

The Standard Bearer

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Behold Your God!

O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

Isaiah 40:9-11

The way out of spiritual Babylon to the holy city Jerusalem is fraught with dangers and discouragements.

Left to ourselves, we would never make it.

But, thankfully, where God calls us to walk, He also leads. When He calls us to make a pilgrimage to the heavenly Jerusalem, He leads us there like a Shepherd.

In our weakness and sinfulness God's Word to us is, "Behold your God!" In Him is all of our salvation.



Every one of God's children faces trials and hardships. Some of the obstacles and spiritual battles we face may

seem insurmountable. Often we respond in discouragement: "How in the world can good come out of this? What's the point of even trying? It's all hopeless." Relationship problems, financial strain, health issues, work circumstances, grief over the loss of loved ones, feelings of inadequacy, besetting sins, guilt, the devil, and the world all conspire against us to turn us out of the way.

What message does God send to encourage us? "Behold your God!"

When Judah faced the prospect of captivity in Babylon, they would no doubt be tempted to question God's faithfulness. "What will happen to His promises of an everlasting inheritance? Has God forgotten His Word? Has He forgotten to be gracious? Does He still love us? Will our sins make His Word void?" Judah would be tempted to look at God's chastisement and conclude the worst.

When God chastises us we might have the same sentiments. We conclude that He hates us or has deserted us. In our difficulties, we imagine that He has turned against us. We forget that chastening "yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11b).

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

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Our focus and attention is on ourselves and our circumstances rather than on God and His unfailing love. Like Peter, we look only at the wind and waves around us, so that our hearts sink within us and our minds are filled with dread and despair.

Then God's Word to us is, "Behold your God!"

The church must serve as the instrument to bring these good tidings. This is her calling. Like a messenger who comes fresh from the battlefield, the church must run to the cities of Judah with the good news of success. Of course, the messenger does not change the truth of the matter. But, the good tidings affect the hearers. The message brings peace and joy to the hearts of God's people.

So important are these good tidings that the messenger must make every effort to proclaim them far and wide. He must go up on a high mountain so that his voice can carry as far as possible. He must lift up his voice with strength, having no fear.

What is the substance of this that demands our utmost attention?

Certainly not, "Behold your *enemies*!" We can get wrapped up in the enemies that plague us. We see their strength and ferocity and call out like Elisha's servant, "Alas..., how shall we do?" (II Kings 6:15). We remember how they have so often wounded us. Our spiritual hands become weak and our knees feeble. When we look only at our enemies, we neglect the fact that God fights for us.

Nor is the message to God's people, "Behold *yourselves*!" Captive Judah must not imagine that coming into and enjoying their inheritance is all up to them. The good news is not that we have it in ourselves to fight against Satan, the world, and our old sinful flesh. The good news is not the message that we hear from the world: "Have faith in yourself!" That is not good news at all. That leaves us in our misery.

Nor is the message to God's people, "Behold *yourselves and God*!"—as if our salvation was some kind of cooperative effort, where we do our part and then God does His part; as if we had to meet certain conditions before God is able to save us.

Rather, the message is the simple proclamation of the gospel: Behold *God*! Behold the Mighty One. Behold Him who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, in whose sight the creature is of no account. Behold Him who needs no counselor to teach Him. Behold Him before whom the nations are as a drop in the bucket and as dust of the balance. Behold the incomparably great God who accomplishes all His will and for whom nothing is too hard. If we want comfort in our pilgrimage from Babylon to Jerusalem, we must not behold our enemies or ourselves; we must behold God.

More than "Behold *God*!" the church must proclaim "Behold *your* God!" God is not a cold, abstract reality; He is *our* God, our faithful covenant God. To be sure, He also rules over the heathen; but God is not *their* God. He has not committed Himself to them in any way. But, our God has taken us into covenant fellowship with Himself. He is our God, not because we loved Him and chose Him, but because He first loved us and chose us to be His precious possession. "Your God" is a shortened form of the covenant formula found throughout Scripture: "Ye shall be my people, and I will be *your* God." (cf., Ezek. 37:27; Rev. 21:3).

When the outcome of our labors appears to be in vain, when we are tempted to give up on the good fight,

God's Word comes to us, "Behold your God!" When we get caught up in the here and now, looking at our sins, our failings, our weaknesses, and our difficult circumstances, we need to be reminded, "Stop beholding these things, and behold your God! Look to

Him for grace. Trust in Him to continue His work of salvation."



All by itself, "Behold your God!" proclaims the gospel of grace to Judah and to us. But, the prophet expands on the content of the message in the next verse with a two-fold expansion: "*Behold*, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: *behold*, his reward is with him, and his work before him."

'God' (Elohim) in the previous verse is now referred

*All by itself, "Behold your God!"
proclaims the gospel of grace
to Judah and to us.*

to as 'the Lord GOD' (Adonai Jehovah). 'Lord' speaks of His sovereign rule especially over His people. 'GOD' is the great I AM, who keeps His promise of mercy to thousands of generations of His people.

Our sovereign, covenant God "will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him." Behold, He comes quickly (cf. Rev. 22:12). Just as He led Israel out of Egypt with a strong hand, so He will come again with strong hand. He will not leave us in Babylon, but will gather us to Himself. For that to happen, Jesus Christ would come with a stretched out arm and fight the battle against sin, and Satan, and death. God's fury would be poured out upon Christ for our sins. He would ascend into heaven and take up His rule for the sake of Zion, His church. Nothing will stop our Shepherd-King from accomplishing His own purposes.

Of course, God's sovereignty in salvation must not make us passive. Just the opposite; it urges us onward in the work. Knowing that Christ gathers His people through the preaching, the church seeks to be faithful in her calling. Knowing that God uses means to accomplish His purposes in our personal lives, we make diligent use of the means of grace. Knowing that God's Word is a light to our path and a lamp to our feet, we seek to hide that Word in our hearts that we might not sin against Him. And yet, the truth remains: Jesus Christ will certainly gather, defend, and preserve His church.

God would also have us know that the salvation Jesus Christ has purchased for us will certainly be accomplished in us: "His reward is with Him, and His work before Him." 'Reward' literally refers to wages. When Jesus Christ comes, He will cause all wages to be paid according as each person deserves.

On the one hand, the wicked will be cast into outer darkness because the wages of sin is death. What a horror for those who face the Lord GOD on the Judgment Day to receive the wages of their sin!

On the other hand, Jesus Christ will also pay out the wages that He Himself has earned for His people. He earned His wages through His obedience and suffering. He became sin for us that He might give us His righteousness. He became poor so that we might enjoy His riches. He accomplished the work to redeem us so that He might give us His gracious wages. As He rules in heaven, His wages are ever with Him. The reward of His

work, salvation for Zion, is set before Him to dispense to His people.



In light of His great labor and the reward that is with our Savior, Isaiah finishes this comforting message by reassuring us that our God cares for us as a shepherd cares for his sheep.

Like Asaph in Psalm 73, we question God's care for us: "Why so much trouble and turmoil if He truly cares?" The answer lies in the depth of His love that will stop at nothing to bless us with full salvation. Christ's care for us is expressed in verse 11: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."


On the way from Babylon to Jerusalem, we have a faithful Shepherd who cares deeply for each of His sheep. The journey is full of difficulties and dangers. The anti-Christian world presses in upon us. The devil walks about seeking whom he may devour. Our sinful flesh is prone to wander. In ourselves, we are defenseless sheep.

But, our faithful Shepherd will lose none of His sheep. He brings us to pasture. He protects us from danger. He constantly nourishes and cherishes us. When we turn toward Babylon, He chastises us and brings us back into the way. None can snatch us from His hand. When the lambs are threatened by danger, He gathers them with His arm. When they are too weak to go on by themselves, He carries them in His bosom with great affection.

The Shepherd gives exactly the care that each of us needs. Young or old, joyful or discouraged, ignorant or knowledgeable, humble or proud, the Shepherd knows exactly how to care for us. When we need to be chastised, He knows exactly the measure to use. He is able and willing to accomplish our salvation.

This is the God we are to behold. Our faithful covenant God who is able and willing to lead us out of Babylon all the way to the new Jerusalem. He who has begun a good work in us will surely carry it through to completion.

Behold your God!

Believe in Him and rejoice in His care. 

Training for Protestant Reformed Teachers: Some History

It has been the intent of this series of editorials to demonstrate the importance, yea, even the necessity, of having some institution to provide training that will equip men and women to teach in Protestant Reformed schools. This is not a novel idea. It has a pedigree, if you will. It can be traced to Herman Hoeksema.

Recall (from the first editorial in this series, Nov. 15, 2016) that in 1920 Rev. Hoeksema, minister in the Christian Reformed Church, was promoting membership in a society for a “normal school.” Rev. Hoeksema was the president of this society. In his editorial in *The Young Calvinist* he explained the importance of this school:

What is a normal school? It is an institution for the purpose of training young men and young women for the teaching profession. It is with a view to the teaching profession what a seminary is for the ministry. Now, we all agree that we must not expect competent ministers in our church without a good seminary. But just as little right we have to expect competent teachers in our Christian schools without a good normal school. We must have teachers that are theoretically well-informed, that are practically well trained and that are principally on a sound basis. Our entire

Christian school depends upon such teachers. The teacher is the heart of the school. If we want to have Christian schools, we must have Christian teachers in the first place. And to get Christian teachers we must simply train them.

The normal school that Hoeksema was promoting did not survive. The main reason is that the CRC denominational school (established to train ministers) was expanding its offerings. It developed into a full teacher college and issued strong appeals to young men and women to obtain their teacher training in this school—what was to become Calvin College. It is also probable that the controversies over common grace left Rev. Hoeksema with little time or energy to promote the normal school from 1920 to his deposition by the CRC in 1925.

