

The Standard Bearer

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Jesus: The Forerunner into the Sanctuary

Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Hebrews 6:19-20

Forty days after His resurrection Jesus was taken by God from the earth into heaven, where He resides in glory until He will come again at the end of the world.

Many churches of the Reformed tradition will soon gather in public worship to commemorate this glorious event.

The ascension of Jesus is described in the passage for this meditation. Jesus, who has been made a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec, has “entered into that within the veil” as our Forerunner. This refers to His ascension.

And how important this is for us! Jesus is described as our hope. All our hopes for the future are inseparably connected to Him. And so when through His ascension Jesus entered into “that within the veil,” He did so as our hope. And that hope serves as an anchor of our

soul, keeping us from drifting out into the sea of sin and destruction.

Priest Forever after the Order of Melchisedec

In chapter 7, the book of Hebrews compares the priesthood of the house of Aaron to that of Melchisedec.

In Old Testament Israel God appointed the sons of the house of Aaron to serve as priests in the tabernacle and later the temple. With the help of the Levites they led Israel in the worship that Jehovah God had ordained for His house with the multitude of sacrifices, feast days and ceremonies.

In contrast to the priests of Aaron’s house, there was Melchisedec.

We read of Melchisedec in Genesis 14, where we learn that Melchisedec was priest of God and king of Salem, which later was named Jerusalem. Melchisedec met Abram returning home from the slaughter of the kings and the rescue of Lot. Abram gave to Melchisedec a tenth of the spoils of war.

The emphasis of the book of Hebrews is that Jesus Christ is Priest of God after the order of Melchisedec rather than that of Aaron. The meaning is that Jesus’ priesthood more closely resembles the priesthood of Melchisedec. The point of emphasis is that, like the priesthood of Melchisedec, Jesus is Priest of God *forever*. Hebrews 7

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emphasizes that there is no record of any ancestors or descendants of Melchisedec. This points ahead to the priesthood of Jesus, which is *everlasting*. The priesthood of the members of the house of Aaron ceased when they died. But Jesus' priesthood continues forever. For after His death, He arose and lives to serve as our High Priest forever.

Entering into That within the Veil

As Priest of God forever, Jesus has entered into "that within the veil."

That which is within the veil refers to the holy of holies, into which the high priest of the house of Aaron entered annually on the great Day of Atonement to sprinkle the blood of atonement on the mercy seat.

Into this sanctuary Jesus has also entered as High Priest. However, Jesus did not enter into the earthly sanctuary. The earthly sanctuary served as a picture of heaven itself as the dwelling place of God. Into this heavenly sanctuary Jesus entered at His ascension.

And there He abides until He comes again.

Entered in As the Forerunner

A forerunner was a scout or spy that went on ahead to provide much needed information and even preparation for the army to enter into an area.

In much the same way, Jesus has ascended into the heavenly dwelling place of God as our Forerunner.

He has entered into heaven as our Forerunner not to serve as a spy or a scout but to assist us that we may enter in as He has. Jesus does this in His capacity as our High Priest in heaven,

First, He prepares a place for us, as He promised in John 14:2-3: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." As the ascended Lord, Jesus prepares a place for each one that the Father has given to Him. This place He has earned for them by giving Himself as a sacrifice for their sins on the cross. And when that place is ready, He returns to bring each one to His mansion in His Father's house.

Secondly, as our eternal High Priest, Jesus is making intercession for us. When the high priest of the house of Aaron would enter annually into the holy of holies, he would take the blood of atonement that had been shed

on the great altar and sprinkle it on the mercy seat. This was accompanied by prayers for the people.

This served as a picture of what Jesus does continually in the heavenly sanctuary as our eternal High Priest. Jesus prays for us, bringing our needs to the throne of God's grace. He bases His prayers on the perfect sacrifice of the cross where He shed His blood to pay for our sins. Through this intercession, we receive all the blessings of God's salvation, so that we are brought one day into the sanctuary of heaven to join Jesus by occupying the place He has prepared for us.

Entered in As Our Hope

In this connection, our passage speaks of our hope.

In the Bible the idea of hope is used in two different ways. Most often it is used to describe the anticipation, longing, and certainty that the believer has for eternal life in heaven. But sometimes it is used to describe the glory that the saints will receive and for which they hope.

The latter is the emphasis here.

Verse 18 of this chapter speaks of the hope that is set before us. This hope is the eternal glory that is ours in Jesus Christ, which we will receive one day as an inheritance. As our High Priest, Christ earned this heavenly glory for us by His perfect sacrifice for sin. As our High Priest, He is preparing our places in this heavenly glory. As our High Priest, Jesus even gives us a foretaste of this glory by showering us with heavenly blessings through His intercession for us.

Our eternal hope is inseparably connected to Jesus Christ, our eternal High Priest.

And so our passage speaks of our hope having entered into heaven. When Jesus ascended into heaven as our eternal High Priest, so did our hope. The thing for which we hope is now in heaven, in Jesus, awaiting us.

This distinguishes us from those who do not know Jesus Christ. The unbeliever also has hope. But his hope is only an earthly hope, a better tomorrow on the earth.

Our hope in Christ is an eternal hope of glory.

An Anchor of the Soul, Both Sure and Steadfast

And this hope serves as an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast.

An anchor is what keeps a ship from drifting out to sea and becoming lost.

In like manner, the hope we have in heaven in Jesus Christ serves as a spiritual anchor for our souls.

We are as a ship that is set on the sea of temptation, false doctrines, persecution, and hardship. All these things are like so many waves that would set us adrift into sin and certain destruction. And so we need an anchor to keep us from drifting. The anchor that keeps us from drifting away into ruin is the hope we have in heaven in Jesus Christ.

Our heavenly hope serves as such an anchor because it is so precious.


Something precious to someone will keep him from wandering off and losing it. The court often allows those who are charged with a crime to be set free on bail because failure to appear in court results in the forfeiture of the bail money. The fear of losing their children will often deter those in a broken marriage from leaving and seeking a divorce.

In like manner does our heavenly hope keep us from drifting away into sin and ruin. How precious is our heavenly hope! There is nothing greater than this hope that we have in heaven in Jesus Christ. It is worth endur-

ing all the temptations, persecution, and hardship that this life affords. Neither do the “benefits” of embracing the false doctrines of this world compensate for the loss of this hope.

And so it is that our heavenly hope serves as an anchor of the soul, to keep us from drifting away into sin and destruction. More accurately our hope is what Christ uses to keep us faithful to Him as we face the storms of life.

And this is a sure and steadfast anchor. An anchor that is not sure and steadfast may break, allowing a ship to drift off into disaster. But the hope that we have in heaven in Jesus Christ is sure and steadfast. Were our hope only the hope of this world, it could not hold us in the storms of life. But such a hope as we have in heaven is sure and steadfast.

This passage states a fact but implies a calling. The calling is to cling to the hope that is ours in Jesus Christ. And in the power of that hope remain faithful to the Lord, that you may one day claim that hope in Jesus Christ. 

EDITORIAL

PROF. BARRETT GRITTERS

The Pain and Profit of Protests

(A Preview of Synod 2017)

The April 15 deadline for submitting material for treatment at synod has passed.¹ The material for synod’s work has now been distributed to consistories. With the exception of a few items that may come through supplements, synod’s agenda is fixed. It is a large agenda, larger than average both in bulk and in the number of individual matters synod must deliberate. The subjects range from the mundane (but necessary) to the most profound and weighty. They vary from recommending

approval of one minister’s retirement to the examination of seven young men who seek that office. From financial support of needy churches and emeritus ministers to serious doctrinal controversy. The delegates (and their alternates, who may be called to sit in for one unable to attend) must gird up their loins for some very intense labor, and likely a couple of week’s work. Are the elder delegates fully aware of how long this synod could last?

What threatens to eclipse everything else on the agenda of Synod 2017 are ten protests and appeals synod must address. Ten objections to decisions made or actions taken

by Protestant Reformed assemblies. Although they are significant, even vital, the protests and appeals ought not to overshadow the other important work of our denomination’s annual broadest assembly.

Front and Center

After the opening worship service, the election of officers, and the business of appointing committees to offer “pre-advice,” synod will put front and center the momentous work of examining seven men who have finished their training in the seminary, the largest single class the PRC has ever examined. These men have been recommended for examination by the seminary pro-

¹ The annual PRC Synod will be held at Hudsonville PRC beginning June 13, D.V.

fessors and the Theological School Committee. They have studied for at least eight years preparing for this final gate through which they must pass to be declared candidates for the ministry of Word and sacrament in the PRC. Because there are seven, the unusual procedure approved at last year's synod will be to divide both students and delegates into two separate groups and have two exams running concurrently. Both groups of students will be examined in public, and both groups of delegates will see all the students. Separating the students in this way enables synod to finish the exam in almost half the time that the rules normally would require—even then, still most of three days—and still give the students an examination that will reveal their knowledge, abilities, and the convictions of their hearts. May God be with these good brothers!

The Normal and Expected

Nor may protests diminish the significance of all the *other* work of synod—the normal and expected work that synod does every year. That includes the denominational work of missions. Both the Foreign and Domestic Mission Committees report and bring recommendations. What is significant in the DMC's report is that there is so little to report. The PRC have no domestic missionary. What is significant in the FMC's report is how much: the massive amount of work in the Philippines, the efforts to obtain a third missionary for this field, and the good work of the two who are presently laboring. It will not be a surprise to hear that synod will even treat a recommendation (from

the Contact Committee) that the PRCA enter into official sister relations with the churches in the Philippines. May the Lord direct the synod so to decide, on the basis, of course, of unity in faith and life between the denominations.

