knowledge and understanding of Reformed doctrine after years of being part of the church.

Interesting and exciting things continue to take place in the church, some of which are quite unusual compared to events taking place regularly in PRC local congregations in the U.S.

Attendance at both of the worship services, including the afternoon service, is good, greatly improved since years back. The audience is almost 100% Asian. The members are now of all ages. The excellent biblical tradition of two well-attended worship services is established in CERC. I know of no other Reformed church in Singapore having this and, in fact, less and less in America and in other places of the world have this great blessing of God continuing from year to year among them. By God's grace this greatly helps to make a church strong.

What is especially heartening to see now is the presence of a number of young families of the second generation. There are rich times of fellowship between the morning and afternoon services. Lunch is prepared and provided by church members. Most people stay around. Little children are running around through the crowds. To the eyes of a Westerner these children are particularly precious. There are also young people of teenage years and older who have grown up in the church. They are enjoying fellowship together in the hallways.

There is a maze of smaller rooms available for special

classes, the minister's study, the meeting of the church session, and other purposes, including a church library.

The Heidelberg Catechism is regularly preached in the afternoon services. Between and after the two worship services catechism classes are being taught to the little ones as well as to the teenagers. Classes include covenantal instruction in the Heidelberg and in Essentials of Reformed Doctrine. This may sound so much like the PRC churches in America that it is hardly newsworthy. But what is unique about this is the fact that this is happening in a Reformed church that God raised up on the mission field. This is the exciting life of a Reformed church that has been in existence for a few decades now, and where God's blessing of the truth of the covenant is so evident.

Marriages between members who have grown up in the church are now common. I officiated at one a couple of weeks ago. I am giving pre-marriage classes to two couples of the church who have wedding plans in the near future. I could write a lengthy part of this article about some of the unique features of the most recent wedding celebration. It was a very simple wedding. The church auditorium was full. The couple being united in marriage sat down in front for most of the ceremony. The Reformed Marriage Form with its excellent biblical instruction on marriage was read. After the ceremony, the newly-weds went up on the platform and together made a beautiful, sincere expression of thanks to God for the training of God-fearing parents and for a number of fellow Christians who had been especially instrumental in their lives as they were growing up and preparing for marriage. What was most heartening to ourselves, and ought also be to all the PRCA ministers who have spent large amounts of time laboring in CERC, was this part of the expression of thanks. There were copious amounts of hearty praise and thanks given for all the work of the PRCA in the last years, and what an influence this work had been in the lives of young couple to build them up in the knowledge and doctrines of the Reformed faith. Can anyone who has been here

serving in the ministry ask for greater reason for joy and thanks than to hear such an expression from a godly couple of the church?

Many things are happening during the week between the Lord's days. These include meetings of cell groups for Bible study and fellowship in several places all over Singapore. Sherry and I have enjoyed visiting these groups, and in some cases I have temporarily taken over the leadership. Given the situation with transportation from one part of the island to the other and the fact that many do not own cars, the cell groups function well.

Saturdays are catechism days. There are also youth meetings, which are led mostly by specially gifted, more senior and mature young people, who seem to be doing a great work in leading the young people of the church.

During the week there are pastoral visits at our apartment. As is true in all of our churches in the U.S., some of the individuals and families here are facing great struggles and trials in their lives. We are thankful that they are coming for counsel and encouragement, and we pray for wisdom from God to be able to give this as a pastor. Many are seeking practical guidance from the Word of God for real and sometimes deeply anguishing problems common among Christians in this world.

An aspect of the life of the church that not all of our readers may be aware of is that every Lord's day there is a group of mostly elderly saints who can only understand the preaching of the Word when it is interpreted into the Chinese by fellow members of the church gifted to do this. Having existed now for as long as it has in the providence of God, CERC has elderly saints who are members of the church. Another example of the special dimensions of the work here took place a couple of weeks ago with an elderly saint who is now more than one hundred years old. She had a typical fall that often happens to the elderly, leaving her quite badly bruised. We visited her in the hospital with a Chinese language interpreter. What warmed our hearts particularly was to witness the joy of faith in this elderly woman. When the Word of God was read, there was such evidence of a true faith and confidence in the promises of salvation. We ought not neglect such evidences of the working of God's grace in the lives of His people, in this case elderly saints near the end of their earthly pilgrimage.

The session (which we in U.S. call the consistory) meets regularly at least once a month and is obviously active in the leadership, oversight, and guidance of the church. There is a schedule for pastoral visits, so that all the homes receive a visit from the elders at least once a year or more. Along with all the work that a session has to perform in the church are labors connected with the overseeing of a missionary and his labors in

India. Anyone who has been involved in such work in a local congregation knows how much labor is actually involved in overseeing a mission work in a foreign country, and how many serious direction-setting decisions have to be made.

At our last session meeting three fathers appeared to request baptism for their infant children. This too is a regular event in the life of CERC.