As he had done as minister in the CRC, Herman Hoeksema promoted Christian schools in the Protestant Reformed Churches. He strongly maintained that parents in the PRC ought to be sending their children to the existing Christian schools. He also promoted the cause of Protestant Reformed schools. The September 15, 1937 issue of the *Standard Bearer* promoted (editorially) “Our Own Christian High School.” In addition, Hoeksema was vitally interested in the education of *teachers* for these Protestant Reformed

schools. We will examine that in a future editorial, D.V.

The history of teacher training in the CRC raises the question of what is the proper institution for educating teachers. The two main options were there in 1920. Herman Hoeksema was promoting a school to be supported and governed by a *society*. Calvin College was being touted as the better way, an institution maintained and governed by the Christian Reformed *Church*. Is one of these methods the (only) correct one? Or are both legitimate means?

It may surprise you to learn that the PRC have a history on this. I was alerted to this history by the discovery of a series of articles penned in the early 1950s by Homer C. Hoeksema. This history is significant for a couple reasons. First, the Protestant Reformed Churches faced the question of whether or not an institution for teacher training should be established by the churches—as an *ecclesiastical* endeavor. Second, this history demonstrates that the churches had much concern and interest in the cause of training teachers for the Protestant Reformed schools. The churches gave their endorsement of it.

Therefore, we will recount some of this history. H.C. Hoeksema did the research, and although I checked the PRCA *Acts of Synod* as well, I

Previous article in this series: January 15, 2017, p. 173.

will be using much of HCH's material in these editorials.¹

The history, as recorded in the *Acts of Synod*, begins in 1948. In those *Acts* (p. 63), the following item appears in the report of the Theological School Committee:²

12. We received a letter from the Society for Protestant Reformed Education asking us to what extent the facilities of the Theological School can be made available to prepare persons interested in the teaching profession to qualify them for teaching in schools of our own. This society is planning to build a ten room grade school in a year or two. We informed them that at present we have no facilities and that we are forwarding their request to Synod. Their letter is herewith attached.

The letter mentioned was not published in the *Acts*. However, Synod did address this matter, for the report of the committee of pre-advice includes the following (p. 65):

11. In connection with the letter of the Society for Protestant Reformed Education, which the committee refers to Synod, we advise:
That Synod advise the Society for Protestant Reformed Education that we have no facilities for a complete normal course. However, that we can supply, we hope, the very necessary Protestant Reformed point of view by having prospective teachers

¹ HCH started the series on schools and teachers in the August 1, 1951 issue (vol. 27, #20). He began tracing this history in the June 1, 1952 issue (vol. 28, #17). The entire series is profitable reading.

² The Theological School Committee (TSC) then and still today oversees the Protestant Reformed Seminary on behalf of Synod.

take Reformed doctrine and read specified outside literature upon educational subjects, as produced by our men and others.

The same *Acts* records that Synod adopted that recommendation, only slightly revised, as stated in Article 80:

Motion made and supported to adopt the advice of Committee under No. 11 dealing with the request of the Society for Protestant Reformed Education *for the institution of a Normal Course in our School*.

Amendment is made, supported and carried that we change the term '*Reformed Doctrine*' to '*Principles of Education*.' The Amended motion is adopted. [Emphasis added.]

The 1949 *Acts of Synod* records more activity on teacher training. The Theological School Committee forwarded to the Synod the following letter (p. 64):

May 7, 1949
Theological School Committee
Esteemed Brethren:

As you perhaps know, it is our intention, the Lord willing, to open our own school in September, 1950. We realize that our greatest need is for teachers, able and equipped, to teach our children the required subjects permeated by the Protestant Reformed life view. For these teachers to do this we feel that they should receive a specific course of instruction above and beyond that which they receive at Calvin College.

As you know, some work has been done along this line by our Teachers' Club. The Board, however, deems it necessary that we should have a regular normal course where our prospective teachers would receive their final training. This we feel is very essential in order that our school may indeed reflect the truth as we know and love it.

This is not only of local importance, for we also have other Protestant Reformed Schools and plans are being made to open more.

We come, therefore, to your body with the request that, if at all feasible, a normal course be added to the curriculum of our Theological School this coming year. If for various reasons you do not see your way clear to do this, kindly forward this request to Synod with or without your recommendation.

Board of Society for
Prot. Ref. Education

Sincerely yours,
(w.s.) D. Jonker, Sec'y,

Per the Education Committee.

To the same Synod came an overture from the consistory of Randolph (WI) PRC, via Classis East³ (pp. 67, 68):

The Consistory of Randolph advises Classis to overture Synod to consider ways and means of establishing our own Normal Training School to train prospective teachers to teach in our own Christian Schools.

Grounds:

1. It is simply a fact, that shall our Protestant Reformed Schools be distinctive, that the teachers must be able to teach distinctively. The school is not better than the teacher.

2. It is a fact that the need of our own schools is being felt more and more, as is attested by our own School Society and the erection of buildings. It would be shortsightedness not to prepare our own teachers.


By order of the Consistory,
Geo. C. Lubbers, Pres.
W. Huizenga, Clerk.

³ Before 1953, Randolph was part of Classis East. Classis East debated whether or not to study this overture before sending it on to Synod, but in the end sent it to Synod without recommendation.

How did the Synod of 1949 respond to these two requests? Article 37 of the *Acts* states that the committee of pre-advice recommended that Synod “accept these proposals in principle, and...place this matter before the faculty and the Theological School Committee for study and possible execution.” However, an amendment was made

and supported to elide the statement, “to accept these proposals in principle and.” This amendment is carried, and the motion as amended was adopted. Accordingly, the matter of adding a course of study for a normal school in the Protestant Reformed Seminary, or a separate normal training school, was placed before the faculty and the TSC “for study and possible execution.”

It is interesting that the Synod of 1949 did not adopt the principle of the churches creating a normal school. Yet Synod allowed the faculty and TSC to begin following (executing) these requests, that is, to form a course for normal school instruction for teachers.

More on this history, with comments, next time. 

GUEST ARTICLE

MR. RICK MINGERINK

Teacher Training: Recent Developments

Editor’s Note: Although the subject matter of this article and the recent editorials is nearly identical, there is no inherent (cause or effect) connection between them. As you might expect, I am delighted in the development reported in the article.—RJD

In 1956, the final book in the Narnia Chronicles was published. Readers of good literature witnessed the ending of a great saga. In November of that same year, Fidel Castro boarded a boat en route to Cuba to help set off the Cuban Revolution. On December 7, 1956, four days after Castro landed in Cuba, another important event happened. Gathered in a little room in Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School, representatives from Adams Street, Hope, and South Holland/Oak Lawn Christian schools met in a joint meeting.

The world little noted nor long remembered that meeting. People moved along with no idea or care about what these men were discussing. But for those with an interest in and concern for Reformed education, the meeting was of great importance. On the agenda that evening was the establishment of a Normal School (a teacher-training school).

Mr. Mingerink is the administrator of Adams Christian School, the Executive Secretary of the Federation Board of the Protestant Reformed Schools, and a member of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church.

Although the paint had hardly dried on the walls of these new schools, their founders knew the importance of properly trained teachers for their schools. By coming together on this matter, they saw in their unity a source of strength and stability. In short time, this little gathering organized themselves into the Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies. It was created with the purpose of dealing with matters pertaining to Protestant Reformed schools in common.

Over the next couple years, the Federation met to discuss the matter of training teachers; but progress on such a project is neither easy nor simple. In 1960, with no reason recorded in the minutes, the Federation passed a motion to drop all efforts in establishing a Normal School. I can only imagine what the obstacles might have been. No money? No room? No time? No energy? No support? No leadership? Such are the common obstacles that plague even the greatest ideas. Despite this decision, the Federation did not change any of her purposes for existence. In Article II. C of her Constitution, she has the purpose of “seeking ways and means for a more thorough training of teachers and prospective teachers in Christian principles.”

With this purpose still intact, the Federation has once again made a push to provide a more “thorough training” of teachers. In 2015, with input from various individuals, the Teacher Educational Development (TED) committee

of the Federation produced “A Concept Plan for a Future Protestant Reformed Teacher Training Program.” A short quote from this document provides the purpose for it: “This document is designed to articulate a vision for such a program [teacher-training program] and to inspire potential supporters to embrace this ideal and to acknowledge its feasibility.” This plan was presented at the annual Federation delegate meeting in October, 2015 as information. The readers of the *Standard Bearer* can access this seventeen-page publication by visiting www.prcs.org. The *Concept Plan* articulates a distinctively Reformed teacher-training program, which supplements the regular college education teachers receive.

In the months following, the TED committee of the Federation reached out to her member schools asking for feedback on the ideal of a teacher-training program. Additionally, a delegation from the TED committee visited the Covenant Canadian Reformed Teacher Training College (CCRTC) in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. This is a small teacher-training college that provides training for elementary school teachers who plan to teach in the Canadian Reformed Christian schools.

In April, 2016, after assessing the feedback from the member schools and evaluating our observations from CCRTC, the TED committee presented the Federation delegates with a revised direction. Slow and easy was the main message we heard. This is also how the CCRTC got her feet off the ground. Slow and easy. Of course, when working in committees with constant turn-over, *slow and easy* can also be a path for getting very little accomplished.

We live in a society of great spiritual and moral erosion. This erosion has eaten away at the educational institutions our future teachers attend. These are the institutions that shape the young men and women who will be providing instruction in our classrooms. Many institutions that were once great halls of education are now only feed troughs for swine; hardly worth casting your pearls before. They have become arenas for showcasing man’s “philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Col. 2:8). Slow and easy is appropriate for engaging in a large venture, but we must keep our nose to the grindstone.