The Committee for Contact with other churches has been tasked with a mountain of work and brings to the agenda a fair share of its bulk. Synod will examine our existing relations with the CPRC Northern Ireland, the CERC Singapore, the EPC Australia; and the labors to investigate relations with churches in Namibia, South Africa and Germany. The Contact Committee also brings a significant recommendation that, after a number of years as "Observers" at NAPARC (North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council), the PRC not join this council of churches. Membership in this organization, the Contact Committee judges, does not fit the guidelines established by Synod 2016. Finally, the CC brings recommendations with regard to synod's mandate to work on the revision of the Psalter.

The Theological School Committee (which oversees the life and work of the seminary) brings a mostly routine report. The notable exception is their presenting a nomination of three ministers from which synod will choose to appoint one to replace Prof. R. Dykstra. Prof. Dykstra, then, will retire when his replacement finishes his preparations to teach and can take on the full load of responsibility—as long as five years. The TSC presents the names of Rev. Garrett Eriks, Rev.

Douglas Kuiper, and Rev. Andrew Lanning. The churches may be reminded that a few years ago synod adopted a procedure for replacing the three professors that differs from the norm. The rule is that the year in which a professor reaches the age of 65, synod begins the process of his replacement. But since all three current professors are only 18 months apart in age, and it would not be wise to replace all three in such close succession, an exceptional process was adopted. The replacement process would begin early, be spread out, and a man would be called in 2017 for Prof. Dykstra (present age 63), in 2019 for Prof. Cammenga (present age 62), and 2021 for Prof. Gritters (present age 61). Pray that God will provide able and faithful men for our seminary.

Then there are other committee reports, none of them insignificant, such as the Catechism Book Committee that polled consistories for input on possible improvements in the catechism curriculum, the Emeritus Committee that oversees support of our retired pastors, the Finance Committee, the Board of Trustees, the Stated Clerk, the Student Aid Committee that supports our seminarians, and the reports from each classis.

The Painful but Profitable Protest

And then there is the matter of the painful but profitable (we hope) protest.

A protest or appeal, that is, an objection to a decision or action of an assembly, is painful in the very nature of the case. It indicates disagreement, serious and significant

disagreement. So, they are painful to write (one would imagine). And painful to treat. They are objections after all, weighty objections. Members of the church are *aggrieved* by some decision or action. For no one may write a protest or appeal unless he has been truly *wronged* by a decision.

But however painful protests and appeals may be to write and treat, their *presence* and *proper* treatment indicate that the churches are healthy and well. If protests were non-existent, or were treated with contempt and summarily dismissed, it would indicate a fatal illness. Without the right of protest and appeal, and without *serious* consideration of these objections, a Reformed church has lost her identity as Reformed. We have seen such churches in our contacts with small pockets of Reformed believers over the world. Some of them have been compelled to leave their denomination because, although the process of protest and appeal was still permitted in their denomination, the process had a “form of godliness,” but only the form.

Even if one disagrees vehemently with the content of a protest, he shows himself to be soundly Reformed if he willingly hears it and respectfully treats it. That’s the Reformed way.

That also happens to be one of the central articles of the Church Order of Dordt. In the PRCA Church Order, Article 31 reads, “If anyone complain that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to a major ecclesiastical assembly.”

It is worth reminding ourselves of all that in this 500th anniversary year of the Reformation. We are not Roman Catholic. That is, first, we believe that *the church can err*, even with a multitude of counselors in an assembly. The only church that believes itself to be infallible is the Romish church, and we are not Romish. We can err, and protests are permissible and sometimes necessary to correct an erring church.

Second, to be Reformed is to recognize *the position of the believer* in the church. The Roman Catholic Church taught that the common members did not have a voice. They were merely ‘laity,’ not ‘clergy.’ Thus, Rome locked out all objections and protests because of her embrace of two errors—the church is infallible and non-officebearers have no voice in the church.

Now, it may be said that the protests and appeals coming to the PRC Synod 2017 are, in fact, *mostly* from officebearers—ministers and elders. Nevertheless, the fact that a *few* come from those who hold no special office indicates that the PRC recognizes the prophetic and priestly office of all believers. We also recognize that consistories, classes, and synods can err. Maybe they have. Synod will take its time to consider the reasons proffered by the protests.

One more thing ought to be said about protests and appeals. They must be in proper form. Sadly, sometimes objections come to assemblies in such poor form that they almost defeat themselves. So the PRCA has adopted a short and helpful explanation of what pro-

tests and appeals are, and how they ought to be written. No one ought to write a protest without reading this explanation. Among other things, the explanation reminds protestants that:

- Synod’s deadline for material is April 15. Material presented after that will not be treated at that year’s synod.

- Protests and appeals must come to the next possible meeting of that assembly. For example, objections to decisions of Synod 2015 are not appropriate for Synod 2017.

- One must know and deal with the history of an issue before he or she speaks about it: “Previous classical and synodical decisions must be researched and referenced.”

- A protest must contain confessional and biblical grounds for its objection. Personal preference, bare logic, and mere emotion carry no weight.

- Brevity ordinarily is best.

- Humility, mutual respect, and love for the church and her King are above all necessary.


One other rule is not written but ought to be considered. I call it the rule of common sense: “Get help.” That is, a protestant should get advice from others before submitting a protest or appeal. Over the years, I have seen enough objections to assemblies fail miserably or falter badly, at least in part because of the obvious blind spots of their authors. Sometimes pride, or isolationism, drives a protestant to write a protest without getting someone else’s objective opinion. Others might assume that to speak to anyone about their protest would be violation of the rule of Ar-

ticle 31 to consider decisions “settled and binding” until they are changed. This is a laudable motive, in light of the fact that some people suppose that stirring up the denomination’s members to oppose a decision is not schism, which it in fact is. But asking for help from a person or two is not schism, nor a violation of Article 31’s mandate. And maybe there are other reasons some have not to get advice for their protest. But they ought to.

True, a written rule cannot be added to those already adopted: “You must seek advice.” But it certainly would help avoid some glaring problems in protests and appeals. Embarrassing jumps in logic, unwarranted assumptions, bold and un-

proven assertions, badly obscure and unclear sentences or paragraphs—sometimes not even understandable after three readings—are all enough to tempt even the most patient and reasonable delegate to dismiss the protest or appeal out of hand. Add to the mix that a document might be interminably long, and you could probably be convinced that synod should say more about length, more, that is, than the soft reminder that brevity is “in the best interests” of all involved. The counsel of the “multitude of counselors,” through whom is wisdom, should be sought *before* coming to the assembly. Even the most capable has a blind spot, or two.

The protests and appeals coming to Synod 2017 include an objection to a consistory’s decision allowing guests to the Lord’s table, a protest against the project of Psalter revision, and eight objections relating to a charge of false teaching. There is little more serious in the church of Christ than contention over doctrine. There is little more important than getting it right in the eyes of God. Synod has work to do, to understate the matter.

By the proper treatment of these objections, and all the other labors of Synod 2017, may God mercifully keep the PRCA in the way of truth and right. 

LETTERS

Images vs. Preaching

Although not usually inclined to express written comment, I do feel constrained to endorse Prof. R. Cammenga’s concluding paragraph to “Believing and Confessing” (March 1, 2017): “Away with these images and icons! God will have

His people taught, not by dumb images, but by the lively preaching of His Word.”

To which I say—Amen!

Alan J. Best
Cardiff, South Wales, UK 

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

MR. DON DOEZEMA

Upon This Rock (29)

Robbing Christ of His Honor (21)

“**B**ut when Christ could be pointed out *with the finger*,” as we quoted last time from John Calvin, “the Kingdom of God was opened.” We looked briefly at the extent to which that was true of old Simeon. Some thirty years later, John the Baptist was privileged to do so even more literally.

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Previous article in this series: April 15, 2017, p. 326.

I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.... He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose.... The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.... And I knew him not but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and

bare record that this is the Son of God. Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! (John 1:23-36).

Behold! The Lamb of God! What can this be but “an allusion to the ancient sacrifices of the Law” (Calvin). The *types*...touching *Antitype*. *God’s* Lamb. The sacrifice that would *accomplish* what the blood of thousands of bulls and goats could only *typify*. Which was the forgiveness of *sins*. The sins, in fact, of “the world.” Not just of the *Jews*, but of the elect of every nation. And in this man, Jesus, an eternal majesty—“He *was* before me,” says John (though in *time*, He came *after*).

And who was He but the “*Son of God*”! Thus does John bring his testimony to what Lenski calls the “grand climax”—by declaring “the essential reality that stands out for all time, unchanged and unchangeable.” The *incarnation*. The mystery of the gospel: “God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16).

Surely, it would seem, John the Baptist had it all together.

But *did* he?

Let’s explore that a little.

I like Lenski’s caution here, that “it is idle and nearly always misleading to ask regarding the Baptist or regarding his disciples, to what extent they comprehended the testimony here uttered. The Baptist spoke by *revelation*, he uttered thoughts which *towered above his own mind*. They still tower above *ours* although we have now the full New Testament light” (emphasis added). But I especially like that Lenski did not stop there. “And yet,” he continues, “as in the case of Simeon, Anna, and the long line of Old Testament prophets (Is. 52:15; 42:6, 7; 49:6, 7), the Baptist uttered no empty sounds as far as his own mind and heart were concerned, no riddles or enigmas without key or solution, but glorious truth which his own mind *beheld as truth*, absorbed and penetrated more and more, in which his own heart trusted with ever increasing joy.”