Besides all the activities on-going during the Lord's day, there is a pre-baptism class in the afternoon attended by nine individuals, most of whom are preparing themselves for either baptism or confession of faith and church membership. This is another exciting activity in the life of the church that we are directly involved in; and it has such beautiful promise of the continued growth of the church, not only from the generations of the covenant, but also as God gathers His elect people in various wonderful ways from outside the church.

Especially those who over the years have been members of a large PRCA congregation may wonder why I am even telling you all of this, since most of these things are so common in our local churches. Perhaps the best response is that the very fact that these things are regularly taking place in the CERC is exactly the reason why they are so exciting, keeping in mind that the church here was raised up by God and preserved in Singapore for all these years.

With thanksgiving to God, we can say that there is a beautiful church here. Not one that is without weaknesses and problems. CERC has profound appreciation for the work of the PRCA that now has gone on so many years. She looks for and needs our continued help and guidance, especially over the next few years. There is an earnest prayer being heard continually in CERC for another minister-on-loan to help her yet for the next few years in the providence of God. It can be said that no Reformed church can imagine herself to have arrived, and not have a great ongoing need to grow and become stronger in the truth. Building strong covenant families usually takes as long as one generation or even longer.

By the Fall of this year CERC will have two of its young men as students in the PRC seminary in GR training for the ministry. This is rightly considered to be a tremendous thing for the future of CERC, giving her hope of having two of her own native ministers in a few more years, D.V. Our Theological School and its professors can be greatly encouraged that the Lord should use them for such great things.



Things which must shortly come to pass

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

Chapter five: Premillennialism (19)

Fundamental Reformed critique of premillennialism

Previous article in this series: March 1, 2018, p. 255.

“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.”

Galatians 3:16

“For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.... In Isaac shall thy seed be called.... The children of the promise are counted for the seed.... That the purpose of God according to election might stand.... As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”

Romans 9:6-13

Introduction

Dispensational premillennialism is false doctrine concerning the truth of the last days, or end. It is false doctrine in its fantasy of a rapture of the church off the earth and out of history at any moment, importantly before the rise and raging of Antichrist.

It is false doctrine in its assurance of members of the church that they will escape the great tribulation of the last days under the Antichrist.

It is false doctrine in positing a distinct age of history following the present age—a literal millennium of a thousand years—during which age the Jews will be an earthly kingdom of God, ruling over all nations with physical power and steeped in material bounties.

This false eschatology is no minor matter. It not only fails to prepare the members of the church for the coming conflict with the beasts of Revelation 13, but it also blinds the churches to the signs of the rising of the beast out of the sea and the establishing of his antichristian kingdom as this rising takes place before our very eyes at the present hour.

Dispensational premillennialism makes the kingdom of Christ an earthly, physical, carnal entity—a restored nation of Israel, whose citizens are racial Jews. Thus,

premillennialism obscures the reality of the Messianic kingdom as spiritual and heavenly. Premillennialism ignores the gospel truth that all believers have been “translated into the kingdom of his [God’s] dear Son” (Col. 1:13). This truth clearly implies that the Messianic kingdom is a present reality in the world, indeed, was a reality on earth in the apostle’s day. It implies as well that the kingdom is spiritual, not carnal, heavenly, not earthly, for there was no physical, earthly kingdom of God in the world when the apostle wrote these words. Nor is there such a carnal kingdom of Christ on earth today, when the elect of God are still being translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. Colossians 1:13 does not only imply, but also expressly declares that the citizenry of the Messianic kingdom are mainly Gentile believers, not racial Jews, for those of whom he spoke in the text were Gentile Christians.

Ignorant of the truth of the kingdom of Christ, premillennialists do not live in the awareness that the life of the New Testament Christian is kingdom-life, that he is called to battle on behalf of the kingdom of Christ against the kingdom of Satan, and that his high office and honorable position is that he is a citizen of the Messianic kingdom of God.

Dispensational premillennialists deny the confession of the Heidelberg Catechism that the Gentile Christian today is the citizen of the Messianic kingdom and that he mainly lives the life of the kingdom, not by exercising physical dominion over the ungodly and by enjoying to the full the material goods of an earthly kingdom, but by fighting against sin and Satan. Premillennialists also deny the teaching of the Catechism that the reign of all believers, not only racial Jews, will be “hereafter,” that is, after history ends, and that this reign of Christians over all creatures will be eternal, not merely for a thousand years.

Why art thou called a Christian?

Because by faith I am a member of Christ, and thus a partaker of his anointing; in order that I also may confess his name, may present myself a living sacrifice of thankfulness to him, and may with free conscience *fight against sin and the devil in this life, and hereafter, in eternity, reign with him over all creatures.*¹

Even more reprehensible is premillennialism's disparagement of God's beloved, honored, glorious church and of God's grand work of gathering the church. Premillennialism disparages the church and her gathering in favor of the fictitious, supposedly future kingdom of Jews and of the imaginary work of God of restoring earthly Israel as the kingdom of God in the world.

These are elements of premillennialism's false doctrine of the last things—its eschatology.

How radically different this view of the end is from that of the Reformed faith and how seriously in error is this view are evident on the very surface of the premillennial doctrine of the last things.