With this in mind, the direction proposed by the TED committee was the establishment of a new committee called the Teacher-Training Committee (TTC). This committee, headed by a paid director, would have the purpose of conducting more detailed research into a teacher-train-

ing program with the eventual goal of obtaining approval from the Federation to begin providing more teacher-training opportunities. It has become readily apparent to the TED committee that the complex endeavor of teacher training requires more time and energy than what the TED committee can provide. Members of the TED committee already serve on local school boards and the work required for this endeavor is more than what this committee can handle as it is structured now. The new TTC would ideally be comprised of individuals who are not currently serving on a school board but who have the skill and heart for the great work it is tasked to do. We also want to see committee membership from individuals outside the West Michigan community. This is possible thanks to the use of various communication programs on the Internet.

I am happy to report that at our last Federation delegate meeting held this past October, the Federation voted to approve the formation of such a committee. The TED committee has also recently secured Mr. Rick Noorman, administrator at Covenant Christian High School (Grand Rapids), to serve as the first Managing Director of this committee. We are convinced he is very capable and has a solid grasp on the nature of the committee’s work. He will be working with us to fill the rest of the committee slots.

I end this short article by asking the readers of the *Standard Bearer* to support our efforts in the establishment of a training program for our future Protestant Reformed teachers. We need willing individuals to serve on this committee. After sixty-plus years of Protestant Reformed education, we have accomplished very little in this area. We need men and women who can think deeply about the principles, practices, and history of Reformed education and then shape our new teachers with this knowledge and practice. Such training can provide a common anchor that keeps the instruction of the school from tossing in the winds of every new idea and philosophy. But such an anchor can also serve as a springboard from which the craft of Christian education can be sharpened and honed. Without such a program, we have no *think-tank* for further development of and research into Reformed education. And in this day and age, if we are not confronting what is coming our way, we are only slowly eroding.

Although there is nothing left to write in the story of Fidel Castro or the Narnia Chronicles, the story of Protestant Reformed Teacher Training is just beginning. Please help us write this story and support this important cause.



The Error of Eternal Functional Subordination: An Evangelical Debate

A Theological Debate

There is presently raging within American Evangelicalism a debate on the relationship among the three persons of the Trinity. This debate is called the “Eternal Functional Subordination” (or EFS) controversy. On one side of this debate are Wayne Grudem (Phoenix Seminary) and Bruce Ware (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary), while on the other side are Carl Trueman (Westminster Theological Seminary) and Liam Goligher (senior minister of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia) with their colleagues, Aimee Byrd and Todd Pruitt, blogging on the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals’ blog, “The Mortification of Spin.”¹

The EFS view is this: within the Godhead, the Father is supreme, and the Son is functionally and eternally, although not ontologically, subordinate to the Father. Let us try to unpack those deep theological concepts!

The Bible teaches that the Mediator, the man Christ Jesus, the Son of God in human flesh, was subordinate to or subject to His Father. In the incarnation, the Son willingly submitted to the Father. Jesus declared that He came to do the will of His Father. Paul teaches that Jesus “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant” (Phil. 2:7). All orthodox believers agree on that point.

However, the advocates of EFS read back into the being of God what the Son became in the incarnation—the Son was *eternally* subordinate to the Father. Even before the incarnation, and even before the creation of the world, the Son was subordinate to the Father. The Son was *always* subordinate to the Father!

However, this subordination is not a subordination of *being* (the word “ontological” refers to the being of something). The Son, insist Grudem and Ware, is *ontologically equal* to the Father and the Spirit. The Son is, to use the term employed in the Nicene Creed, *homoousion*—of the *same essence* as the Father. Instead of an ontological subordination, Grudem and Ware teach a *functional* subordination—an *eternal* functional subordination—of the Son to the Father. “Functional” refers to the different roles or works of the divine Persons.

Therefore, while there is “no difference in nature between the Father and the Son, there is a difference between their roles in the Trinity.”² The difference between the roles is not that the Father generates the Son, that the Son is begotten of the Father, and that the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son, which truths the EFS advocates affirm. Rather, the difference is one of *authority* or *supremacy*. Grudem writes, “God the Father has eternally had a role of leadership, initiation, and primary authority among the members of the Trinity, and the Son has eternally been subject to the Father’s authority.”³ “The Father had authority over the Son and the Son submitted to that authority before the world was made.” Ware writes (and if anything his statements are even more troubling than Grudem’s):

...Though the Father is supreme, he often provides and works through his Son and Spirit to accomplish his work and fulfill his will. I am amazed when I consider here the humility of the Father. For, though the Father is supreme, though he has in the Trinitarian order the place of highest authority, the place of highest honor, yet he chooses to do

¹ Adam Parker has collected many of the blog posts pertinent to this debate in one place, <http://www.bringthebooks.org/2016/06/trinity-controversy-omnibus.html>.

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² Caleb Lindgren, “Gender and the Trinity: From Proxy War to Civil War” (*Christianity Today*, June 16, 2016), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2016/june-web-only/gender-trinity-proxy-war-civil-war-eternal-subordination.html>.

³ Dennis W. Jowers and H. Wayne House (eds.), *The New Evangelical Subordinationism?* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 223-261; <http://www.waynegrudem.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Biblical-evidence-for-the-eternal-submission-of-the-Son-to-the-Father.pdf>.

his work in many cases through the Son and through the Spirit rather than unilaterally.⁴

God the Father receives the ultimate and supreme glory, for the Father sent the Son to accomplish redemption in his humiliation, and the Father exalted the Son to his place over all creation; in all these things, the Father alone stands supreme over all—including supreme over his very Son. All praise of the Son ultimately and rightly redounds to the glory of the Father. It is the Father, then who is supreme in the Godhead—in the triune relationships of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and supreme over all of the very creation over which the Son reigns as its Lord.⁵

While Scripture praises the humility of the Son in humbling Himself in the human nature to suffer and die, Ware writes of the “humility of the Father” in using the Son as an agent in creation and redemption and the Spirit in sanctification!

Theological Error

The EFS error—or heresy—is based on the view that since human sons are under the authority of their human fathers (true), the Son of God is under the authority of His divine and eternal Father (false). In addition, EFS is used in support of the complementarianism promoted by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, an evangelical group that promotes the view that, while men and women are by nature equal, women are functionally subordinate to men.⁶ Grudem, for example, presents the Son’s submission to the Father as “the role-model for a woman’s submission to her husband.”⁷ (Of course, the pattern for a woman’s submission to her husband is *not* the Son’s eternal, functional submission or subordination to the Father, but the church’s submission to Christ! “Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything” [Eph. 5:24]). In an appeal to I Corinthians 11:3, Grudem writes in his *Systematic Theology*:

⁴ Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationship, Roles, and Relevance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 55; cited by Todd Pruitt in “Let’s All Be Nicene” on “The Mortification of Spin,” <http://www.mortificationofspin.org/mos/1517/lets-all-be-nicene>.

⁵ Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, 50.

⁶ The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, <http://cbmw.org>

⁷ Donald MacLeod, “Subordinationism (out of the blue!),” <http://www.donaldmacleod.org.uk/dm/subordinationism-out-of-the-blue>.

Just as the Father has authority over the Son in the Trinity, so the husband has authority over the wife in marriage. The husband’s role is parallel to God the Father, and the wife’s role is parallel to that of God the Son. Moreover, just as Father and Son are equal in deity and importance and personhood, so the husband and wife are equal in humanity and importance and personhood.⁸

“What about the Holy Spirit?” you might ask. Says Grudem:

And, although it is not explicitly mentioned in Scripture, the gift of children within marriage, coming from both the father and the mother, and subject to the authority of both father and mother is analogous to the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Father and Son in the Trinity.⁹

So the Son is eternally, functionally—but not ontologically—subordinate and submissive to the Father, which is analogous to the husband-wife relationship; and the Holy Spirit is eternally, functionally—but not ontologically—subordinate and submissive to the Father and Son, which is analogous to the parent-child relationship! Grudem’s *Systematic Theology* is very influential among and widely read by evangelicals. It is even the textbook in many evangelical seminaries. The seriousness of his error cannot be underestimated. Todd Pruitt at “The Mortification of Spin” writes, “This goes far beyond reasonable speculation. In an effort to be charitable I want to call it exotic. But that will not do. It is worse than exotic. It may well be blasphemous.”¹⁰

Indeed, some of the orthodox fathers faced scoffing heretics who, in their opposition to the equality of the Son with the Father, asked sneeringly whether the Holy Spirit were the grandson of the Father. Now Bruce essentially affirms that the Spirit *functions* as the son of the Father and the Son!

Trinitarian Orthodoxy

Grudem and Ware are reading into the idea of “Son of God” more than is warranted in Scripture. The Sonship

⁸ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 257; cited by Rachel Evans in “Eternal Subordination of the Son and Wayne Grudem’s *Systematic Theology*” on the Aquila Report, <http://theaquilareport.com/eternal-subordination-of-the-son-and-wayne-grudems-systematic-theology>.

⁹ Grudem, 257.