So...did John the Baptist *understand* what he spoke concerning Jesus? As we said concerning David’s utterance of Psalm 51:16, 17, we had better believe he *did*!

Peter, in his first epistle (1:10-12), testifies of ‘diligent searching’ on the part of the prophets of old. This is a

very interesting passage. For our purposes in this series, it warrants a closer look, which I would like to give it later. Suffice it now to say simply that, though the prophets can be said to have ‘searched’ also their *own prophecies*, this does not at all mean that, when those prophets spake or wrote prophetically, they could afterwards reflect on their words and think, “I wonder what *that* could mean!” What was revealed to them was, not mere *words*, but *truth*. Truth that they *understood*. Veiled truth, to be sure, and truth characterized by some *obscurity*, but truth that had *meaning*...for *them*. “*Repent ye*,” John preached, “for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 3:2). And, again: “Bring forth therefore fruits meet for *repentance*” (v. 8). John knew full well that that flew in the face of the thinking of the majority of Jews in his day. Certainly of the Pharisees and Sadducees, who were at that moment *in his audience* (v. 7). The Messianic kingdom of their vain imagination was one that would bring about the restoration of the glory days of David and Solomon. Political power. Earthly riches. No repentance needed for a kingdom like *that*. A kingdom that is a *spiritual* reality, on the other hand, is an entirely different story. That was what John the Baptist was preaching. And he did it with *conviction*. As he did also in his preparing of the way for a Messiah whose concern would be, not the power of *Rome*, but the power of *sin*. And who would be, in fulfillment of Old Testament types and shadows, *God’s* Lamb. All that, I say, John the Baptist preached with the power of *conviction*. Conviction that can come only from *understanding*.

But did John understand all of the *implications* of what he preached in the wilderness of Judea? He spoke of *God’s* *Lamb*. Surely, then, he must have anticipated *Calvary*, right?

Again, however, we must remind ourselves that the shadows that enshrouded the saints of old were not dispelled in a moment at the dawn of the new dispensation. They were lifted gradually...by the Master Teacher—and, more often than not, in direct connection with the event itself. *Death*, and *resurrection*, of the *Messiah*!? Think Luke 24:45-46: “*Then* [that is, *on Resurrection Sunday*] opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, *Thus* it is written, and *thus* it *behooved* Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.” And then, what about John

the Baptist's reference to the sin of *the world*? Think of Peter, on the housetop of Simon the tanner, having to respond to a plea from Cornelius, a Gentile centurion. Clearly, what the prophets, and the apostles after them, learned was by *revelation*. And what was revealed by the Spirit, in both dispensations, was exactly what they *needed to know—at the time*.

Likewise, the Baptist. John understood what was revealed to him. And what was revealed was all that he needed to know in order to prepare the way of the Lord, “the voice of one crying in the wilderness” (Matt. 3:3). What he did not understand, because he *did not need* to understand, was how all this would play out. How will this kingdom of Christ, which is spiritual, come to *manifestation*? John did not know. No doubt he expected that kingdom to come about by some visible display of power on the part of the Messiah. “The axe,” he said, is “laid unto the root of the trees” (Matt. 3:10). And, “every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.” In other words, some kind of decisive action on the side of righteousness, in opposition to the wickedness and carnality that prevailed in Jewry.

And then...that did not happen, from John's perspective. In short order, John found himself languishing in the dark dungeon of the castle of Machaerus, a prisoner of Herod Antipas. The carnality and wickedness anathematized by John in his preaching in the desert still prevailed. And the Messiah, the Messiah whose way John had faithfully prepared, the Messiah who, John had thought, would take decisive action on the side of righteousness, appeared to be...looking the other way! How can this *be*? So grossly incongruous this was, in the mind of John, that he needed Christ's assurance that things were not in fact going awry. Hence, the question put to Jesus by John, through a couple of his disciples: “Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?” (Luke 7:19).

How could Jesus set John's mind at ease? There was really only one way, and that was to ask what the *Scriptures* had to say.


As it happened, providentially, the disciples of John arrived on the scene when Jesus was in the midst of healing many people “of their infirmities and plagues” (Luke 7:21). That, really, was enough. “Go your way,” Jesus said to the disciples of John, “and tell John what things ye have seen and heard.” The facts, in other words, speak

for themselves. But, to make sure that John got the *point*, Jesus added: “...how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached” (v. 22). An unmistakable, and *deliberate*, reference to the prophecy of Isaiah: “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped...” (Is. 35:5-6). And: “he hath sent me...to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (61:1-3). Fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies concerning the kingdom of Christ. This is decisive. We can be confident that John received it as being so. And that he experienced, too, the ‘blessedness’ of those who are not offended in Jesus (Luke 7:23).

“What went ye out into the wilderness for to see?” Jesus asked the people still gathered around Him after the departure of John's disciples. “A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet” (Luke 7:24-26). How so? Because of his great work as the “messenger” who would go before the *very face of the Christ* (v. 27). As such, he stood head and shoulders above David, who could but behold dimly, enshrouded still as he was by shadows, at a distance. Some *1,000 years* distant. Whereas John had the great privilege of pointing out His *bodily presence*. Truly, from that point of view, as Jesus went on to say, “among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist” (v. 28).

And then this: “But he that is least in the kingdom is greater than he” (v. 28).

John would die just, as it were, outside “the kingdom.” On its very threshold. He would not live to see that great work of God's Lamb that would one day be proclaimed in the glorious gospel. Think of the contrast between the message of the greatest of the prophets of the old dispensation and the preaching of the apostles and of the ministers of the gospel in the new. John could only say “the kingdom of heaven is *at hand*.” The apostles could preach “Christ, and him *crucified*” (I Cor. 2:2). They were able to preach Christ, who “by one offering... hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:14). They preach Christ, “who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (I Cor. 1:30).

No wonder, then, that he that is least *in the kingdom* is ‘greater’ than the greatest of the Old Testament prophets! 

Revelation, Inspiration, and Infallibility (19)

“What Saith the Scripture:” The Bible’s Perspicuity

Introduction

“If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scripture than thou dost.” These are the words that William Tyndale (1494-1536), English Reformer and Bible translator, spoke to an ignorant Roman Catholic clergyman whom he was debating. By the grace of God he was able to accomplish the very thing to which he committed himself. And it cost him his life. After he was betrayed by a friend, he was arrested and jailed. Eventually he died a martyr’s death—after being strangled, his body was burned to ashes. Significantly, what Tyndale vowed arose out of a strong conviction of Scripture’s perspicuity. Once translated into his own language, every Englishman would not only be able to read the Bible, but also understand the Bible—down to the lowliest young field hand with the scantest education. He would be able to understand it because the Bible is perspicuous, that is, clear or understandable.

This year we are celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Sparked by Luther’s nailing of the Ninety-five Theses on the chapel door in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517, this coming October will mark the 500-year anniversary of the Reformation. One of the main doctrines restored to the church through the Reformation was the doctrine of Scripture—Scripture as the sole authority in the church and over the church. But one of the most important corollaries of the doctrine of Scripture was the perspicuity of Scripture. Quite obviously, Scripture could only function as an authority if it could be understood. It could only be the rule by which all teaching, preaching, and writing were to be judged, as well as the lives of people and clergy alike, if what was contained in Scripture was clear and understandable.

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We are at present studying the perfections of Scripture. The perfections of Scripture are those characteristics of Scripture that derive from the fact that Scripture is the Word of God. As the Word of God, Scripture shares in the perfections of God whose Word it is. Thus far, we have considered two perfections of Scripture: Scripture’s authority and Scripture’s necessity. The third perfection of Scripture is its perspicuity. The Latin expression (theologians love their Latin) is *claritas scripturae* or *perspicuitas scripturae*.

The Meaning of Perspicuity

We are helped in understanding the meaning of “perspicuity” by its synonyms. Words like “clarity” or “understandability” are synonyms of perspicuity. What perspicuity means is indicated by the Latin original. Although a big word, its meaning is not so difficult to grasp when the bigger word is broken down into its smaller parts. “Perspicuous” is made up of the Latin preposition *per*, which means “through,” and the verb *spicio*, which means “to see.” “Perspicuous” means “to see through.” That which is perspicuous can be “seen into and through.” In regard to a book, the idea is that its meaning can be known. What the author intended to communicate can be grasped by the reader. A text’s meaning is clear and understandable. Such is the character of sacred Scripture, insisted the sixteenth-century Reformers.

The opposite would be a text that is complicated and convoluted, mysterious and mind-boggling; a text whose meaning is deep, dark, and hidden. It would be something that is deliberately written, if not to confuse and mislead, at least to be unclear and difficult. Such a book would deliberately be written, not to inform, but to puzzle, bewilder, and baffle the reader. Or, a book might not be perspicuous because it is written at an intellectual level far above the average reader. The average reader would not be able to make heads or tails out of a textbook for multi-variable calculus or abstract algebra, for physics or

statistical thermodynamics. I know that I would likely not be able to comprehend the first paragraph in such books. Thankfully, the Scriptures have not been written for the intellectually gifted. Rather, they have been written for us, the ordinary believers and members of Christ's church—and our children.