Two heresies

Involved in this popular false doctrine of the last days, and basic to it, are especially two heresies. A “heresy,” as I use the word here, is worse than a false doctrine, evil and dangerous as a false doctrine is. A heresy is a corruption of the gospel at its very heart.

The two heresies of premillennialism are the denial of Jesus Christ and the rejection of divine election.

Denial of Jesus Christ

Dispensational premillennialism denies Jesus Christ.

It denies Jesus Christ in its own peculiar way.

But the denial of Jesus Christ is real, and culpable.

Dispensational premillennialism does not deny the person and work of Jesus Christ outrightly, as do the modernists. Premillennial theologians confess that Jesus is both God and man; that He died to atone for sin; that He rose bodily; and that He will come again in the body, indeed, will come again a *couple* of times.

Nevertheless, premillennialism denies Jesus Christ by its rejection of the gospel truth that salvation in the age of the Old Testament was by faith in Jesus Christ, that is, faith that had the coming Messiah as its content. Salvation in the Old Testament, according to dispensational premillennialism, was by faith in God, apart from the coming Messiah, who is Jesus. The coming Christ was not the “object” and “content” of the faith of the

Old Testament saints. Dispensationalism is shut up to this monstrous heresy by its insistence on the essential difference between the Old Testament dispensation of law and the New Testament dispensation of grace. The covenant with Israel was not the “covenant of grace,” the content of which was the promised Messiah, who is Jesus. It was not substantially the same covenant in Jesus Christ that embraces elect believers and their children in the New Testament.

Charles Ryrie, who now presents himself as a more “moderate” proponent of premillennialism, denies that the “conscious object of the faith of Old Testament saints [was] Christ.” The object and content of the faith of the Old Testament saints was God—God apart from the Mediator between God and man, the Messiah, who is Jesus. Ryrie quotes with approval the quasi-creedal statement of Dallas Seminary:

We believe that it was historically impossible that they [Old Testament believers] should have had as the conscious object of their faith the incarnate, crucified Son, the Lamb of God (John 1:29), and that it is evident that they did not comprehend as we do that the sacrifices depicted the person and work of Christ.²

Ryrie charges that the Reformed faith is “guilty of superimposing Him [Jesus Christ] arbitrarily on the Old Testament.” The same guilt attaches to the “concept of salvation through faith in Christ” as the only way of salvation in the Old Testament.³

Jesus, *an arbitrary superimposition!*

So also, the truth of *salvation by faith in Christ!*

The Reformed faith condemns this denial of Jesus Christ as Mediator of the one covenant of grace for Old Testament believers. Exactly with regard to Jesus Christ as the necessary Mediator of all salvation and exactly with regard to one's knowledge of this Mediator and trust in Him as the object, content, and way of gracious salvation, the Heidelberg Catechism confesses that believers, in all ages, “know” the Mediator

from the Holy Gospel, which God himself first revealed in Paradise, afterwards proclaimed by the holy Patriarchs and Prophets, and foreshadowed by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law, and finally fulfilled by his well-beloved Son.⁴

There has never been gracious salvation apart from the Mediator, Jesus the Christ. There has never been knowledge and confidence of salvation by a God of

2 Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), 122-125.

3 Ryrie, 187.

4 Q&A 19, in Schaff, *Creeds*, 3:313.

1 Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 32, in P. Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 3:318 (emphasis added).

grace apart from knowledge of and trust in the Mediator, Jesus the Christ.

To affirm salvation apart from the Messiah is blatant denial of Jesus Christ. This alone ought to cause the premillennialist to regard his theology with horror, to drive him to his knees in repentance for his gross, doctrinal sin, and to renounce his Christ-denying theology root and branch.

In addition, premillennialism denies Jesus Christ by denying that Jesus Christ has such preeminence, such honor, such centrality in history, according to the eternal counsel of God, that He determines what the kingdom of God is and who the citizens of the kingdom are.

This, I will demonstrate in the next article in this series.

(to be continued)



Ministering to the saints

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

Psalter revision: Proposed new songs for Psalms 1-40

Previous article in this series: April 1, 2018, p. 301.

I understand that some of my recent articles may be “information overload.” I want to give information, but do not want to overload. To help understand this article, it will probably be best that you have your Psalter open.

In my last article I introduced two kinds of lyrical changes that the interdenominational Psalter revision committee is proposing for Psalms 1-40 (Psalter numbers 1-112): changes to existing lyrics and changes that involve adding new lyrics to existing songs.

I ended that article by saying, “Next time, I intend to introduce the three new selections being proposed for Psalms 1-40.” In fact, not three, but five completely new selections are being proposed for Psalms 1-40. I am sorry for my mistake; my goal is to provide you with facts, and mistakes do not serve that goal.