¹⁰ Todd Pruitt, “A Mythological Godhead,” “The Mortification of Spin” (July 9, 2016), <http://www.mortificationofspin.org/mos/1517/a-mythological-godhead>.

of the second Person does not imply subordination to the first Person. Donald MacLeod writes,

Whatever was the case in the “ancient world,” the Jews did not conceive of sonship as implying subordination. This becomes clear in John 5:18, where Jesus calling God his Father is immediately taken to mean that he is making himself equal with God.... But the drawing of such inferences is itself a dangerous thing. If we interpret Jesus’ sonship in terms of its human analogy, we cannot stop at mere subordination. We have to go on to infer, first of all, that the Father exists before the Son and, secondly, that the Father generates or gives being to the Son. Both of these inferences were drawn by the Arians, but neither of them is tolerable.¹¹


When the Bible teaches us that Jesus is the eternal Son of God, it refers to the fact that He is the only begotten Son. To beget is the activity of a father in which he brings forth one who (1) is of the same essence or being as himself—a human father begets a human son, and the divine Father begets the divine Son; (2) is a distinct person from himself—a human father is not the same person as his human son, and the divine Father is not the same Person as His divine Son; and (3) is generated in an act of love—a human father loves (or should love) his human

¹¹ MacLeod, “Subordinationism.” While MacLeod’s comments are generally helpful here, he is mistaken on one point. He rightly points out that the Father is *not before* the Son (they are coeternal), but it is a mistake to deny that the Father generates or gives being to the Son. The orthodox position is that the Son is begotten, but not made or created.

son; and the Father dearly loves and delights in His Son. Of course, the begetting of the Father is unlike the human activity in that it is eternal, unchangeable, spiritual, and essential to the being of God. Writes David Engelsma, “The begetting of the essence of the Son from the essence of the Father does not imply the subordination of the Son to the Father, but the full equality of essence, or being.”¹² In the *Essentials of Reformed Doctrine* catechism course, we teach our covenant youth, “What is the distinct personal property of each of these divine persons? Of the Father that He generates the Son; of the Son that He is generated by the Father; of the Holy Spirit that He proceeds from both the Father and the Son” (Lesson 6, “The Holy Trinity,” Q&A 14). The EFS version would have to read, “Of the Father that He has primacy over the Son and the Holy Spirit; of the Son that He is subordinate to the Father (as a wife is subordinate to her husband); of the Holy Spirit that He is subordinate to both the Father and the Son (as children are subordinate to their parents)”!

Speculation about the Trinity has serious consequences.

Let us be warned against the heterodoxy of Grudem and Ware.

Let us be careful how we teach and understand this precious doctrine. 

¹² David J. Engelsma, *The Reformed Faith of John Calvin: the Institutes in Summary* (Jenison, MI: RFP, 2009), 84.

THINGS WHICH MUST SHORTLY COME TO PASS

PROF. DAVID ENGELSMA

Chapter Five

Premillennialism (12):

Critique of the Premillennial Explanation of Daniel 9

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Previous article in this series: December 15, 2016, p. 129.

Introduction

Of at least equal importance for the premillennial understanding of the last things with Revelation 20 is the prophecy of the seventy weeks of Daniel 9. Taking the seventy weeks as seventy weeks of *years*, that is, a

definite period of 490 years, premillennialism separates the seventieth week from the preceding sixty-nine weeks. The first sixty-nine weeks were the time between the command to rebuild Jerusalem and the coming of the Messiah, who is Jesus.

The seventieth week, however, does not immediately follow the sixty-nine, according to premillennialism.

The seventieth week is still in the future.

It is, therefore, separated from the preceding sixty-nine weeks by at least 2,000 years.

The seventieth week will see the appearance of Antichrist and his world-kingdom. At the beginning of this week (of years, according to the premillennial teaching), the church will be raptured out of the world, so as to escape the fury and persecution of Antichrist, although nothing of this rapture is part of the vision of the prophet in Daniel 9. Antichrist will concentrate on the earthly nation of Israel, which will have returned to its Old Testament homeland. For the first half of the yet future seventieth week (of years), that is, three and a half years, on the quite non-literal interpretation of premillennialism, Antichrist will show himself friendly to Israel. He is supposed to be the one who makes a covenant with Israel, according to Daniel 9:27.

Midway through the seven-year period, Antichrist will suddenly turn against Israel, halting its worship and persecuting the nation. This will continue for three and a half years, the second half of the seventieth week, as calculated by premillennialism.

Then, Jesus Christ will return to earth in His resurrection body, in order to save the nation of Israel, destroy the Antichrist, and establish the millennial kingdom on earth with old Jerusalem as the capital. There, on a great white, material throne, the risen Jesus will sit ruling the old, fallen, sinful, temporal world for a thousand years.

Criticism of the Premillennial Explanation of Daniel 9

The importance of the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27, as interpreted by premillennialism, for that heretical, and utterly misleading, eschatology is evident. Especially its interpretation of the seventieth week gives premillennialism the huge gap it so desperately needs between the first coming of Christ and the time in the future when Christ is supposed to deal savingly once again with national Is-

rael. At the same time, the seventieth week, now thrust into the future, provides the period of time in which God will restore the nation of Israel and fulfill to it the promises of earthly power, peace, and prosperity made to Israel in the Old Testament, which is also the desperate need of premillennialism, by virtue of its commitment to a literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecy.

The price that premillennialism pays for this fallacious, fanciful, and fatal explanation of Daniel 9:24-27 is high. First, it necessarily makes of the church of Jesus Christ, the precious body and bride of the Son of God in human flesh, a mere *parenthesis* in the saving purpose and work of God in Jesus the Messiah. The time of the church is a mere gap between the sixty-ninth and the seventieth weeks of the great, grand saving work of God on behalf of Israel. So insignificant is this gap-work that it does not even merit mention in the prophecy of Daniel 9, or, for that matter, anywhere in the prophecy of the Old Testament.

Although modern, progressive premillennialists, seeking favorable recognition by and approval from Reformed theologians, play down the idea of the church as merely a parenthesis,¹ the older, more forthright premillennial theologians were correct, on their principles, in describing the saving work of God in Christ of gathering a church as a “parenthesis” in the main saving work of God with Israel. “The [church] age itself is a parenthesis in the divine program of God.”² Alva J. McClain does not hesitate to assert that the “Church...occupied a wholly subordinate place in this period of Christ’s teaching.”³

A more wicked derogation of the one, great, and glorious saving work of God in Jesus Christ in history can hardly be imagined. The church of Jesus Christ, His

¹ Cf. Darrell L. Bock, “The Reign of the Lord Christ,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, ed. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992). The “moderate” Bock takes (mild) issue with the older premillennial doctrine that the saving of the church is a parenthesis within God’s work of establishing the kingdom. Nevertheless, controlled by his premillennial theology, Bock cannot refrain from adding that “the appearance of parenthesis could not be avoided” (60).

² John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964), 25.

³ Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1959), 391. McClain refers specifically to the post-resurrection ministry of Christ. Since McClain thinks that most of Jesus’ pre-resurrection ministry also ignored the church, the church was at best secondary in all the ministry of Jesus.

body and bride, a mere parenthesis? The redemption of the church by the blood of the incarnate Son of God according to the triune God's election of the church in love as the first of the decrees of His counsel mere parenthetical work? A parenthesis in language is an incidental observation about the subject of the sentence. Often an interruption of the main thought, it is, strictly speaking, not necessary. The sentence flows, can be understood, and makes good sense without the parenthesis. And this, according to premillennialism, is the church and the divine work of gathering the church.

Because Israel rejected Christ's offer of being the glorious, earthly kingdom of God, God postponed His one, main, grand purpose with history—the establishment of Israel as an earthly kingdom—and turned to the salvation of a church as a parenthetical work—“plan B,” so to say. And this exposure of premillennialism's minimizing of God's saving of the church says nothing about the fact that, if ever God did make an offer to humans that they would have accepted wholeheartedly, it would have been the offer to Israel of being the glorious earthly kingdom of God in the world. It was exactly the stumblingstone for Israel that the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ is spiritual, not earthly as they erroneously viewed it (see John 6; 18:33-40). Israel despised the Messiah of Isaiah 53 and Daniel 9, His spiritual salvation, and thus the kingdom of God.

This implication alone of the eschatology of dispensational premillennialism, namely, that the church is a mere parenthesis, which honest premillennial theologians frankly make explicit, shows premillennialism to be blasphemous. The truth is that the church is the main proposition of the divine sentence of salvation in Jesus Christ.

The Real “Parenthesis”

The response of the Reformed faith to the blasphemous assertion of premillennialism that the church of Jesus Christ is a mere parenthesis is that of Herman Bavinck:

Totally wrong, therefore, is the chiliastic [premillenarian—DJE] view according to which the New Testament, along with the church composed of Gentiles, is an intermezzo [a short, light piece of music introduced between the major sections of a musical composition, basically the same in

idea as a parenthesis in a sentence—DJE], a detour taken by God because Israel rejected its Messiah, so that the actual continuation and fulfillment of the Old Testament can begin only with Christ's second coming. The opposite, rather, is true. Not the New Testament but the Old is an intermezzo. The covenant with Israel is temporary; the law has been inserted in between the promise to Abraham and its fulfillment in Christ, that it might increase the trespass and be a disciplinarian leading to Christ (Rom. 5:20; Gal. 3:24ff.).... The New Testament is not an intermezzo or interlude, neither a detour nor a departure from the line of the old covenant, but the long-aimed-for goal, the direct continuation and the genuine fulfillment of the Old Testament.⁴

The Reformed faith is in full agreement with Bavinck's searing indictment of chiliasm, or dispensational premillennialism, because of premillennialism's reducing of the church to a mere parenthesis, or “intermezzo.”