By the perspicuity of the Bible we mean that the ordinary believer is able to understand Scripture, know with confidence what the teaching of Scripture is, and be able to judge all teaching in its light. In the Bible God is not playing hide-and-seek, deliberately concealing Himself from the view of the ordinary believer, hiding behind this tree or in that dark corner. On the contrary, in the Bible God is making Himself known to us.

There are two figures that are often employed to make plain what is meant by perspicuity. Both figures are related to the mountains. Since my family and I lived for nearly ten years in the foothills of northern Colorado, I can relate to both of these figures. The first figure is that of a mountain lake—a deep, clear mountain lake. We often took visitors to see Bear Lake above Estes Park, in Rocky Mountain National Park. You could see into its clear, cold waters to great depths, including fish swimming many feet below the surface. But, although the lake was crystal clear, you could never see to the bottom. Scripture is like that.

Or, Scripture is like a large mountain range toward which you are driving. Nearly every summer we headed east to Michigan for vacation, because that is where the PRC synod usually met and that is where our relatives lived. And after three weeks, we packed all twelve of us (at that time) into our van and headed back home, usually breaking the trip up into two days. On that second day, traveling west on I-76 just outside of Ft. Morgan, CO, nearly one hundred miles in the distance, at least if the weather was clear, we could begin to make out the shape of the Rocky Mountains. It was always a contest to see who of us could see the mountains first. They were always a welcome sight. And the closer we drove, the bigger the mountains became and the more detail we were able to make out. Scripture is like that, too.

What Perspicuity is Not

It helps to understand what perspicuity is by distinguishing it from what it is not. What are not implications of the truth of the clarity of the Bible?

The perspicuity of Scripture does not mean that all of Scripture is equally clear. It does not rule out the existence of more difficult—very difficult—passages in the Bible. The fact is that there are some very difficult passages in the Scriptures. The apostle Peter makes reference to the writings of “our beloved brother Paul,” in whose epistles there are “some things hard to be understood....” (II Pet. 3:15, 16). There are such difficult passages in Paul's epistles, and in other portions of Scripture as well—no question about it. But the more difficult passages are to be interpreted in light of the clearer and simpler. Scripture is to interpret Scripture: *scriptura interpret scriptura*. The Reformers insisted on this important corollary of biblical perspicuity. And thus the meaning of the more difficult passages is to be arrived at.

Neither is it the meaning of the Bible's perspicuity that the Bible is clear to the child of God without any effort and apart from the use of ordinary means. The Bible is not necessarily clear on a first and casual reading of the Bible. The Bible is clear as a result of reading and meditation—thoughtful meditation on the text of Scripture. The Bible is clear as we study the Bible in its own light, as well as in the light of what has been written on the text of Scripture by others, by others especially of a previous generation. The Bible is clear as we study the Bible, diligently study the Bible. The Bible is clear as we study the Bible not just privately, but also in our homes and families, as well as in the company of fellow believers. The Bible is clear to us as we sit regularly under the public means of grace, the preaching of the Word in particular—the chief means of grace. Also, the Bible is clear as we pray over the Bible and what we may have read in the Bible. Whenever we read and study the Bible, that reading and study should be accompanied by prayer. Pray to God that He will lead us into a clear understanding of that which He has inspired in the Scriptures.

Neither does Scripture's perspicuity rule out dependence on the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit. Certainly not! The child of God must pray for enlightenment, for understanding, for the grace to hear what the Spirit has to say to the church (Rev. 2:29; 3:22). Just as there was a great work of God through the Holy Spirit to inspire the human writers of Holy Scripture, so is there an ongoing work of the Spirit on those for whom Scripture has been written. Even then, the Spirit's work in


connection with Scripture must not be misunderstood. The Spirit's task is not to make clear what is in and of itself obscure, but to work conviction of what is plainly revealed in Scripture.

Neither does the Bible's perspicuity mean that human beings as human beings are capable of understanding what is written on the pages of the Bible. Certainly it is true, on one level, that because the Bible is written in human language, by human beings and for human beings, human beings are able to understand the Bible. And certainly, even unbelieving men are capable of understanding the meaning of any given Scripture passage. There are unbelieving men with PhDs who understand intellectually what is written in the Bible. Even the Devil was able to quote Scripture and to quote it understanding the meaning of that which he quoted, as is evident from his quotation of Scripture at the time of Jesus' temptations in the wilderness immediately after His baptism. Even then, it is worth noting that he perverted Scripture. But he perverted what he understood. Nevertheless, strictly speaking the perspicuity of Scripture has to do with the *believer*. It concerns the *believer's* ability, under the influence and leading of the Holy Spirit—Scripture's author—to understand the message of Scripture.

The perspicuity of Scripture also does not mean that the believer is able to understand all of Scripture at once. Not even a lifetime of devoted reading and study of Scripture will exhaust its teaching. As God is incomprehensible, so is His word also incomprehensible.

Still, that we cannot exhaust the meaning of the Bible does not mean that we can know nothing of the Bible, nothing with certainty, at least. On the contrary, the Bible is clear in its central message: the gospel of grace in Jesus Christ, according to the will of God, and by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Bible is clear in its teaching concerning who God is, who we are, and what our calling is in the midst of this world. The Bible is clear in teaching the truth about God, about man, about the creation, about Jesus Christ, about the person and work of the Holy Spirit, and about the church. It is clear in its teaching concerning our sin and misery, our redemption in Jesus Christ, and our calling to live thankful and holy lives. As concerns its main message, the Bible is clear.

Every day the child of God takes for granted the Bible's perspicuity. He reads it, studies it, and meditates on it. He takes it up for personal devotions and for family devotions. Christian school teachers read portions of the Scriptures to their students—in the lowest grades. Troubled men and women turn to it for answers to their perplexing questions. Pastors and elders read and apply it to the needs of the members of their congregations. Church members comfort, encourage, and admonish one another on the basis of its clear teaching. Consistories, classes, and synods make judgments in the light of its undisputed testimony.

What a wonderful thing Scripture's perspicuity is! What a wonderful thing it is that "the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple" (Ps. 19:7). 

THINGS WHICH MUST SHORTLY COME TO PASS

PROF. DAVID ENGELSMAS

Chapter Five—Premillennialism (14):

Critique of the Premillennial Explanation of Daniel 9 (concluded)

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Introduction

The Reformed response to the premillennial appeal to the vision of the seventy weeks in Daniel 9 on behalf of a future earthly millennium of carnal power and glory for national Israel is, first, to insist on the symbolical mean-

ing of the number seventy. Seventy is the number of the fulfillment of the covenant of God with His people in the Messiah, who is Jesus.

The seventy weeks of Daniel 9 represent the time from the release of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity to the coming of the Messiah. It is the time of the fulfillment of the covenant of God in the coming and saving work of God's Messiah.

That saving work of the Messiah, according to Daniel 9:24 will be intensely spiritual: finishing the transgression; making an end of sins; making reconciliation for iniquity; bringing in everlasting righteousness; sealing up the vision and prophecy; and anointing the most Holy.

Establishing an earthly kingdom of national Israel so that especially the Jews but also the Gentiles will enjoy earthly peace, earthly prosperity, and earthly power is not one of the works of the coming Messiah, according to the vision of Daniel 9.

The entire unit of seventy weeks will terminate, and culminate, in the first coming of Jesus the Messiah. At His first coming, the Messiah will confirm the covenant of God with Himself and with those who are His by a true and living faith (see Gal. 3:16, 17, 29). By His redemptive work at His coming, Messiah will fulfill the covenant ($10 \times 7 = 70$).

The Breakdown of the Seventy Weeks in Detail

The period of the seventy weeks of Daniel 9 begins with the going forth of a command to build Jerusalem (v. 25). This is the decree of Cyrus in AD 537 that Judah may return to Canaan. Long before Cyrus made the decree, Isaiah prophesied it: "Cyrus...is my [Jehovah's] shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid" (Is. 44:28; see also Is. 45:1-13). The historical fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy is recorded in II Chronicles 36:22, 23.

The decree of Cyrus freeing the captive Israelites of Judah and permitting the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its temple was a crucial juncture in Israel's history and a wonderful revelation of God's covenant faithfulness. Judah was in bondage, desolate, and apparently doomed. This condition was its just judgment on account of its unfaith-

fulness in the covenant. Amazingly, God then ordered the deliverance of Judah, her return to the land of promise, and the restoration of the nation's covenant life with Him.

The sixty-nine weeks of Daniel 9 represent the time from Cyrus' decree liberating Judah from her bondage to the coming of Jesus Christ: "...unto the Messiah the Prince" (v. 25). This period is divided into two parts: seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. The seven weeks are the period of the "troublous times" of the building of Jerusalem under Zerubbabal, Ezra, and Nehemiah. This period of seven weeks extends to approximately the end of the Old Testament revelation in the book of Malachi.

The sixty-two weeks are the period of 400 years between the time of the Old Testament and the time of the New Testament.

The sixty-nine weeks—seven plus sixty-two—terminate in the coming of Messiah: "unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks" (v. 25).

Premillennialists argue over the question, which stage or event in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ is the end-point of the sixty-nine weeks: "unto the Messiah the Prince" (v. 25)? The obvious answer is the birth of the Messiah. When Jesus was born, "Messiah the Prince" appeared. "Where is he that is born King [Messiah] of the Jews?" the wise men asked on the occasion of the birth of Jesus (Matt. 2:2).

The sixty-nine weeks of Daniel's prophecy, therefore, extend from Cyrus' decree to the birth of Jesus.