Five proposed new songs

As of its last meeting (February 2018), the committee is prepared to recommend that our churches adopt five new songs in the section from Psalms 1-40. The five new songs would be numbered 26A, 28B, 32A, 33B, and 38A. By now I trust my readers understand that this means they will be versifications of Psalms 26, 28, 32, 33, and 38. Each of these songs will be complete versifications of those Psalms; one of the goals of the

28B To Thee, O LORD, I Cry

vs. 1-9

1. To Thee, O LORD, I cry; my Rock, Do not be deaf
2. Re-ceive my plea for mer-cy, LORD, As now I call
3. O drag me not a-way with those Who prac-tice wick-
4. Re-pay them for their e-vil deeds Ac-cord-ing to

to my la-ment. If Thou art si-lent
to Thee for grace, I lift my hands to
ed-ness and sin; Who kind-ly on their
their wick-ed-ness; Bring back on to them their

I be-come Like those that to the pit de-scend.
Thee in prayer And look to Thy most ho-ly place.
neigh-bors speak But har-bor mal-ice deep with-in.
just re-ward And pun-ish their un-right-eous-ness.

5. «Because they slight the works of God
And treat his actions with disdain,
In justice he will tear them down
And never build them up again.

7. My heart uplifted leaps for joy;
My thanks to him I gladly sing.
«The LORD God is his people's strength,
A saving fortress for his king.

6. «Blest be the LORD, for he has heard
The plea for mercy which I made.
The LORD God is my strength and shield;
I trust in him who sends me aid.

8. «O, save Thy people, Thine own flock;
And bless Thy heritage, dear LORD.
Attend them with a shepherd's care
And carry them forevermore.

Thomas Tallis
Tallis' Canon
L.M.D.

committee is always to have one complete versification of a Psalm, and two when possible. The letter after the Psalm number (26A, 28B) not only indicates that this will be the first or second selection of a particular Psalm, but also whether the committee judges it to be the most complete versification of that Psalm in our Psalter. The “A” selections are more complete than the “B” selections.

I have space to reproduce only three of these five proposed Psalms. Let me comment first about the two that I will not reproduce here.

Our Psalter has two selections from Psalm 26: Psalters 69 and 70, each of which treat the entire Psalm. Psalm 26 has 12 verses. Psalter 69 has seven stanzas, while Psalter 70 has five. This indicates that Psalter 70 treats the Psalm less completely than does Psalter 69. But even Psalter 69 is not as complete a versification as we would desire. The committee recommends omitting Psalter 70 (the least complete versification of Psalm 26), designating Psalter 69 as 26B, and adding as 26A a song from the Reformed Presbyterian Church (North Amer-

ica) Psalter entitled “Lord, Vindicate Me.” Its tune, “Kingsfold,” is not overly familiar to us, but neither will it be difficult to learn.

Our three selections from Psalm 33 (Psalters 85-87) treat that Psalm section by section; together, they are a complete versification of the Psalm. The committee recommends combining these three to the tune of Psalter 86, and designating it 33A. Selection 33B will be a song from the United Reformed Church of North America (URC)/Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) Psalter-Hymnal entitled “With Joy Let Us Sing to the Lord.” Its tune, “Ash Grove,” is often paired with the thanksgiving hymn “Let All Things Now Living a Song of Thanksgiving.”

The other three songs are printed in this article. Our Psalter currently has only one versification of Psalm 28 (Psalter 75, which will become 28A), so 28B is a second complete rendition of the Psalm. The tune, “Tallis’ Canon,” is familiar; it is often paired with the hymn “All Praise to Thee, My God, This Night.”

Because Psalters 83 and 84 treat Psalm 32 section by section, the committee recommends adding another selection from Psalm 32 (32A) which will be a complete versification of the Psalm. Its tune is entitled “Resignation.” Several tunes have that name; our tune to Psalter 121 does. But the tune to 32A will be a different tune, one which is often sung to the words “My Shepherd will supply my need; Jehovah is His name.” *Psalters 83 and 84 will then become 32B and 32C.*

32A What Blessedness Belongs To Him

vs. 1-11

1. What bless - ed - ness be - longs to him Who tru - ly is for - giv'n,
 2. I lan - guished, si - lent in my guilt; My days were filled with groans;
 3. Thou par - don'st my in - iq - ui - ty And took my guilt a - way;
 4. In - struc - tion I will give to you, And teach the way to go.
 5. The sor - rows of the wick - ed man In num - ber shall a - bound

For whom trans - ges - sions have been cleared, And cov - ered is his sin.
 Thy hand on me pressed day and night, And heat dried up my bone
 And there - fore while Thou may'st be found, Let god - ly peo - ple pray.
 My watch - ful eye will guide your steps; My coun - sel you will know
 But those who trust in God the LORD, His mer - cy will sur - round

How bless - ed is the one the LORD Ac - cus - es not of sin,
 My tres - pass - es to Thee I owned, Hide not my wick - ed - ness;
 The gush of tor - rents will not harm; Thou hid me, gave me peace
 Be not like sense - less mule or horse Which can not un - der - stand
 Be glad, you right - eous, shout for joy, And give the LORD your praise

The man with - out de - ceit and guilt, Whose heart is pure with - in.
 I said, I will be - fore the LORD Trans - ges - sions now con - fess.
 Thou keep - est safe, sur - round - ing me With songs of my re - lease.
 With bit and bri - dle must be curbed To fol - low your com - mand
 With up - right hearts, O saints of God, Your joy - ful songs up - raise!