Chiliasm...comes in conflict with Christianity itself. In principle it is one with Judaism and must get to where it attributes a temporary, passing value to Christianity, the historical person of Christ, and his suffering and death, and it only first expects real salvation from Christ's second coming, his appearance in glory. Like Judaism, it subordinates the spiritual to the material, the ethical to the physical, confirms the Jews in their carnal-mindedness, excuses their rejection of the Messiah, reinforces the veil that lies over their minds when they hear the reading of the Old Testament and promotes the illusion that the physical descendants of Abraham will as such still enjoy an advantage in the kingdom of heaven.⁵

The positive Reformed, biblical confession concerning Israel and the Old Testament is that

the true reading and interpretation of the Old Testament is to be found with those who have turned in repentance to the Lord Christ (2 Cor. 3:14-16).... A person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and...circumcision is a matter of the heart (Rom. 2:29).... The Jewish person who becomes a Christian was not a child of Abraham but becomes such by faith (Gal. 3:29).⁶

... to be continued. 

⁴ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 4: *Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation*, ed. John Bolt, tr. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 662.

⁵ Bavinck, 662.

⁶ Bavinck, 662, 663.

The Dialogue of the Lord's Supper (12c)

Introduction

The sacraments are God-ordained elements of worship. The primary purpose of the sacraments as elements of worship is that they be part of the holy dialogue between God and His church. God speaks to His people in the sacraments and they respond to His speech in faith and praise. In this way the covenant of grace is known and experienced in the sacraments. We are now ready to consider, What is He saying to us in the Lord's Supper? And how do we respond?

I Feed You

The main thing God says to us in the Lord's Supper is, "My people gathered here before me, I feed you and I nourish you." In baptism the main thing God tells us is, "My people, I wash you." Here the main thing He tells us is "My washed people, I also feed you." The Heidelberg Catechism points that out when it says in the middle of Answer 75 concerning God's promise in the Lord's Supper, that "He feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life." The Reformed Lord's Supper Form has the same emphasis. It says that Christ speaks to us in the Supper telling us that He has given His body to the death of the cross and shed His blood for us and as certainly *feeds* and *nourishes* our hungry and thirsty souls. This is a meal God sets before us, and by setting it before us God is telling us "I feed you with food for your soul."

You Need Food

That means, then, that He is also telling us that in His divine judgment we need to be fed. We are malnourished. God says to us, "My people gathered before me, you need to eat; you need strength, you are weak spiritually." In the Lord's Supper God says, "Even though you

are in the kingdom of God, washed by virtue of union with Christ, do not think that you automatically run the Christian race and live the Christian life out of that seed of new life. You need to be fed, you need to be nourished, even as a Christian, in order to carry on unto everlasting life. You get hungry spiritually as you fight the battle of faith. You must be filled along the way in order to go on fighting that battle."

That is true. God's testimony about that is objectively true regardless of whether we see it. But do we see it? Do you know that hunger? Do you see the need? Just as our bodies become weak physically when we have been engaged in strenuous activity, so also do we know that our souls become spiritually weak and famished as they go through the spiritual battles of this life? In that weakened state there are hunger pains; you yearn for food. It is only the hungry who are fed. And the first thing the Lord's Supper teaches us is that we are hungry and need continual nourishment, influxes of grace in order to live the Christian life.

The Food We Need

The Lord nourishes us and strengthens us in the Lord's Supper by telling us of two realities through the means of this sacrament. First, He declares to us the reality of our justification, that His broken body was offered on the cross for us, and His blood shed for us, that our sins might be forgiven. That feeds our hungry souls. We come sometimes limping into His house and to the Lord's Supper. We fight the battle of sin. In a week of self-examination we see that so much sin remains yet in us. We are hungry for an assuring word that our sins are forgiven in Jesus Christ, that He still loves us. "Tell us that, and it will be like food to our souls, it will strengthen us to keep going."

And then secondly, our sanctification is declared to us in this Supper. That too feeds and nourishes us. Now that we are forgiven, we also need spiritual strength to go

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back and fight against the same sins we have asked Him to forgive. And in this supper He says, “Christ’s death and life are good food for that too. I will fill you with Christ Himself, His own life. And you will be strengthened by this food to go out and live for Me in your life. I will feed you, my poor starving people. I will feed you with Christ. I know you are famished, I know you need strength. Here is your food—My forgiving grace, and grace to give you power to keep my law.”¹

Other Aspects of Salvation

That is not all our covenant God says in the Lord’s Supper. He says also that He will feed and nourish us *together* as we gather before Him. And that part of our strength will come from our being unified before Him. I Corinthians 10:17 tells us God says in the Lord’s Supper that “we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.” We are one. God unites us in this meal and tells us we are united before Him.

In addition, He speaks to us in the Lord’s Supper of the heaven that is coming for us. Mark 14:25: “Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” He declares to us what is coming when He will eat and drink with us in the marriage supper of the Lamb. And does that not also nourish us and strengthen us?

Union With Christ

Our God tells us in the Lord’s Supper that we have this food, this nourishment, this unity, this hope of heaven, by virtue of our union with Jesus Christ His Son. This is a covenantal sacrament. It is a covenant meal in the covenantal assembly. And the heart of the covenant is union and communion with God in Christ. He Himself said, “This is the New Testament (or covenant) in my blood.” He tells us that we will partake of Christ Himself. So that, as the Catechism says, when we partake by faith, very really we are more and more flesh of His flesh and bone of His bones, united to Him like a head united to the body is governed by the same Spirit.

Jehovah tells us in the Lord’s Supper that this will be

¹ In the actual partaking of the Supper God gives this blessing of salvation. The declaration is made especially as the elements are on the table and then are being broken and poured out.

how we are nourished. This will be how we have the food of justification and sanctification. He will unite us in the Supper more and more to Jesus Christ Himself, so that His life by His Spirit flows into us. In union with Him, His righteousness is imputed to us legally and we are declared righteous. In union with Him His actual life fills us, giving us strength. This is how we will be united to each other; we will all be united together by being united to Christ. This is how we will have heaven one day. We are united to Him and will be with Him where He is in glory. “I feed you My people, I feed you for strength along the way.”

Come, eat!

And the final thing He says to us in the Supper is, “Come, eat!” He commands us to come and partake of what He declares to us, to eat not only with the external mouth but with the soul by faith, to eat this Christ. It is not only, “This is My body broken for you”; it is, “*Take eat*, this is My body broken for you.”

Our Response

And together, the church gathered before Him as the covenant people respond to what He says and then does. This is worship, the holy dialogue. After He speaks, we do not just sit there; we respond to what He says. First of all, we respond by the activity of eating and drinking, not only with our physical mouth, but with our soul in faith. We do eat Christ for nourishment. We take the bread and wine and speak in our minds as we do so, saying, “Thanks be to Thee, Lord! Yes, I am hungry, famished spiritually! I need Christ! And as really as I am chewing on this bread, in my soul I am taking Him as my Christ by the faith Thou hast given me. Unite me to Him!” I eat!

Second, we respond with prayer and praise. We worship Him for what He has told us and given to us. How can we not?! We cannot just sit in worship and be silent. I point out that in the Reformed Form for the Lord’s Supper, our Reformed fathers again sought to capture this notion of a holy dialogue of worship also in the liturgy of the Lord’s Supper. They were conscious of the fact that this is an *element of worship* and that it must be celebrated in the church as a dialogue between God and His people.

So after the section on self-examination that prepares us for this holy dialogue, the Form explains what God

says to us in the Lord's Supper: "Let us consider to what end the Lord hath instituted His supper." God speaks to us in that section of the Form, telling us from Scripture what He will say to us in the sacrament.


Then, after that, we respond with prayer, "O most merciful God and Father, we beseech Thee that Thou wilt be pleased in this Supper...to work in our hearts by the Holy Spirit," that is, "We beseech You to give us what You just said You would give us." This is covenantal interaction, dialogue.²

After that prayer God speaks again in the elements: "The bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ. The cup of blessing which we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ.... Lift your hearts to heaven and do not cleave to the external bread and wine."

And upon eating, we respond with praise to our

² In this section the Lord's prayer was originally to be said in unison by the church at this point and at the end to capture this dialogue. See, G. VanDooren, *The Beauty of Reformed Liturgy*. Winnipeg: Premier Publishing, 1980, 42.

God. "Let us therefore *jointly praise* His name with thanksgiving and everyone say in his heart thus, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul,'" with Psalm 103 and many other passages fused together in a symphony of praise, for He has given what He promised. And then we speak in a prayer of thanksgiving: "O Almighty, merciful God and Father, we render Thee most humble and hearty thanks for what has just happened." Following which, in some churches, we respond in the giving of a collection for the Benevolent Fund at the end, a practice that goes all the way back to the early church.³

Having been nourished and fed so freely by God's grace in Christ, we respond to His speech and the nourishment He gives. This is dialogue. In prayer, song, and offering we do what I Corinthians 11:26 tells us to do, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew [proclaim] the Lord's death till he come." 

³ K. Deddens, *Where Everything Points to Him*. Neerlandia: Inheritance Publications, 1993, 77.

STRENGTH OF YOUTH

REV. BRIAN HUIZINGA

"To Teach Them War" (13)

Knowing Our Enemies: Satan

In 2003 the U.S. Defense Department created a special deck of "Iraqi Most Wanted" playing cards. Each of the 52 cards gave a profile, in order of rank, of the henchmen of former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. Saddam was the Ace of Spades and the top card in the deck. The American soldiers invading Iraq were each given a deck of cards. By thumbing through his cards, either while on active duty or during some down-time

of recreation in the barracks, the soldier could quickly familiarize himself with his most important enemies.

In our spiritual warfare we need a profile of our enemies. This article and the next two are our profile cards. Our Reformed Confessions (Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 52; Canons of Dordt, V, 4) identify our three principal enemies. On one card is "Satan." On another is "The World." On a third is "Our Sinful Flesh."