Then followed the seventieth week, the "one week" of Daniel 9:27. The seventieth week was the entire period of the life and work of Jesus Christ that belonged to His first advent, inclusive of His atoning death, His resurrection, His ascension, and His outpouring of the Holy Ghost. That week, the culmination of God's covenant dealings with Judah during the preceding sixty-nine weeks, saw the fulfillment of God's covenant of grace with His people ($10 \times 7 = 70$). In this seventieth week, Messiah the prince, who is Jesus, accomplished the wonderful, spiritual, six-fold salvation of the covenant people of God described in Daniel 9:24: finishing the transgression; making an end of sins; making reconciliation for iniquity; bringing in everlasting righteousness; sealing up the vision and prophecy; and anointing the most Holy.

Objections by the Premillennialists

Against this interpretation of the seventy weeks of Daniel's vision, and particularly against this explanation of the seventieth week, premillennialists object. There are basically two objections. Both concern verses 26 and 27 of Daniel 9. First, the premillennialist argues that Messiah is cut off *after* the sixty-ninth week (v. 26) and *before* the seventieth week (v. 27). The same is true, he contends, regarding the destruction of the city by the people of the prince. All agree that the destruction of the city refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70 under the general, Titus. The premillennialist argues that both the death of Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem happened *before* the seventieth week, not *in* it.

Closely related to this first objection is the second. The premillennialist explains verse 27 as referring to the Antichrist and to a secular covenant that he will make with national Israel in the future, when the seventieth week finally comes. The "he" of verse 27, who will confirm the covenant, is Antichrist, not "the Messiah the Prince" of verses 25 and 26.

The response of the Reformed amillennialist to these objections is as follows. First, although it is true that the death of the Messiah occurs after the sixty-ninth week, the Daniel 9 passage does not say, or even suggest, that His death occurs before the seventieth week.

Second, the one who confirms the covenant, according to verse 27, is not Antichrist, but the Christ of God. The covenant in view is not some secular treaty with the nation of Israel, but the one, spiritual covenant of grace of God with His "many" chosen people out of all nations. The confirmation of this covenant by God's Messiah is not still future, in AD 2017, but has taken place in the past, by the work of the Messiah at His first coming.

The Truth of Daniel 9:26, 27

The cutting off of Messiah and His having nothing (as is the original Hebrew of Daniel 9:26) were the crucifixion and death of Jesus.

This cutting off of Messiah occurred *in* the seventieth week, the "one week" of verse 27. This seventieth week immediately followed the sixty-ninth week, as one week naturally follows another in history; as every reader would be led by the passage itself to conclude, were it not for the recent imposition on the text of the dogmatical theory of dispensational premillennialism; and as there

is nothing in the text itself leading one to suppose otherwise. It is exactly the death of Messiah that makes this week the *seventieth* week, that is, the week of the fulfillment of God's covenant.

The first part of verse 27 refers to the Messiah, Jesus. The meaning of verse 27 becomes clearer from a more literal translation than that given by the King James version. Literally, verse 27 reads: "And he shall confirm the covenant with many, one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and upon the wing of abominations [is] the one making desolate and unto completion and it is determined it shall be poured out on the desolate."

It is Jesus the Messiah who confirms God's covenant, "one week," that is, in the seventieth week.

It is Jesus the Messiah who puts an end to all Old Testament sacrifices and oblations by His one sacrifice of Himself on the cross in the midst of the seventieth week (see Heb. 10). By His sacrifice of Himself, Jesus caused "the sacrifice and the oblation to cease" (Dan. 9:27). His sacrifice was the reality that the Old Testament sacrifices typified. The reality did away with the types. This is something that premillennialism very much needs to hear and take to heart, for premillennialism allows for the restoration of earthly, bloody Old Testament sacrifices in a coming millennium. This wicked teaching is a denial of the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

All by itself, this one gross heresy of the premillennial explanation of Daniel 9:27 exposes the error of premillennialism's interpretation both of the text and of the entire passage: the premillennial explanation of verse 27 is based on premillennialism's teaching that God will permit the resumption by the Jews of the bloody sacrifices of the Old Testament.

If one asks concerning the remainder of the seventieth week, it is everything that belongs to the first advent of Jesus following His death, namely, the period of His resurrection, His ascension, His sitting at the right hand of God, and His outpouring of the Holy Ghost. On the basis of verses 26 and 27, which speak of the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and of the sanctuary, one could make a good case for the explanation of the end of the seventieth week as the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. At that time and by that significant event, God made known that the new covenant had fulfilled the old, that

by being fulfilled the earlier covenant had become old and had “vanished away” (Heb. 8:13; a truth that premillennialism denies), and that now this new covenant extends to all who are “called” by the gospel out of all nations, so that they might receive, not a temporal inheritance consisting of an earthly land of Canaan, but an “eternal inheritance” (Heb. 9:15; something that premillennialism also denies).

Proof of this Interpretation of Daniel 9:26, 27 (in Opposition to that of Premillennialism)

It is exegetically mistaken to make “he” in verse 27a refer back to “prince” in verse 26 and, thus, to conclude that the reference in verse 27a is to the Antichrist. “Prince” in verse 26 is not the subject of the phrase in which the word occurs in verse 26: “people of the prince...shall destroy the city,” etc. It is the people who shall destroy Jerusalem, that is, the people and armies of Rome.

In addition, the subject of the entire passage and prophecy, the *dominant* subject, is Messiah the Prince, Jesus the Christ. To Him, the word “he” in verse 27 refers. The Messiah will confirm the covenant with many, not the Antichrist.

Also against the premillennial interpretation of the passage is the fact that verse 27 speaks of a *confirming* of the covenant. Premillennialism explains this as meaning that Antichrist will, in the future, *make* a covenant with national Israel. But as the AV rightly translates, verse 27 does not use the Hebrew verb that means “make,” but the word that means “confirm.” The reference is not to the making of a new covenant, but to the confirming of an already existing covenant (the Hebrew verb is *gbr*, not *krt*, or *ntn*).

Jesus, “the Messiah the Prince,” did exactly this at His first coming: He confirmed the covenant of God, established already with the woman and her Seed in Genesis 3:15 and continued with Noah, with Abraham and his Seed, with Israel, and with David.

The covenant that Messiah confirmed is God’s covenant with Abraham and his Seed (cf. Genesis 17:7; Gal. 3:16, 17, 29), the covenant that Israel violated, as Daniel lamented bitterly in his prayer in Daniel 9, and the covenant that Daniel, nevertheless, besought God to keep.

By the death of Jesus, God did keep and confirm His covenant. In the confirmation, He revealed it in its full reality as being spiritual in every respect, obtaining the blessings mentioned in Daniel 9:24, acquiring for the members of the covenant an eternal, heavenly inheritance,

and extending, not only to elect, spiritual, genuine children of Abraham among the Jews, but also to elect Gentiles, who have the faith of father Abraham by the circumcision of the heart (cf. Rom. 2:28, 29; Rom. 4).

In Conclusion

The seventy weeks were fulfilled in the first advent of Jesus the Messiah.

The seventieth week of Daniel’s vision in Daniel 9 is past history—grand, past, covenantal history.

The one covenant of God with His people, the elect and exceedingly precious church, the one bride and body of God in the Messiah, in all ages and of all nations has been confirmed.

All of the blessings of the covenant, which are mentioned in Daniel 9:24, have been earned and obtained by the Messiah. They are now freely bestowed upon the chosen people of God.

Jewish and Gentile believers now and forever live in the enjoyment of the confirmed covenant of grace and of its spiritual blessings.

The vision of Daniel 9, with Isaiah 53 one of the most clear, full, and glorious prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the saving, covenantal work of God in the Messiah, gives absolutely no support to premillennialism. On the contrary, it exposes that theology and hope as utterly false. Premillennialism corrupts this grand prophecy of the Messiah and His work.

Appendix

Another interpretation of the seventy weeks given by some Reformed amillennialists is the following. The seventy weeks are the entire period from the command to build Jerusalem to the second advent of Christ, including the present age of already some two thousand years. From Cyrus’ decree to the first advent is seven weeks. From the first advent to the appearance of Antichrist in the future are sixty-two weeks. The seventieth week, according to this interpretation, will be the brief period in the future during which Antichrist will reign and which will end with the second coming of Jesus Christ. This interpretation is possible because of another possible reading of the last part of verse 25. It is possible to translate the last part of verse 25 as follows: “...unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks; and threescore and two weeks the street shall be built again,” etc. According to this translation, the building of the street and the wall lasting

sixty-two weeks is symbolic of the gathering of the church throughout the new dispensation, until the appearance of Antichrist. This is the interpretation of Daniel 9 by Herman Hoeksema.¹

This interpretation is wrong for the following reasons.


First, like the view of the premillennialists this interpretation supposes that verse 27a (“he shall confirm the covenant”) refers to the Antichrist. Everything said above against the premillennial explanation of verse 27a holds against this interpretation. “He,” in verse 27, is the Messiah Himself.

Second, this interpretation does injustice to the plain meaning of the last part of verse 25. By the building of the street and the wall of Jerusalem in troublous times,

¹ Herman Hoeksema, *Behold, He Cometh! An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1969), 396.

Gabriel does not refer, symbolically, to the gathering of the church, but to the literal rebuilding of Jerusalem after the return of Judah from captivity in Babylon.