Walker's Southern Harmony
 Resignation
 C.M.D.

38A LORD, In Thy Wrath, Rebuke Me Not

vs. 1-22

1. LORD, in Thy wrath, re - buke me not, Nor in Thine
 2. There is no sound - ness in my flesh; For Thou art
 3. Guilt ris - es up a - bove my head; Sins' heav - y
 4. Bowed down with trou - ble, grief and pain, All day I

an - ger chas - ten me. Deep - ly Thy ar - rows sink with -
 an - gry at my sin. There is no health with - in my
 bur - den weighs me down. Loath - some and fest' - ring are my
 mourn in deep dis - tress. Pain so se - vere con - sumes my

in; Heav - y, Thy hand weighs down on me.
 bones; Thine in - dig - na - tion burns with - in.
 wounds; LORD, for my fool - ish - ness I mourn.
 loins, There is no sound - ness in my flesh.

Griffin Hugh Jones
 Lief
 L.M.

Psalters 102 and 103 together give a full treatment of Psalm 38. The committee recommends *retaining both as 38B and 38C*, but adding as 38A a selection from the URCNA/OPC Psalter-Hymnal. Most will find the tune “Llef” unfamiliar, but it is an easy tune to play and learn. Its minor key makes it suitable to bring out the plaintiveness of Psalm 38.

Other new songs?

Perhaps the committee will recommend additional selections for Psalms 1-40. For one thing, the committee has not yet finally decided which Genevans (the songs found in our “Chorale Section”) to recommend for inclusion, but the Genevans of Psalms 6 and 19 are possibilities. These would be new for the PRC, but not

for the Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC) or Free Reformed Churches (FRC) (they are Psalter numbers 437 and 438 in the version of the Psalters that the HRC and FRC use). Nor would they be new to Reformed believers: they are called “Genevans” because the tunes were used in Calvin’s Geneva, and our Dutch forefathers put Dutch lyrics to those tunes.

The committee is also still looking for replacement tunes for some Psalter numbers. Psalter 18 (a rarely sung tune) is one example. The desire is to retain the lyrics, but put them to a different tune. However, if a good replacement tune is not found, the committee might propose an entirely new versification. *Might*. As of today, *not certain*.



Pertaining to the churches...in common— Domestic Mission Committee

Rev. Audred Spriensma, home missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches

Home missions: Casting our bread upon the waters

“Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days” (Eccl. 11:1).

A figure is used in this text, the figure of a farmer scattering seed upon the receding flood waters. The seed floats on the waters and slowly sinks into the muddy soil left behind. The seed is apparently lost! But not so, for our text promises that you shall find it after many days.

This figure of sowing seed is used often in the Bible for the spiritual sowing of the seed of the gospel. The soil is the hearts and lives of individuals and nations. The seed is the Word of God. And the Sower is Christ through His church. Now, it is especially the work of missions that I want to emphasize in this article, but this text is also applicable to many different callings. It could be parents teaching their covenant children, teachers in our good Christian schools, pastors and elders in catechism instruction, professors in the seminary, pastors and missionaries preaching and teaching, and the individual witness for which we as Christians have daily opportunity.

What is important to note in this text is that we have a command. It is not a mere suggestion or encouragement to be engaged in this activity. It is a command: “Cast thy bread upon the waters....” It may be difficult and we even might pull back from the command. Think of Jonah, who was commanded by God to preach to Nineveh, that wicked and enemy nation. Or think of the command to Jeremiah to preach to apostate Judah. It would land him in the bottom of a muddy cistern. But we neglect this command to our peril: it is a great sin against God who commands us and uses means for the salvation of others.

This command demands patience. The farmer must wait for the seed to sprout, wait weeks and months for the grain to grow and mature, and finally produce fruit that can be harvested. Similar to the farmer, the casting of spiritual bread takes patience, only much more. Notice what the Spirit says in verse 11: “thou shalt find it after many days.” What is demanded is diligence. We read in Ecclesiastes 11:6, “In the morning sow thy seed,

and in the evening withhold not thine hand.” It is so easy for us to postpone our activity, thinking that there will be a better time (v. 4). Rather, we must grasp the opportunities as the Lord gives them.

It is so easy for us to become discouraged because we do not see the spiritual fruit right away. In many occupations one is able to see the result of his or her labor quickly, whether that be a carpenter, housewife with daily chores, or a painter putting a clean coat of paint on drab, dirty walls. But parents sometimes do not see any fruit on their instruction with a son or daughter. A pastor might not see the fruit of his preaching. The missionary might not see much growth in a Bible study or mission field. “...After many days” requires much patience, diligence, and holy wrestling in prayerful dependence upon God. It is many days...for an unconverted son or daughter, in a difficult pastorate, or on a mission field that does not seem to grow. It might be finally in eternity that a child or parishioner or a neighbor comes to you and says, “Thanks for your testimony;” “Thanks for your labor;” “Thanks for your prayers.”