We begin with a profile of Satan. He is our foe. Some people question whether all of the enemies on the "Iraqi Most Wanted" cards were legitimately the real and present threats they were portrayed to be. Make no mistake about it, Satan is a real and present threat. He is not a

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symbol of evil or a figure of speech. Satan is real, as real as you are. The Bible says so.

Satan is that perdition-bound, God-hating, powerful, fallen angel, who, under the sovereignty of God, seeks through temptation to influence souls to hate and disobey God. The information on his card is alarming and makes a battle against the likes of Saddam Hussein, “Chemical Ali” and “Mrs. Anthrax” look like mere sport.

While the list is not exhaustive, here are six profile descriptions of Satan that every soldier in the army of Christ should know.

1. Satan is not physical but spiritual

- As an angel, Satan is pure spirit. He was not made out of the dust of the ground and does not have a visible, physical, flesh-and-blood form as we do (Eph. 6:11-12).
- Although he may be present, I will never see Satan walk past me or my group of friends after church, or while I am on a date, or exiting a job interview.
- It is impossible to include a picture of Satan on his profile card.
- It will take more power than I possess to destroy Satan, for he cannot be killed by tying a mill-stone around his neck and casting him into the depths of the Mediterranean Sea.
- His *working* is essentially spiritual, aimed at my soul. A terrorist can slit my throat or shoot bullets into my chest. Satan goes deeper. He wants my soul, the spiritual aspect of my being in which I stand consciously before my Maker. He wants my soul to die savoring the things of men and not of God (Matt. 16:23).
- This makes his working mysterious and beyond complete comprehension. As the Spirit’s good operation of regeneration in my soul is mysterious and beyond my comprehension (John 3:8), and likewise the holy angels’ ministering for my salvation (Heb. 1:14), so also are Satan’s evil operations and influences upon my soul. I know that in Jesus’ day Satan took possession of some (Mark 5); he also entered Judas (Luke 22:3; John 13:27); he filled the heart of Ananias with a lie (Acts 5:3); and he takes some captive at his will (II Tim. 2:26). But exactly how he interacts with the thoughts, desires, and emotions of my flesh is mysterious. He does, though. I must take him seriously!

2. Satan is not God, but a creature

- Only God is God, eternal and self-existent. Satan is a creature who was made.¹
- As a creature, Satan is not omnipresent. His influence extends throughout the whole earth due to his hordes of demonic henchmen (Eph. 6:12); nevertheless, even as a spirit-being he cannot be present everywhere in the universe at the same time. He comes and goes (Job 1:6-7; 2:7).
- Satan is not omniscient. He does not know everything. He does not know the names written in the book of life or when Christ shall come again (Mark 13:32).
- Satan is not omnipotent. He has tremendous power, but power that is limited and controlled by God (Job 1:12; John 10:21; James 4:7). Always, I must remember this!

3. Satan is so depraved

- His names reveal him to be the evil one that he is. His two most common names are “Satan” and “Devil.” “Satan” appears 55 times in the Bible, and most often in the books of Job and Revelation. “Devil” never appears in the Old Testament, and 61 times in the New Testament.
- “Satan” means “adversary.” Chiefly, he is the adversary of God. He hates God personally, hates God’s sovereignty, and hates God’s decrees and works. Because he cannot kill God, he hates and opposes God’s Anointed. Because Satan could not keep Christ in the grave, and because Christ was caught up unto God and to His throne (Rev. 12:5), Satan goes after the woman, Christ’s church—thus, *you* and *me* (Rev. 12:13). If he could get just one of God’s children to drown in perdition, he could claim the throne of the universe, for he would have exposed God as a powerless and faithless idol who could not keep His promise to save all His own. Adversary!
- The name “Devil” means “slanderer.” He is the father of the lie (John 8:44). He uses human beings as his mouthpieces—and soon the Antichrist—as he goes through the world uttering lies about God, Christ, and the church, intending to destroy the name of God.
- It is impossible to express just how wicked this Adversary and Slanderer really is. Article 12 of the Belgic Confession reminds me that “the devils and evil spirits are

¹ For a description of the beginnings of Satan, see a previous article in this series: “Knowing War’s Origin: In the Angelic Realm” in the May 15, 2015 issue.

so depraved that they are enemies of God and every good thing, to the utmost of their power, as murderers, watching to ruin the church and every member thereof....” Satan has no conscience that can prick him in his defiance of God. He will never repent. Nor will he evolve into a morally decent creature. He is far worse than the worst of Nimrod, Athaliah, Herod the Great, Caesar Nero, Hitler and the 52 “Most Wanted of 2003” all put together.

- Satan is not my friend. Some people are fascinated by gargantuan or venomous serpents and want to keep them as pets in their homes. However, I may never become infatuated or fascinated with Satan and suppose I can innocently get to know him. I may never worship him. He is my adversary and I must hate him, flee from him, and pray for his destruction.

4. Satan’s craft and power are great

- He is not a mere man devoted to the utter ruin of my soul in hell, but the prince of a hellish kingdom (Eph. 2:2). He is a dragon (Rev. 12).

- Typically, his power is not exercised through brute force, but craft, wiles, and evil stratagems. He is the Tempter who works through deceit (Matt. 4:1,3; Eph. 6:11). He is the Master of Trickery, making hell look appealing and sin fun. He can appeal to my pride to convince me that the dung of my boast “I am Protestant Reformed!” is the solid ground upon which I should stand in the judgment day. He baits gnarly hooks of hell-fire with honeycomb so that even though the whore’s feet go down to death, the young man cannot resist her and her lips (Prov. 5).

- Before he rushes at me head-on declaring, “God did not say!” he will dance at my side suggesting, “Yea hath God really said eighteen-year-olds may not drink beer, listen to pulsating music, and talk profanely together around a bonfire? Does the Bible say that? Where?”

5. Satan is my constant foe

- Some enemies fatigue. Some lose focus. Some eventually give up. Not Satan (I Pet. 5:8).

- Every day Satan is ready to meet the challenge of getting me to turn my back on God and walk toward hell, either boasting in iniquity or despairing in hopelessness. Whether I am ready for him when I first stir in bed at dawn or not, he is ready for me—ready to tempt me to

have negative thoughts multiplying in my mind as I arise from my slumber, so that I begin my day gloomy, or to have me lose control of my emotions or tongue at the first encounter of something I do not like. He exerts his influence upon me in the sanctuary to make sure I get jealous of so-and-so as she walks in, to make sure I think about the game during congregational prayer, or to make sure that when we guys gather in our circle afterward we demean others, especially so-and-so with his dorky haircut. He is present on every date to make sure we get alone time and temptations to compromise our chastity. When I leave the job interview with no job, he tempts me to imagine I am a worthless failure. Even while I pray, he tempts me to think about something other than the immediate presence of God’s majesty, or to doubt that God really will forgive me, or that He even hears my confession. Relentless he is.

6. Christ is Satan’s Lord

- Satan is not the Lord of the universe but subject to my Christ who is. Not unto thee, Satan, but to our God will we forever exclaim and pray, “For in Jesus Christ, Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever, Amen!”

- Because Christ who bruised Satan’s head on the cross is Satan’s Lord, Satan will never claim and bring to perdition an elect child of the Lord (John 6:39; 10:29). Rather, the lake of fire will soon claim Satan forever (Rev. 20:10). My comfort is that I belong to the Lord.

Let’s take a moment to illustrate one of Satan’s battle campaigns in order to see all these characteristics of his in play, and to acknowledge how awful he is. It is a campaign waged on the field of a young woman’s soul.²

Imagine a nineteen-year-old woman who goes to the first class of her sophomore year in college. Satan also attends. This Reformed young lady, while not recklessly craving attention, is somewhat vulnerable because she is having a hard time being content, yearning for the emotional rush of a relationship with a man. She wants a boyfriend. Satan will play on that yearning. In that

² What follows is not a description of a concrete case. It is an imaginary case. No particular individual or family is in mind. May the reading of this deliberately descriptive and sobering fictional account by the youth be an instrument of God to give them serious pause.

first class she meets a handsome fellow. By the end of the week over 100 text-messages have been exchanged.

He is an unchurched unbeliever and she knows it. They begin dating—secretly. Her guilty conscience is overridden by the excitement she feels as he continually tells her how attractive she is and how lucky he is to talk with her. Satan is taking her captive at his will.

When her parents and mature friends find out what is going on, they compassionately but sharply admonish and warn her, insisting she cut off her relationship with this fellow. She tries to justify her actions and temper their concerns, “He is such a good guy. Honestly. Give him a chance. He wants to come to church with me and talk with our pastor. We talk together about the Bible, about what it means to be Reformed. Besides, we are not dating, we’re just friends.” Her parents repeat, “You may not be friends with the enemies of God. God is not mocked.” Her immature friends keep cheering, “You two are *adorable!*” Her mature friends say, “Dear, does this advance your relationship with God?”

She feels less and less guilt. Through the Adversary and Slanderer’s working she feels more and more vindication for standing up to “narrow-minded and judgmental” family and friends. Meanwhile, she and the young man are secretly breaking boundaries because they really do “love” (that’s Satan’s lie; lust is not love) each other and want to demonstrate their “love” through intimacy. Through the emotional rush this “amazing man” gives her, she is ready to sell her inheritance and even her soul for a life with him. She has never felt better about herself. Her heart pounds to see him. He makes her feel like a princess. Her obsession is unbreakable. And on top of it all, he’s coming with her to a catechism class.

Three years later they have a ten-month-old daughter and are divorced. He was manipulative, abusive, and repeatedly sexually unfaithful.