Third, the most serious, and obvious, error of this interpretation is its distortion of the statement in verse 26, that Messiah shall be cut off and have nothing. According to this interpretation, this has to be the destruction of the church by Antichrist at the end of the world. In fact, the text is speaking of the cutting off of the Messiah personally, that is, Jesus’ death on the cross.

Fourth, the translation of verse 25 is correct as we have it in the King James version of the Bible: From the command of Cyrus unto the Messiah the Prince (at His first coming) are seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. That is, sixty-nine weeks extend from Cyrus’ decree to the first coming of Christ Jesus, not to the end of the world. 

GOD’S WONDERFUL WORKS

REV. JAMES LANING

Foundational Principles (9)

Bearing the Father’s Image

It is commonly taught that all human beings bear the image of God. Yet that would mean that man by nature is like God, which Scripture says he is not. Man certainly was like God when the Almighty created him. But he became like the devil when he listened to him.

The ones who bear God’s image are those who are in God’s Image. Christ is the Image of God, and only those who are in Him are like Him, and thus like God. Although these imagebearers have an evil nature, God is the Father of their spirit, and in their spirit they look like their Father.

God’s Children Bear His Image

The triune God has fellowship within Himself. He did not need to create in order to have friends. Yet He chose to form a creature with whom He would have fel-

lowship. Before He created him, He spoke within Himself and said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen. 1:26a). The two phrases “in our image” and “after our likeness” are parallel, indicating that God’s image is also a likeness. To bear God’s image is to be like Him, and only one who is like God can rightly know Him and commune with Him.

So to bear God’s image is to be like Him. Reading on in Genesis, we see that it is God’s children who bear His image. In chapter five we find the same words *image* and *likeness*, but this time the passage is speaking about Adam begetting a son: “And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth” (Gen. 5:3). God’s son bore God’s image and Adam’s son bore Adam’s image. Seth looked like Adam, and Adam before the Fall looked like God.

This is a fundamental principle: God’s children are the ones who bear their Father’s image. We see an illustration of this principle frequently. Every time we

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notice that children look like their parents we are seeing an earthly illustration of this heavenly reality.

Unbelievers Bear Their Father's Image

God told Adam that he would die on the very day that he ate of the fruit that was forbidden. He would become separated from God if he rejected what God said. Then he would cease to be like God. Instead, he would be like the devil, delighting to do what is evil: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning" (I John. 3:8a). Man by nature is said to be "of the devil." He has been that way ever since Adam sinned.

It is true, of course, that some people repent and believe in Christ. But the reason why they do is that God has regenerated them. In their spirit these people have been born of God and bear God's image. But the others are like the devil, and are said to be the devil's children.

There are two groups of people who differ according to who their father is. God's children do what God says, and the devil's children do what the devil says: "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother" (I John 3:10). This passage speaks of a contrast not only between good and evil actions, but also between good and evil people. Some are God's children and imitate Him by doing what is righteous. The others are children of the devil and do the same evil deeds that the devil does.

Jesus spoke of this when talking to some unbelieving Jews about who their father is. These Jews were claiming that Abraham was their father. Jesus responded that they clearly were not children of Abraham seeing as they were not like Abraham at all. Abraham believed in the coming Christ, but these Jews hated Christ and wanted to kill Him. Then Jesus said "ye do the deeds of your father," without saying explicitly who their father was. After that the conversation went like this:

Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie,

he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it (John 8:39-44).

The devil's children bear his image and do what he does. Only those who are born from above bear God's image and strive to do what He does.

Bearing God's Image in the New Man

So if we believers are God's children and bear His image, why do we still sin? Scripture tells us that we have what is called an *old man* and a *new man*. Our old man is our sinful nature, and in that old man we are like the devil and delight to do what God has forbidden. But God has given us a new spiritual heart, and in that heart we trust in God and submit to what He tells us:

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them (Ezek. 36:26-27).

We who have a new heart are said to have a *new man*, and it is in this new man that God is our Father. Of great importance it is to understand that we bear God's image and imitate Him not in the old man but in the new.


A couple of parallel passages in the New Testament make clear that it is in the new man that we bear God's image. The first one says that God *created* us in the new man: "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24). We who have a new heart are said to have a new man and to have become *new creatures* (II Cor. 5:17). In our new man we have been created good, we are righteous and holy just as our Creator is righteous and holy.

The second passage says explicitly that it is when God formed us in the new man that He created us *in His image*: "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:10). We know and love God only because God created us after His image. Before we were like the devil and hated God. But now in the new man we know Him, love Him, and desire to do what pleases Him.

So if we are like God only in the new man, it follows that God's image is borne only by those who have a new man. To teach the opposite and to say that all human beings bear God's image is to say that man's sinful nature

is like God. Those outside of Christ only have a sinful nature. They do not have the new man. So if they bear God's image, that would mean that man in his sinful nature looks like God. Such is the clear implication of that position.

The comforting truth is that we see what God is like when we look not at sinful man, but at Christ. God's

only begotten Son, He is the Image of God. By God's grace we have been joined to Christ. We look like Him and thus like God. As we consider what our Father does and think on what He has made us to be, we delight to imitate Him. May we shine forth His glory, letting others see by our confession and walk that we truly are His children. 

ALL THY WORKS SHALL PRAISE THEE

MR. JOEL MINDERHOUD

Climate Connections

As we noted in the previous article, (April 15, 2017, p. 332) news reports regarding the “state of the environment” regularly appear, but often with differing conclusions. Sometimes we have heard of global cooling and at other times we have been told of global warming. Scientists admit the difficulty of predicting what will happen due to the complexity of the creation. We know there are certain factors that have a definite effect on the climate; but due to the many factors involved, and the impossibility of isolating all possible factors in order to determine precisely *how much* of an effect each has, the challenge to predict global climate is very real. In addition, one must consider how these factors interact with one another and what effect that has on the climate. As we noted in the last article, issues such as global warming and acid rain may seem at first glance to be unrelated, but they are actually closely intertwined. In this article we will consider some of these climate connections, mindful of God's sovereign care over all creation, as well as of our own responsibility to be faithful stewards within it.

Connections Related to Human Factors

In order to understand how certain factors can affect the climate, we must understand that any solid or liquid particle in the atmosphere has the ability to reflect light. Some particles reflect incoming sunlight back into space

rather than absorb it and, consequently, the earth is not warmed by these particles. Of the total incoming sunlight, approximately 30% is reflected back into space by the clouds and by other tiny particles in the air, as well as by snow and other “lighter-colored” objects on the earth. “The fraction of sunlight reflected back into space by an object is called its *albedo*, which therefore is about 0.30 for the Earth overall.”¹ Therefore, a higher earth albedo correlates to lower global temperatures.

More cloud presence, as well as the presence of certain other particles in the atmosphere, increase earth's overall albedo. This means that more light is reflected back into space and, consequently, there is less heating of the earth. On the other hand, there are also atmospheric particles, like black carbon soot, that absorb sunlight and convert it to heat—increasing the temperature of the atmosphere. These kinds of particles lower earth's albedo value and result in a gradual heating of the planet.

Analyzing climate change is difficult due to the many offsetting processes in the creation. Consider, for example, the effect of burning coal in a power plant. Sometimes carbon ash (soot) is released in the burning process. Although the ash exists in the atmosphere for a short time, it eventually settles on the earth, darkening the surface of the earth (particularly in areas of snow). This decreases earth's albedo and therefore promotes global *warming*. However, coal burning *also* produces sulfate aerosols—sulfur dioxide (SO₂). And sulfate aéro-

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¹ Colin Baird and Michael Cann. *Environmental Chemistry* (New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, 2012), 167.

sols tend to reflect sunlight back into space—increasing earth’s albedo, thus promoting global *cooling*. Clearly, soot and sulfate aerosols are offsetting factors influencing global temperature changes.

However, sulfate aerosols also result in acid rain. As we discussed in a previous article, acid rain is not a desirable side-effect of coal burning. Therefore, much of the sulfur content of coal today is removed by methods either prior to burning or by a process within the smoke stacks. Efforts to remove sulfur have been, for the most part, successful and the sulfate aerosol content in the atmosphere in North America and Europe has been reduced. This in turn has reduced the amount of acid rain produced. Again, however, there is an offsetting factor. As indicated above, those sulfate aerosols serve also to reflect sunlight away from earth, thus contributing to the desired *global cooling*. Removing the sulfate in the interest of controlling acid rain will therefore contribute at the same time to *global warming*.

In all of this we see how one environmental factor is often intricately connected to another. Alleviating problematic effects in one area can result in the enhancing or, at least, uncovering of an effect in another area, due to the interrelated nature of God’s created world. This interaction can also be observed in the “natural” occurrences within the creation.

Connections Related to Natural Effects: Mt. Pinatubo and Phytoplankton DMS

What we are not often aware of is that there are also naturally occurring events that significantly influence the environment. Consider the effects of the volcanic eruption of Mt. Pinatubo (Philippines) in 1991.

Initially tons of ash spewed into the atmosphere resulting in a slight local warming as more heat was trapped and the air warmed due to the absorption of light by the dark ash particles, decreasing earth’s albedo. This effect, however, was short-lived, as the soot particles eventually fell from the sky and were widely distributed.