Why would a sovereign God cause “many days” for us to find fruit upon our labors? First, He is sovereign, free to do as He pleases, determining what the fruit is and when the fruit manifests itself. God is not bound by time. Second, He does all things for His glory. The man in John 9 was blind all his life so that when Jesus Christ came in His public ministry, He received glory in making the blind to see! There is a possible third reason. In waiting to give us fruit, God teaches us to walk in faith, not sight. “Lift your eyes to ME!” God says. We need faith in God’s promises, faith in the midst of difficulties. We need faith that God will give the field to labor in and that He will give the increase. We are to cast our bread upon the waters. We are humbled in our entire dependence upon the Lord. We read in Psalm 126, “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”

But God adds to the command a promise. And what a promise it is! We need to claim that promise. The promise gives life to the command and strength for the laborer. “Thou shalt find it.” We will find the abundant seed, the awesome fruit. It is the immutable covenant God who cannot lie that promises. None who have trusted in the Lord have done so in vain. None who have followed God’s promises have been disappointed. God fulfills His own Word in His own way and in His own time. Christ Jesus the Incarnate Word was planted in the earth. He died and rose again and with Him brings a great harvest of men, women, and

children, those who know and love and believe in Him.

So the Lord is saying to us as churches, “Trust me. My command will do its work. I will bless My own Word. My powerful, efficacious, saving Word is a power unto salvation to all who believe. Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.”

The above text is one of many texts that I have preached on in our churches to stir up zeal for our labors as a denomination. How do we cast our bread upon the waters? We do it by preaching, teaching, and making and following up on contacts that our churches have. I have had the privilege to preach in many of our churches in Classis East. Several of our churches have been conducting community Bible studies and several more churches are contemplating doing so. It is a joy to conduct or help our churches in this labor. The Domestic Mission Committee (DMC) has for thirteen months given pulpit supply to the Franklin Reformed Fellowship in Pennsylvania. Those who have gone there would try to make and meet more contacts in the area. The DMC and Byron Center PRC Council have recently received a request from the TULIP Fellowship in Florida to assist them with preaching and teaching. This is a small group in St. Petersburg, Florida. Their pastor has been diagnosed with cancer and will be undergoing chemotherapy. The Byron Center Council approved my going for three Sundays to preach and teach and to evaluate the possibility of further work in that area. I also received approval from my Council to look for mission possibilities in the inner cities of Grand Rapids and Holland. Therefore, I toured the Holland Rescue Mission and conducted a chapel service for the men.

Thank you to all the churches that have asked me to fill their pulpits. And I again express my willingness to work with any evangelism committee to set up Bible studies. As we obey God’s command to “cast thy bread upon the waters,” we are encouraged by His promise: “for thou shalt find it after many days.” In obeying this command, encouraged by His promise, in diligence and prayer we patiently wait upon the Lord to continue to open doors for us.

In Christ’s labors,
Missionary-pastor Audred Spriensma



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



Holland, Michigan: From Dutch Colony to Dynamic City, Robert P. Swierenga. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014. Three volumes; pages xxviii + 2618. Hardcover. \$150.00. [Reviewed by Douglas J. Kuiper.]

In three hefty volumes, Robert Swierenga provides us with a comprehensive and definitive history of the city of Holland, MI and its surrounding area.

He sketches the big picture in 9 chapters. The history begins in the late 1830s when the Congregationalist and Presbyterians began a joint mission work among the Indians, called the Old Wing Mission (chapter 1). Then comes the history of the Dutch settlements and the beginning of their Americanization (chapters 2-3). Chapters 20-23 treat the history from 1900 to 1960, and chapters 33-34 the history from 1960 to the present.

The other 25 chapters focus on specific aspects of life and society in Holland. Chapters 4-6 treat the history of Holland's churches, and chapters 7-9 that of public and Christian schools, and of higher education. Appendices 2 and 3 list each church and school in the city's history.

Chapters 10-11 are devoted to the subject of transportation—roads, railroads, airports, and the Port of Holland. Industry is covered in chapters 12-15, in detail. I am no industrialist, but I was intrigued to read of the variety of manufacturing in Holland, the number of industrial innovations that originated there, and the role that the “bonus committees” played in attracting industry. In these chapters is a miniature history of manufacturing in West Michigan.

Chapters 16 and 17 treat the history of farming and agriculture in the area, and the next two chapters the history of other shops and businesses. Appendix 5 lists almost every business that has been housed in Holland from its earliest days. Politics, public services, fire and police, parks and other city institutions, are the subject of chapters 24-27; chapters 28-32 cover the history of recreation and entertainment, clubs and societies, the arts, social services, and the newspaper.

As I said, these volumes are comprehensive and definitive. Anyone else who may have thought to write a history of Hol-

land up to the present may lay down his pen. The history has been written.

One cannot read 2,700 pages in one sitting, of course; but I found the volumes hard to put down, and always looked forward to the next free hour or two when I could resume my reading.