Satan has his sights on bigger things—her family. Two years after the divorce she is engaged to another man and planning her second wedding. Most in her family are overwhelmed with grief. Her father collapses to his knees to pray every night and just sobs uncontrollably. Thinking about the whole situation is all-consuming; “What happened to our sweetheart—the baby of our family? Did I fail as a father? How could this happen? Divorce? And now *remarriage*? In *our* family? How? Why? And

our 3-year-old granddaughter... how can we help her in all of this?”


The divorced woman is angry because no one—with the exception of two older brothers—comes or gives their blessing to her wedding. “What!?” she bitingly retorts, “You all think I’m going to hell!?” Influenced by Satan (his craft is great), she, and two of her older brothers, are convinced this remarriage is not the adultery God calls it, but God’s tender mercy to a suffering saint who cannot be expected to live the single life at 24 years of age. Now there is conflict in the family. Will it escalate? Satan’s goal is attitudes, words, and actions that dishonor God. Then there is the new husband and his family. They go to a Reformed church and are appalled that the family of their new daughter-in-law does not come to the wedding and calls this beautiful marriage adulterous. “How unbelievably unchristian, hyper-radical, and judgmental can folks be?” they wonder.

What a tragedy is the whole mess.

This happens. I’m a father. Just writing this puts a knot in my stomach.

Don’t you see how the bloody battles of history are mere sport, compared to the campaigns waged by Satan? Don’t you hate Satan with all your heart and long for his complete destruction in hell? Don’t you long for heaven? Don’t you see how desperately we all need armor—God’s armor? Don’t you want to pray right now?

Do it. Pray. Pray in adoration of your good and sovereign God who is in control of these heart-rending happenings in testing and proving His saints; who will never allow Satan to pluck one elect child out of His hands, so that even if a believer is drawn into great and heinous sins by Satan, faithful Jehovah will graciously bring that believer to confession of sin and amendment of life.

Humble yourself before His sovereignty and reverence Him as He does not always incorporate all of our physical seed into His everlasting covenant. Not knowing who are elect and who are reprobate, pray that those who have been taken captive by Satan be freed. Free them, O God! Pray for wisdom in hard situations, and for charity that rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth. And thank God for that precious blood of His Lamb by whom we overcome our great enemy Satan and love not our lives unto death (Rev. 12:11). 

Laughter

Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing; then said they among the heathen, the LORD hath done great things for them.

Psalm 126:2

The study of human behaviors is a large and fascinating enterprise, drawing research from every religious and secular worldview known to man. Laughter is perhaps one of the most commonly relatable human behaviors. Most babies laugh by four months of age, and a visit to any schoolyard during recess sometimes makes one think that children communicate through laughter alone. The entertainment industry reaps huge profits by churning out every sort of comedy imaginable, and most adults laugh regularly with their loved ones. Even the dourest individual laughs every now and then. However, compared to other common human behaviors, there is a surprisingly small body of research focusing on laughter. What we do know about laughter is interesting and might be instructive as to the state of our spiritual health.

The physiology of laughter reveals that it is the result of neurons communicating with several sets of muscles simultaneously to elicit multiple responses. These muscles work in concert to cause the characteristic sounds and facial expressions associated with this behavior. First, our diaphragm and rib muscles tighten to produce the sound of laughter (variably described as a chuckle, chortle, giggle, guffaw, titter, cackle, or snort). The constricting of these muscles results in air being squeezed through our vocal tract at a very high pressure to produce both the sound and the rhythmic nature of laughter. Most people have a characteristic laugh that includes both rhythmically melodic and non-melodic sounds. These different sounds occur from the air interacting with different components in our vocal tract. Each of these sounds is typically much higher in pitch than our normal speech. Also, whether we want to admit it or not, most people's intense laughs include a few snorts that are

the result of turbulence in the nasal cavities. In addition to rib muscle and diaphragm action, two sets of facial muscles are engaged during laughter. One set controls the corners of our mouth and the other set controls the area around our eyes. While everyone can voluntarily control these facial muscles, relatively few people have voluntary control over these eye muscles.

In humans, laughter can be stimulated by tickling, play, humor, chemicals, and pathological conditions (and, in some extreme experiments, directly by electrical stimulation of the brain region thought to regulate laughter!). Other laughter triggers that, curiously, are not commonly addressed in the scientific literature are those associated with joy. Think of family members meeting again after years spent apart, a one-year old seeing his father walk in the door at the end of the work day, or someone receiving incredibly good news. In each of these cases, the heart is overcome with joy and laughter simply bubbles out. With respect to laughter elicited by tickling and play, humans might not be unique. When other mammals such as primates and rodents engage in play or are tickled, rhythmic vocal expressions are produced that are strikingly similar to those of human laughter.

Other aspects of laughter include the fact that most people find it difficult (if not impossible) to laugh genuinely on command, and that most people have little difficulty discriminating genuine laughter from false laughter (by both the sound and the facial aspects). Current studies also indicate that both males and females laugh frequently, but females laugh significantly more than males. One interesting aspect of laughter is that it can be contagious, and appears to be more contagious between people who are well-acquainted with each other in a positive manner compared to strangers.

While we perhaps associate laughter most often with humor, tickling, or play, the majority of human laughter is not associated with any of these stimuli. In our society, laughter is a common component of normal conversation, and therefore for many of us, most of our laughter takes place absent any humor. Most casual conversations are frequently punctuated with laughter, even when the

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conversation is about the most mundane topic. Anyone who uses public transportation or observes people in a crowded shopping mall or beach can attest to the fact that laughter is sprinkled through just about every conversation. During these casual conversations, the speaker tends to laugh measurably more than the audience, and when these normal human social interactions are studied, laughter is much more likely to accompany ordinary phrases or comments unrelated to humor (for example, preceding or following the phrase “It was nice to meet you”). Laughter in response to something categorized as a joke or humor is in the distinct minority. Even when laughter follows a “joke-like” comment in a conversation, the “joke” is typically not something that would normally be thought of as particularly funny or that would be met with laughter if it were told with the express purpose of being a joke. The laughter that accompanies normal conversations is spontaneous (that is, genuine, not false), but at the same time is systematically placed within speech patterns. This social laughter most frequently punctuates phrase breaks in speech, not the middle of a phrase. For example, it is actually quite common for a person to say something such as: “What time are we meeting? Ha-ha,” but one will rarely say “What time are, ha-ha, we meeting?” While this laughter is genuine, the fact that it reliably occurs in specific conversational locations indicates that the content of the speech is more important than the laughter, and therefore, the laughter is punctuating the speech. On the other hand, laughter associated with humor or physical stimulation takes precedence over speech or other behaviors (it can be difficult to articulate a sentence while being tickled or directly after hearing a hilarious joke). Therefore, it is thought that even though social laughter and laughter from other stimuli elicit the same physical effects, they may be governed by different neural processes and may be subtly different behaviors. In any case, simply observing human interactions supports the research above: laughter definitely is an important social behavior that impacts human relationships. In fact, compared to the quantity of laughter occurring in social settings, laughter is virtually non-existent in solitude; the laughter that does occur in solitude is typically associated with humor.

We can gain valuable insight into laughter as an aspect of human behavior through these studies. More impor-

tantly, though, our Creator has provided us with a good amount of instruction on laughter in His Word. First are the well-known examples of God Himself laughing. In Psalms 2, 37, and 59, God’s response to plots against Him and His people is holy laughter. To the almighty God, the machinations of wicked men who shake their fist at their Creator are nothing more than the vain barking of dogs (Ps. 59:6). This divine laughter is a laughter of contempt: “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision” (Ps. 2:4), and “But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh at them; thou shalt have all the heathen in derision” (Ps. 59:8). Quickly following God’s laughter is the wrath of a just God: “Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure” (Ps. 2:5), and “The LORD shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming” (Ps. 37:13). What a fearful thing it is for an individual to be laughed at by the LORD! Clearly, God’s laughter is a description of His disposition toward His enemies as they attempt to work against Him. It is not the same thing as the laughter of humans described above.

The Scriptures do, however, address human laughter in several places. When studying scriptural accounts of human laughter, it quickly becomes clear that there exists both proper and improper laughter. The well-known passage in Ecclesiastes verifies that there are times when it is proper to laugh: “A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance” (Eccl. 3:4). Further, Jesus promises that a time of laughter awaits His children who currently weep (Luke 6:21). A prime example of proper laughter is found in Psalm 126:2: “Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.” In this Psalm, the Jews who had returned to the Promised Land from their Babylonian captivity could not help but break out in peals of laughter for God’s goodness to them. Therefore, laughter in response to providential blessings is entirely appropriate.

The history of God’s promise of a covenant son to Abraham also provides great insight into proper laughter. When Abraham was 99 years old, Jehovah appeared to him and promised that he and his wife, Sarah, would have a son, and that this son would stand first in a great line of kings eventually culminating in the Messiah. Abraham’s response was one of worshipful laughter, as he fell on his face and then proceeded to keep God’s covenant by circumcising all the males in his household (Gen. 17). This was laughter

of faith and wonderment and was captured for posterity in the name of Abraham's son, Isaac, which means, "he laughs." After Isaac was born, Sarah also laughed in faith and amazement for the goodness of God (Gen. 21). Again, the example of proper, God-pleasing laughter is that it breaks forth due to the unbelievable goodness of God. This type of laughter is perhaps different from those already described above. It is not marked by humor, physical stimulation, or a verbal punctuation. It is an emotional response that is the vocalization of joy, but it is joy arising from the believing soul. Faced with the incomparable and overflowing goodness of our Lord, sometimes the believer is only able to respond by laughing!