However, 30 million tons of SO₂ from the volcanic eruption remained in the atmosphere for several years. These sulfate aerosols reflected sunlight back into space, thus increasing earth’s albedo. During the following two years (1992 and 1993) a decrease in the global temperature by 0.2°C (0.36°F) was observed. It would appear that the decrease in global temperature was due to the

volcanic eruption (I write “would appear,” for as this article notes, there are many factors that may contribute to a particular climatic event. Without a controlled experiment, one cannot definitively conclude how one factor affected a particular observation. This is, at heart, the issue with much of the debate regarding the causes of climate change). After the eruption, North America experienced several cool summers in the early 1990s. As the aerosols slowly fell from the sky, the global temperatures (by 1995) again returned to values similar to what they were before the volcanic eruption.

Another interesting factor that affects global temperature is the rate of dimethylsulfide (DMS) production. DMS is produced in the oceans by phytoplanktons. Phytoplanktons are the ocean’s ‘grass.’ As microalgae, phytoplanktons contain chlorophyll and use sunlight to perform photosynthesis. Phytoplanktons play a critical role in the entire creation because of the tremendous amount of oxygen produced by these ‘plants.’

But phytoplanktons also produce DMS—an odorous gas that many of us associate with that “smell of the sea.” DMS reacts in the atmosphere with oxygen gas to produce sulfur dioxide, which in turn is converted to sulfate aerosols that scatter incoming sunlight back into space. Consequently, DMS is indirectly associated with global cooling.

The DMS factor clearly illustrates a means by which global temperatures can be kept in check. If global temperatures temporarily increase, one would expect a consequential increase in the amount of phytoplanktons in the oceans, as warmth should promote plant growth. More phytoplanktons should result in more DMS production, and, therefore, also in more sulfate aerosols. More sulfate aerosols would scatter more sunlight away from earth’s surface, resulting in global cooling. Therefore, any global warming pattern should, if all other factors are kept constant, be followed by a period of global cooling.

This gives reason for pause. We must see that God wisely governs the creation in such a way that there are processes that He provided and governs so that a balance within the creation (in this case, with global temperatures) may be maintained.

A Unified Creation

We have considered a few of the many factors that affect global temperature. And we have only skimmed the


surface of one aspect of an exceedingly complex creation. Throughout my study of these matters, my thoughts return again and again to the profoundly complex, yet amazingly cohesive nature of God's creation. British chemist James Lovelock, the "originator of the Gaia hypothesis...suggests that the Earth functions as a single living organism and maintains the conditions necessary for its own survival."² Lovelock's theory resonates with us, who in light of Scripture recognize that God created a universe that is an "organic unity." God marvelously governs the creation by appointed means in which balances are maintained. God works and governs all things in the creation in a harmonious way, through Jesus Christ, His Son, by whom all things consist (Col. 1:17). This harmony is still evident to a great extent in the various parts and systems of the creation, even with the devastating effects of sin. What a marvelous God we serve!

A Sovereign God

In our consideration of the various means that affect global climate, we do well to reiterate that it is our God who rules sovereignly and omnipotently. God reigns supreme in all things. Because God rules, we are not to be alarmists or driven to fear by other alarmists. Sometimes God is pleased to use the efforts of mankind to reduce pollution or mitigate a particular effect to accomplish

² <http://www.whoi.edu/oceanus/feature/dms—the-climate-gas-youve-never-heard-of>.

a particular purpose. At other times, man's attempts prove to be futile, as God uses them to accomplish a different purpose. Therefore, we ought not to despair in the face of all the ominous news reports we hear regarding the health of the earth, for God is sovereign and wisely governs and upholds the creation for His purpose—to glorify His name through the saving of His people. The creation, then, serves as the stage upon which God accomplishes His purpose. Therefore, that creation must endure, according to God's plan, in order to serve His church (Gen. 8:22; Belgic Confession, Art. 12).

The child of God does not respond to this truth of the sovereignty of God with an attitude of despair nor of stoical indifference. Rather, we rejoice in God's sovereignty! This truth of the sovereignty of God over all things is a source of our deep confidence and assurance in God and His works. Encouraged by this truth, we are mindful of our calling as stewards to care for God's creation and to use His good gifts faithfully. For God "put [Adam] into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it" (Gen. 2:15). In reference to Christ and to those in Christ, the psalmist declares: "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet" (Ps. 8:6). Therefore, we are not careless in our use of God's creation. But with sanctified wisdom we strive to make good decisions in our use of the creation, recognizing our calling to care for and use the creation wisely. In so doing, we seek to honor the name of the great God whom we serve—the Almighty, triune Jehovah. 

STRENGTH OF YOUTH

REV. JONATHAN MAHTANI

Antinomianism: A Heresy Within

Before you read this article, please complete this brief quiz by writing either "True" or "False" in the spaces provided.

_____ Because I am saved by grace alone, good works have nothing to do with my salvation.

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

_____ God rewards me only for what Christ has done, not for what I have done.

_____ Since I am clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ, God never sees my sin.

_____ Because of Christ's work, God is always pleased with me.

_____ Christianity is not about obeying the law; it is about believing the gospel.

_____ The purpose of the 10 commandments is only

to show me my sins and drive me to Christ for forgiveness.

_____ Faith is in no sense my activity; it is Christ's.

_____ Since God will sovereignly save His elect in His time and His way, the church should not be too preoccupied with His work of missions and evangelism.

_____ Repentance is not about turning myself from sin; it is about God turning me.

_____ The unconditional covenant means that even if I am continuing in sin, I may still be assured of being in God's covenant.

The idea for this article came from some discussions that took place recently at Classis East and synod meetings of our churches. I trust the young people have heard about it. The debate consisted of whether an individual was guilty of a heresy called antinomianism. After much discussion and a series of appeals and protests, synod finally ruled that the individual was not guilty of the aforesaid error. You may research the details of the case on your own, but I am not as concerned about the details of the case as I am about the hearts of our young people in the Protestant Reformed Churches. While you might not know of anyone who teaches antinomianism, it is nevertheless a real and present danger within our churches.

As I was pondering the case at Classis East and synod, two questions came to my mind: 1) Do our members even know what this big word means? 2) Are they consciously guarding against this error as they ought to be?

What is antinomianism? Literally, it means "against the law." An antinomian generally teaches against the necessity of obeying the commandments of God. Now, before you quickly dismiss this as too obvious to be dangerous, consider that we *are* antinomian by nature! Indeed, an old man that embraces the heresy of antinomianism rages within our hearts to tempt us every day against the law. Since sin itself is about being "against the law," every sinner is antinomian.

Whenever we learn about any heresy in church, during school, or throughout our lives, let us not content ourselves with pointing the finger at other people and denominations who hold to such errors. We can find every heresy in our own soul. A self-righteous pope exists not only in Rome; he is close to home in our hearts. That old man is the worst of heretics, being both against Christ

and against the law. Have you discerned him within?

Additionally, history reveals that the heresy of antinomianism has always plagued the church. As King Solomon said, "There is no new thing under the sun" (Eccl. 1:9b). While different men and women have introduced this heresy in various forms, the resulting conclusion has repeatedly been the same: It is not necessary to obey the law. Antinomianism has emerged most frequently throughout the history of the church as a reactionary heresy, taking its victim and promoter from one extreme to another, and from one heresy to another.

Specifically, antinomianism has been a reaction against works-righteousness. The apostle Paul fought against the Pharisaic and Judaizer notion that a man is justified because of his obedience to the law. While he was absolutely correct about justification by faith without the works of the law, there were those in his day who twisted Paul's inspired argument to conclude, "Let us continue in sin, that grace may abound" (see Rom. 6:1ff.). Later, Martin Luther, along with the other Reformers, rightly preached against the Roman Catholic Church, insisting that a man is justified by faith alone without his works. But sadly, many who claimed to be his followers overreacted and began to teach that man is at liberty to live against the law due to his justification without his works.

The same antinomianism exists today. In evangelical churches across the world, many so-called Christians and Reformed or Calvinistic Christians believe that since the Savior has died to save sinners, there is no need to serve Him as Lord in obedience to His law. Believing in Jesus is necessary, but living for Him is not. "Give us faith, not religion!" is the outcry. As a result, the gospel is completely (and wrongly) severed from the law. Antinomianism has always been a real danger among those who hold firmly to the gospel of grace.

But what about us? If antinomianism has always plagued the church, if it is alive and thriving all around us, and if it is the very character of our sinful nature, would it not be foolish to dismiss it as a harmless enemy? Would it not be foolish to imagine that it is merely a big word that classis and synod delegates discuss in ivory-tower meetings? Should we not beware of this lie among us and within us? Should we not be active in our fight against antinomianism?

I warn you of this heresy because I think that Protes-

tant Reformed people—especially our young people—are susceptible to it. This is not an accusation against our young people; neither is this to say that our young people are less holy than others. But the susceptibility to this heresy is due to the strong emphasis on salvation by grace alone that our churches make. To be clear, our strong emphasis on salvation without works is a good thing. Reformed doctrine does not *cause* antinomian teaching. We need to maintain an emphasis on the gospel of grace for the glory of God. Yet history proves that it is within churches such as ours that there occur frequent sinful overreactions leading to antinomianism. Since we as Protestant Reformed Churches so strongly emphasize that *works of the law are not the basis* of our salvation, we especially must be on guard for this lie. The antinomian error that we are susceptible to sounds a lot like the truth even though it is extremely different. It teaches that *works of the law are a not a necessary part* of our salvation. Do you see the difference?


How well did you do on the quiz above? All of the statements have within them the heresy of antinomianism, making each of them false. They all contain an element of Reformed truth, but they all misuse this truth to conclude that works of the law are not necessary. A good practical way of guarding against antinomianism would be to take the ten statements above and, with your friends and family, discern both the truth and the lie that each contains.