These volumes deserve a far more detailed review than I can give here. Let me give a few reasons why readers of the *Standard Bearer* might well find this book interesting.

First, chapters 2, 4, 5, 8, and 9 chronicle the beginning of the Reformed faith in Michigan, and the formation of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in 1857. One will find enough evidence here to assert that the formation of the CRC was church reformation, and in her earlier years the CRC was consciously striving to be distinctively Reformed and antithetical. One critique is to the point: Swierenga uses the word “schism” as a synonym of “secession” or “split” in referring to the formation of the CRC and the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) (188, 214, 218, and 270). I would argue that “schism” is not synonymous with “secession” or “split,” and that the formation of the CRC and PRC was not the result of schism.

Second, not only does Swierenga present a brief history of Holland PRC (270-271), but he also refers to Herman Hoeksema, whose first pastorate was in Holland's Fourteenth St. CRC. Swierenga mentions Hoeksema's rejection of common grace (252ff.). Later, without drawing attention to the fact that this was when Hoeksema was her pastor, he treats an aspect of this congregation's history when some members left Fourteenth Street because their support for public education was not appreciated (326). Then, in the chapter on World War I, he has a section on Hoeksema and the flag controversy (1526-1534).

Third, repeatedly imbedded in this history is biographical information about Albertus C. Van Raalte. As the pastor of the Dutch immigrants, he was expected to take the lead role in developing society, business, and industry. Consequently, he came to own much property, and he also financially backed numerous commercial endeavors. The outcome was not always happy. Here one must be charitable to Van Raalte, bearing in mind the situation of that day. Still, Swierenga's account repeatedly reinforced in my mind that a pastor must

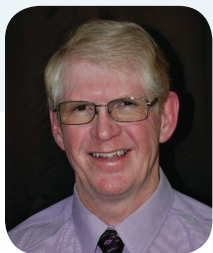
put aside any secular vocation or avocation that would hinder him doing the work of the pastorate.

Finally (because of space constraints), anyone who views labor unions as an evil invention will find plenty of supporting evidence in these volumes. If not the labor unions themselves, then certainly the mentality that underlies their existence affected Holland's industry negatively.

The set retails for \$150, though it can be obtained from other sources for less (check amazon.com or our seminary bookstore). Still, consider that an *investment* that will repay annual dividends of information. To buy this set is not like

spending \$100 at a restaurant or for admission to some recreational event, which buys you two hours of physical pleasure and a lifetime of fading memories; to buy this set is to have something worthwhile to read, later to reread, and always to consult, as long as one is alive and well.

To borrow the set is probably a more practical option for most. Especially if you live in West Michigan, look for it in your local public library or in your church library. If the library does not own it, personally tout the virtues of the book to the head librarian, and donate the first \$10 toward the purchase, with the understanding that you be the first to read it!



News from our churches

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

Trivia question

How many PRC congregations have hosted seminary interns? And which ones have hosted the most interns over the years? Answers later in this column.

Mission activities

On March 25, Rev. Daniel Holstege, missionary-pastor in the Philippines preached for the first time for a group named the "Bearers of Light Community Church" in Guiguinto, Bulacan. This group had prior contact with Provident Christian Church of Marikina where Rev. Holstege's labors are centered. For now we are only exploring the possibility of working with them, as they have asked to be taught about the Reformed faith.

On March 30 Rev. Holstege and his wife Leah hosted at their home in Antipolo City any who are attending Provident Christian Church of Marikina. It was a great time of food and fellowship!

Sharon Kleyn writes a monthly newsletter for the congregation of Doon PRC. Here are a couple of snippets from the March letter:

Saturday, and it's a hot one. I think we are into summer now. The days have been in the low 90s for quite a while and the nights are getting warmer too.

Monday, we had three ladies knock on our gate. They said they were from a church in Antipolo and wanted to tell me about "god the mother." We had a lengthy discussion together. They use one verse to prove God is a mother as well as a father—Genesis 1 where God says, "Let us make man in our image...male and female created he them." They

also believe in the Passover which they equate with the Lord's Supper (if I understood them right) and have their services on Saturday. They say that if you eat the Passover, you will be delivered from catastrophes, especially those at the end of the world. They left a flyer with me (I made sure I gave them a couple of ours as well), and I looked them up on the web after they left. They are a cult that started in Korea and now is worldwide. Interesting. But sad that they are so deluded.

Evangelism activities

The churches of West Michigan invited their members to attend a Spring lecture held on Friday, April 13 at Kalamazoo, MI PRC. Rev. James Slopsema spoke on: "Persecuted for Christ's Sake," answering questions such as these: Are the thunder clouds of persecution gathering for us? How can we prepare ourselves and our children for persecution? Refreshments were served after the speech.

Young people's activities

2018 PR YP Convention: August 13-17 (hosted by the five Midwest PR churches at Lake Geneva Christian Center in Alexandria, MN)

- Chaperone and nurse registration is now open at prconvention.com. Follow the instructions under the chaperone or nurse tab. If you have any questions, send or email to Chaperone@prconvention.com.