In the account of Isaac's birth, we are also provided with an example of improper laughter. When the LORD visited Abraham a second time and reiterated His promise, Sarah overheard and laughed at the thought of a 90 year-old woman bearing a child. In this case, doubt and unbelief produced laughter. The book of Job also variously describes proper and improper laughter. As Job and his friends speak to each other, laughter is brought up at least seven times, sometimes describing the proper response of a believer and sometimes describing sinful, mocking behavior. Scripture is replete with additional examples of sinful laughter. When Hezekiah attempted to reinstitute the keeping of the Passover, his decree was "laughed to scorn" by many in the nation (II Chron. 30:10). The enemies of God's people laugh at them exactly because they put their trust in the Lord (Ps. 22:7-8). Both Proverbs (cf. Prov. 14:13) and Ecclesiastes (cf. Eccl. 2:2; 7:3, 6) caution against vain laughter. Jesus Himself was mocked with laughter when He said that Jairus' daughter was sleeping (cf. Matt. 9:24; Mark 5:40; Luke 8:53). With the rest of human behaviors after the Fall, laughter is naturally used for evil.

From all these biblical examples, principles on laughter can be developed to guide us in our use of this gift. Laughter is a creature, created for our enjoyment and for God's glory; therefore, we must be wise in our use of it. When considering the instruction of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, we should be aware of the strong temptations to pursue vain laughter. We know that the Internet contains endless forms of temptation, and we usually focus our warnings on digital fornication found there. In light of these Scriptures, though, we should probably be

just as vigilant in guarding ourselves from the incredibly popular websites where memes and videos are posted primarily to induce laughter. If we regularly visit websites to laugh, we need to consider whether this humor-induced laughter is describing the perfect man before God ("Til he fill thy mouth with laughing, and thy lips with rejoicing," Job 8:21) or a man who pursues vain pleasure ("Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness," Prov. 14:13). Surely, participating in *virtuous* humor is included in "a time to laugh," but the regular pursuit of humor is likely also addressed in Ecclesiastes: "For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this is also vanity" (Eccl. 7:6).

In the same manner, we should take time to reflect on what moves us to laughter, understanding that both secular science and biblical categories of laughter view it as an emotional response that gives insight into our mindset. When presented with *non-virtuous* memes, jokes, or videos, whether one is easily moved to laughter or cringes at the inappropriate material may be an accurate indicator of the spiritual health of the individual. It is worth taking time to reflect on our own responses to non-virtuous humor. Even a suppression of laughter and a wry smile at this type of humor is revealing.

At the same time, we should take stock as to whether or not we are often (or ever!) moved to laughter when we consider the gift of our salvation, which can sometimes be almost too wonderful for speech. As exemplified by Abraham, Sarah, and the psalmists, holy laughter is that which bubbles up uninhibited from the joyful soul and finds expression in the physiological manifestation of laughter! Surely, we believers who are aware both of our own natural miserable condition and of the exalted condition that has been freely granted to us through Christ will at times laugh when we contemplate this or when speaking about it with others.

Another aspect of Sarah's response to Isaac's birth is instructive here too. Contemporary science has noticed that laughter is almost always a social behavior. Sarah knew this already, and called to her believing friends and family to come laugh with her. She knew the joy that God had placed in her heart was for the purpose of jubilant, worshipful laughter with the church. So, let us heed Sarah's call to sanctified laughter, and laugh together for God's goodness! 

A New Year

"Fear is here! And though we wanted it otherwise, we brought it with us into the New Year." Thus writes Rev. John Heys in a previous SB (volume 46, issue 7). "Putting up a new calendar, calling the month by a different name and the year by another number does not take away the fears we had in the year that is gone by with startling swiftness." (Read more by Rev. Heys to see how the gift of faith abolishes fear!)

Also..., as the year of our Lord 2017 is now underway, we note that John Newton wrote the hymn "Amazing Grace" to accompany his sermon on New Year's Day 1773 and introduced it to his congregation at that time. What comfort it provides at this occasion! "Through many dangers, toils and snares I have already come; 'tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home."

Trivia Question

You may know that the state of Michigan contains more Protestant Reformed congregations than any other state in the USA. Do you know how many? And..., which state has the second most PRC congregations? Answers later in this column.

Minister Activities

Prof. Barry and Lori Gritters and Deane and Donna Wassink left for a three-Sunday stay with the PRC of Vellore, India in late December. Prof. Gritters was to be involved especially with the Sola Gratia Program in training area pastors in the Reformed faith and the pastoral min-

istry. He also preached and taught in the PRCV, English congregation, and village out-reach. The Wassinks assisted in all these labors, as well as directed their attention to the Tamil congregation in expanding and strengthening our bonds in Christ with the PRCV. Pray for the Lord's blessing on the work there.

The Council of Byron Center, MI PRC announced the following trio of pastors from which the congregation voted to call the denomination's next home missionary: Rev. C. Haak, Rev. B. Huizinga and Rev. R. VanOverloop. The congregational meeting for calling a missionary was set for Sunday evening, January 1 after the evening worship service. At this meeting Rev. VanOverloop received the call to this position. May God grant a clear indication of His will to Rev. VanOverloop.

On January 8, Rev. Garry Eriks declined the call from Southwest PRC in Wyoming, MI. Rev. Arie denHartog preached his farewell sermon there in the evening service on January 1. We give thanks for the many years of service by Rev. denHartog, as God has certainly used him for good in our denomination! Rev. denHartog served congregations in Wyckoff, NJ; Randolph, WI; and Redlands, CA in addition to Southwest PRC. He also served as foreign missionary to Singapore as well as minister-on-loan there later.

Congregational Activities

The Psalm Choir began its current season recently and meets each Sunday at 2:15 P.M. in Grandville, MI PRC. And the Protestant Reformed Student Orchestra plans to hold its year-end concert on February 16 at St. Cecelia's Music Center.

First PRC of Edmonton, AB, Canada enjoyed their annual coffee and olie bollen together on New Year's Day, while Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA held their monthly fellowship lunch on January 8.

Seminary Activities

The Protestant Reformed Seminary in Wyoming, MI concluded its first semester of classes and its exams in early December. December 31 marked the end of internships for seven senior students. Many of these young men expressed appreciation for this time of internship. They returned to the seminary for morning Interim classes from January 9-18. The Interim course was entitled "The Schism of 1953" and was taught by Prof. R. Dykstra. The class was to cover the doctrine and history of the split of 1953 and was open to auditors. May God bless the professors and students as they continue in the labors of the school year! How vital to the health and well-being of our churches is our theological school! And we continue to praise and thank God for raising up godly young men to pursue the office of the ministry.

School Activities

Supporters of Adams Christian School had opportunity to lend financial funding to their school by dining at Grandville, MI Big Boy on January 12, when profits there benefited the school.

Sister-Church Activities

Rev. Ron VanOverloop, Grace PRC of Standale, MI and elder Sid Miedema from Byron Center PRC, along with their wives, traveled to Northern Ireland to conduct church visitation with the Covenant PRC

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

Standard Bearer

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there. Rev. VanOverloop also presented the lecture "Content with Who I Am in Christ," as well as leading a Tuesday morning Bible Study on the topic of "Paul's Prayers for the Ephesians." The visitors took part in Covenant's congregational dinner on January 20 and Rev. VanOverloop


preached in the Limerick Reformed Fellowship on January 22, D.V.

Denominational Activities

Classis East met on January 11 at Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI.

Trivia Answers

The state of Michigan is home to fourteen Protestant Reformed Churches, while the states of Illinois and Iowa are home to three each. More trivia next time.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Teacher Needed

■ The Protestant Reformed School of Wingham is in need of a multi-grade 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 or cell 519-955-5665 or Preston Crich at prstncrch@gmail.com for more information and to apply.

Notice

■ The Council and congregation of Southwest PRC express our whole-hearted gratitude to our emeritus pastor,

REV. ARIE DEN HARTOG.

For 12 years he has faithfully led us in the green pastures of God's Word from Sabbath to Sabbath. He, often accompanied by his wife Sherry, has made countless pastoral visits, bringing comforting words and counsel from Scripture. He has led many Bible society meetings. He has chaired at least 144 Council and 144 Consistory meetings for us. His ministry among us has been tireless—we thank him for his faithful labors and pray the Lord's richest blessings on him and Sherry as they enter into this new phase in their lives—"always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58), "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace..." (Is. 52:7a).

Tom VanderWoude, Clerk/SWPRC

Classis West

■ Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Hope, Redlands PRC on Wednesday, March 1 2017, at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Hope's consistory.

Rev. D. Kuiper, Stated Clerk

Seminary

■ All students enrolled in the Protestant Reformed Seminary who will be in need of financial assistance for the coming school year are asked to contact the Student Aid Committee secretary, Mr. Bill VanOverloop (Phone: 616-821-0369). This contact should be made before the next scheduled meeting, March 7, 2017, 3:30 P.M., D.V.

Student Aid Committee
Bill VanOverloop, Secretary

Wedding Anniversary

■ With gratitude to our God for His covenant faithfulness, we want to acknowledge the 60th wedding anniversary of our parents,

JAMES and CHARLOTTE SCHIPPER,

on January 16, 2017. Our prayer is for God's continued care over them. "I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations" (Psalm 89:1).

* Gordon and Nancy Schipper
* Randy and Lindy Looyenga
* Dan and Julie Kaiser

* Nathan and Jill Kamps
15 grandchildren (one in glory)
12 great grandchildren

Grandville, Michigan

Reformed Witness Hour

February 2017
Rev. Rodney Kleyn

Date

February 5
February 12
February 19
February 26

Topic

"How I Love Thy Law"
"No Other Gods"
"The True Worship of God"
"A Name to Be Reverenced"

Text

Psalms 119:97
Exodus 20:3
Exodus 20:4-6
Exodus 20:7