Remember, however, that antinomianism is found not only in theological statements but in the heart. There is something called “practical antinomianism.” This is not something you teach or even speak about, but it is what goes on within your minds. Practical antinomianism is defined as any heart’s misuse of true doctrine to excuse our sin. Listen for the antinomianism of your old man and fight against it. “I know I should not watch this, click on this, gossip this, do this..., but I am going to anyway because I know God will forgive me.” Have you caught yourself thinking this way?

The antinomian old man skews the doctrine of forgiveness to allow for sin. Perhaps you have an idol in your life: a sport, a phone, a drink, a person, or something else. You know this addiction is wrong, and yet you do not want to repent. Without any sorrow or a desire to change, you think, “Oh well, Jesus died for me.” This is practical antinomianism’s twisting of Christ’s

atonement. You might misuse the doctrine of God’s sovereignty: “God is sovereign over me and my sin. If He wants me to turn, then He will work in me to do so in His time. I need not try.” Perhaps you might abuse the doctrine of church membership: “At least I am a member of a true church, a Protestant Reformed Church even. And I attend services twice on Sunday. This makes up for my disobedience.” Maybe you misunderstand the unconditional covenant: “God’s unconditional covenant means that I cannot do anything to get in or get out of my relationship with God, thus, obedience to the law does not matter.” We might misapply the doctrine of sin: “I am totally depraved anyway, so I really cannot help it if I sin.” Or we may wrest the doctrine of election and preservation: “God will preserve His elect, so I do not mind putting myself in some kind of temptation, since I know He will preserve me from hell.”

These thoughts are not necessarily what we might express aloud, but they are the secret wickedness of the human heart. They are perverse, hyper-Calvinistic twistings of true doctrine, blaspheming of God’s name, and falsifying of the Scriptures. This antinomianism is the abuse of truth that “men of perverse, impure and unstable minds wrest to their own destruction” (Canons of Dordt, I/6). When we find such perversity in our hearts, let us fight to mortify that old man. “What is the mortification of the old man? It is a sincere sorrow of heart that we have provoked God by our sins, and more and more to hate and flee from them” (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 33).

The against-the-law mentality of antinomianism is closer than you think. To imagine it as a distant foe is to fall to its deception. It has always been a heresy hard on the heels of the heresy of works-righteousness. The young and old members of the church militant must stand on the way of truth, always watching for the ditches on either side—the legalism of works-righteousness and the license of antinomianism. They are not merely ditches but pits to hell itself. To escape these, we must continually repent of both, and in doing so, turn in faith to Him who said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil” (Matt. 5:17). Christ Jesus has come to fulfill that law by first obeying it for our righteousness, and then working obedience in us through His Spirit. True faith believes in Him who has done both. 

Trivia Question

Six states in the United States of America are home to only one Protestant Reformed Church. Which six? Answer later in this column.

Sister-Church Activities

At the meeting of her Session (Council) in March the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore had a guest. Her missionary to Kolkata (India), Rev. Emmanuel Singh, joined the Session meeting via Skype. This will be a regular occurrence in the future, as Rev. Singh will join the Session only for those items that deal with the work in Kolkata. Rev. Singh submits a monthly report, which the Session reads and has opportunity to discuss and ask any questions about the work in India. The Session approved Rev. Singh's monthly report, indicating that Rev. Singh is faithfully fulfilling his calling, by God's grace. We continue to pray for a blessing on the brother's labors.

Evangelism Activities

The Edgerton, MN PRC Evangelism Committee sponsored a spring presentation on Friday, March 31, at their church. Pastor D. Kuiper spoke on the importance of knowing church history. This presentation served as a background to their fall presentation, at which they intend to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. All ladies whose last name did *not* begin

with "B" were asked to bring a dozen bars or cookies. Still lots of "B's" in Edgerton!

Minister Activities

Zion PRC in Michigan received a decline from Rev. C. Haak (Georgetown, Hudsonville, MI), as did Southwest PRC in Wyoming, MI from Rev. S. Key (Loveland, CO). Doon PRC called Rev. Brian Huizinga (Hope-Redlands, CA) to be missionary to the Philippines and God led Rev. Huizinga to decline this call. First PRC of Holland, MI called Rev. S. Key, who declined that call on April 16. In all these calls we are confident that the King of the church fulfills His will and His purpose in His divine providence. Southwest announced a new trio consisting of Revs. C. Griess, W. Langerak, and M. McGeown, with Rev. Griess receiving the call on April 16. And on April 23 Zion PRC (Hudsonville, MI) voted to issue a call to Rev. G. Eriks, from her trio that also included Rev. N. Decker and Rev. R. Kleyn.

Mission Activities

Hope PRC in Walker, MI appointed the delegation of Rev. James Laning, (Hull, IA PRC pastor) and elder John Van Baren of Hope to travel to the land of Myanmar in May. The idea is to give instruction in the area of Reformed eschatology and church history, D.V. Their wives plan to accompany these men on the trip.

On May 14 the Maranatha Protestant Reformed Church of the Philippines observed its thirty-fourth anniversary as a church. In

its early days, however, it was called the Maranatha Foursquare Gospel Church and was a charismatic-Pentecostal congregation. Over time, and especially through the work of Pastor Leovino Trinidad, God changed this congregation into a solidly Reformed congregation. A church numbering about 300 souls in the 1990s today contains about 40-50 members of all ages. Our missionaries have been involved with the work in this congregation for many years. May God stand on the right hand and on the left of this church and continue to bless her in the times ahead.

Congregational Activities

Bethel PRC Summer Book Study plans to meet June 19 and July 10 to discuss the first half of the book *Be Ye Holy: The Reformed Doctrine of Sanctification* by Profs. D. Engelsma and H. Hanko.

From the bulletin of Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA: "There will be a church and yard Spring clean-up this Saturday morning immediately following the Men's Bible Study. Bring your shovels, rakes, barrows, buckets, ladders, and *children* to help tidy things up around the building and property."

The Doon Martha Society hosted the annual Ladies' League on Tuesday, April 18, at 7 P.M. Rev. J. Engelsma spoke on the topic "A Timeless Beauty." A collection was taken for the Trinity Christian High School Music Department (Hull, IA). All ladies high school age and older from the five Siouxland churches were invited to attend.

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

Young People's Activities

The Young People's Society of Byron Center, MI PRC sold Easter lilies, potted tulips, daffodils, and hyacinths, with proceeds helping toward the young people's convention expenses.

Western Young People's Retreat: The Young People from Spokane and Lynden are planning another retreat for 2017 for ages 14-20. The theme of the retreat will be "Delight in the Lord" from Psalm 40:8. The dates are June 27-30 at Pend O'Reille Bible Camp, North of Spokane. On-site camping and cabins will also be available for families. For more information or a copy of the registration form contact Rev.

Rodney Kleyn (r.kleyn@prca.org) or Mr. Fred Hanko (fredncathy@juno.com). Registration forms are also be available from the pastor of these churches.

School Activities

An announcement found on the Iowa, Minnesota, and South Dakota PRC bulletins in April:


Four Protestant Reformed high school bands will present a concert at Trinity Christian High School in Hull, IA the evening of Thursday, April 20, at 7 P.M. Covenant, Heritage (IN), Loveland, and Trinity will perform individual and combined numbers. Trinity has had combined concerts with Covenant before, but this is the first-time Heritage and Loveland have been able to join

us. We look forward to the event. "Praise him with the trumpet, praise him upon the loud cymbals, praise him upon the high sound cymbals...."

The bands performed the next night in the Dordt College Band Festival.

Trivia Answer

The six states in the USA containing one PRC are: California (Redlands), Colorado (Loveland), Minnesota (Edgerton), Pennsylvania (Pittsburgh), South Dakota (Sioux Falls), and Wisconsin (Randolph). More trivia next time.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Southwest PRC expresses Christian sympathy to our officebearer Mr. John Ophoff in the death of his father,

MR. HERMAN OPHOFF.

May all the promises of the Word of God bring comfort in this time of sorrow: "...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

Gary Boverhof, Vice-President
Tom VanderWoude, Clerk

Teacher Needed

■ The Protestant Reformed School of Wingham is in need of a *part-time* or *full-time* teacher for the 2017-2018 school year. There is grade flexibility with grade assignments, etc. and the board is willing to work with an interested individual's preference. Please contact Jim Siertsema at jimsiertsema@gmail.com / 519-955-5665 or Preston Crich at prstncrch@gmail.com for more information and to apply.

Notice

■ The RFPA is seeking to hire a full-time employee to fill the newly created position of Sales and Operations Manager. This position will feature a full-time salary and insurance benefits. The duties of the position will include sales, marketing, accounting, and general operations. The preferred applicants should have the education and experience that pertain to this role. Individuals interested in this position should contact Tim Pipe at the RFPA office for more details (tim@rfpa.org/616-457-5970).

Call to Synod!!

■ Synod 2016 appointed Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, Michigan the calling church for the 2017 Synod.

The consistory hereby notifies our churches that the 2017 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, June 13, 2017 at 8:30 A.M., in the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, Michigan.

The Pre-Synodical Service will be held on Monday evening, June 12, at 7:00 P.M. Rev. G. Eriks, president of the 2016 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. Ralph VanderVeen, 2973 Willowrun St., Hudsonville, MI 49426. Phone: (616) 669-5833.

Consistory of Hudsonville PR Church
Ralph VanderVeen, Clerk