- Young People registration opened March 15! The hosting churches of the Midwest are excited to have the young people join them for an up-building week of fellowship and fun! For more information and to register, please visit prconvention.com.

• Bussing to convention from Michigan: Due to housing limitations in Iowa, the Iowa convention steering committee has asked that the people coming from Michigan go directly to the camp on Monday. Bussing is lined up to leave from the Grand Rapids area Monday morning around midnight in order to get to the camp in time for registration. Cost to ride the bus is around \$100. To register or for more information, contact Chris Dykstra at dykstra.chris@gmail.com.

The young people of the First PRC of Holland, MI are planning a wood-fired pizza fundraiser for May 12. Yum-m-m!

Hudsonville, MI Young People's Society hosted their third annual Co-Ed Wiffleball Tournament on April 21.

The young people of Immanuel PRC of Lacombe, Alberta, Canada held their annual Black-Tie Dinner on April 20.

Sister-church activities

Candidate Jonathan Langerak supplied the pulpit of the Limerick Reformed Fellowship of Ireland for a few weeks in April after preaching in the Covenant PRC of Northern Ireland on April 8. During this time Rev. Martin McGeown traveled from Limerick to the USA to be married. We wish Rev. McGeown and his new wife Larisa God's blessings in their married life!

Minister activities

On March 29 the congregation at Calvary PRC in Hull, IA

called Rev. Allen Brummel, pastor at Heritage PRC of Sioux Falls, SD, to be their next pastor. On April 15 he was led to accept this call. Heritage Council adopted this trio: Rev. G. Eriks, Rev. S. Key, and Candidate J. Langerak.

Denominational activities

Classis East is scheduled to meet May 9 at Faith PRC in Jenison, MI.

School activities

Hope PRC School Foundation will host their 6th annual Clay-Shoot Event on May 5.

Adams Christian School Foundation is planning their 29th annual ACS Foundation Golf Scramble for May 7 at Egypt Valley Country Club.

Trivia answers

Twenty-two (22) different PRC congregations have hosted seminary students as interns over the years. Two of those have hosted four (4) interns—Southeast PRC and Hudsonville PRC, both in Michigan. More trivia next time.

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

Announcements

Wedding anniversary

We give great thanks to God for blessing our parents, **Steve and Brenda Langerak** with 30 years of marriage on April 15, 2018. We are truly thankful for them, their wonderful example of a Christ-centered marriage, and their desire to build a godly home. “The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel” (Psalm 128:5, 6).

Daniel and Annie Langerak

Benjamin, Marie

Tyler and Laura Langerak

Hayden

Brianna, Aaron, Larissa, Stephanie, Brendan

Grand Rapids, Michigan

Wedding anniversary

On May 12, 2018, **Ivan & Lily Reid** will celebrate their 45th wedding anniversary. We are thankful for the years that their heavenly Father has graciously given them together, and for their godly example and steadfastness in the Reformed faith. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless them in their marriage now and in the years ahead. “O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart” (Ps. 36:10).

Their church family in the CPRCNI

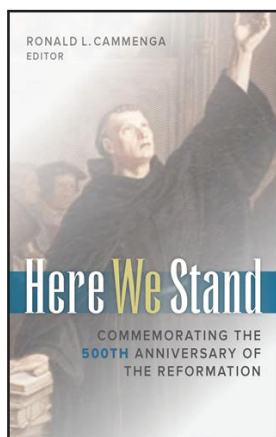
Teacher needed

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.

Announcements continued

HERE WE STAND Commemorating the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation

Ronald L. Cammenga, editor



This book commemorates the anniversary of a great event—the Reformation of the church in the sixteenth century. The content is based on speeches that were given at a 500th anniversary conference organized by the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary. The authors have since added significant

material to their chapters, thereby enhancing the value of this work. Readers will be edified by this book, whether they learn new information or they are reminded anew of the vital truths of the great Reformation.

Retail: \$14.25 | Book club: \$9.26

To order this book, visit

www.rfpa.org, phone (616) 457-5970, or email mail@rfpa.org.



REFORMED
FREE PUBLISHING
ASSOCIATION

Call to Synod!!

Synod 2017 appointed Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church, Byron Center, MI the calling church for the 2018 Synod.

The consistory hereby notifies our churches that the 2018 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, June 12, 2018 at 8:00 A.M., in the Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church.

The Pre-Synodical Service will be held on Monday evening, June 11, at 7:00 P.M. Rev. S. Key, president of the 2017 Synod, will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the consistory before the service.

Delegates in need of lodging should contact Mr. Mike Elzinga (clerk@byronprc.org). Phone: (616) 328-2753.

Consistory of Byron Center PRC
Mike Elzinga, Clerk

Reformed Witness Hour

Rev. Rodney Kleyn

May 6 “Our Ever-Living Intercessor”

Hebrews 7:25

May 13 “The Praiseworthy Woman”

Proverbs 31:10-31

May 20 “The Pouring Out of the Holy Spirit”

Acts 4:1-4

May 27 “The Intercession of the Holy Spirit”

Romans 8:26, 27