

# *The Standard Bearer*

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# Fear Not, I Bring You Good Tidings of Great Joy

“And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.”

Luke 2:10

Joseph and Mary had finally reached their destination, but they found the city of Bethlehem full of people who were of the same lineage. There was no room for them in the inn. It is highly possible that their late arrival was because of Mary being long in her pregnancy. Sometime early in their stay in Bethlehem Mary “brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger.”

Because this newborn child was also God’s only begotten and beloved Son, others had to be told. In addition to a star shining brightly in the far east, a heavenly host of angels proclaimed the tidings of great joy that night in a field near Bethlehem. While the tidings of great joy are for “all [kinds of] people,” the only ones told by the angels

were shepherd boys. The news of this birth would go out from them. They “made known abroad” (v. 17) the news of the birth of the “Savior, which is Christ the Lord.”

## The Fear-filled Setting

The shepherds of that day were usually early to mid-teenaged boys. The job of taking care of the family’s little flock of sheep was usually given to the youngest son, just as was the case with David.

A day filled with watching, leading, and protecting their little flocks was completed. Each of the shepherd boys had taken his small flock to different parts of the desert-like land in search of enough grass to satisfy the hunger of the sheep. When the sun was going down, they brought their flocks together to a common area where a pen had been established years before. With the sheep enclosed, the boys could visit together around a small fire until the weariness of the day brought them to find a night of rest—taking turns standing watch.

We know that these particular shepherd boys had been well taught to look for a Savior who is the Messiah, the Lord. The Spirit of God had been at work in them, so that among the topics of their evening conversations

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

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### Editorial Office

Prof. Barrett Gritters  
4949 Ivanrest Ave. SW  
Wyoming, MI 49418  
gritters@prca.org

### Business Office

*Standard Bearer*  
Mr. Timothy Pipe  
1894 Georgetown Center Dr.  
Jenison, MI 49428-7137  
PH: 616-457-5970  
tim@rfpa.org

### Church News Editor

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

### United Kingdom Office

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

### Rep. of Ireland Office

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

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was Jehovah their God and Shepherd and His promises. We may be assured that it was not the first time that they glorified and praised God when they returned to their flocks later that night (v. 20). It was something they did regularly.

Suddenly, “the angel of the Lord came upon them” (v. 9). The brilliance of heavenly glory burst into the night’s darkness in which the shepherd boys had been quietly sitting. The blinding and dazzling splendor of the angel is “the glory of the Lord” shining “round about them” (v. 9). The angel, along with the multitude of the heavenly host, came from the presence of the holy God. The brilliant light of the angel was a mere reflection of the infinite beauty of the great and holy God in all His virtues. This is the glory of Him whose eyes are too pure to behold evil (Hab. 1:13).

This glory now surrounded the shepherds, and Scripture says that they trembled with a “mega” fear (v. 9b). It was a paralyzing fear! It was for them not just the fear of the unknown, nor of a great surprise, nor of a blinding brilliance. Rather, it was the fear of sinful mortals who are brought consciously face to face with the glorious holiness of the Most High God. They feared that they would be destroyed both because they were mere creatures and because they were horrible sinners. This brilliance penetrated their hearts and laid them bare before God’s sight, so they were deeply conscious that all of their sinfulness was laid bare. It exposed the deep and dark recesses of their old man. The revelation of God’s glory brought them to the final judgment, and they saw themselves eternally condemned.

### **The Joyful Message**

The angel immediately urged them not to be afraid. The angel’s message was intended not only to remove their fear but especially to instill “great joy” into their hearts. The angel brought “good tidings of great joy” to these shepherds.

The good tidings often brought by politicians and, sadly, some preachers as well, is the good news of promises of deliverance from earthly troubles, that is, from crime, from diseases, from war, and from every hardship. Every Christmas you can hear it said that the sweet baby Child came to fill this world with love and kindness. But this only hides their great fear of meeting their Maker.

Additionally, these kinds of good tidings hide the great Gift of God under piles of earthly, gaily wrapped presents.

But such tidings are at best temporary, and they certainly do not remove the fear instilled by the angel’s revelation of the glory of God! Such “good” tidings do not take away man’s greatest fear, namely, the sense of guilt with the fear of death and eternal condemnation. An even greater fear than crime or poverty is our folly, our corruption, our giving ourselves to unrighteousness.

The “good tidings of great joy” announces “a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.” The Savior did not deliver the shepherds from the miserable and lowly task of being shepherds. Nor does the Savior deliver anyone from their earthly circumstances. In fact, the Savior Himself came in great poverty! As an infant He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. But the Savior does deliver from the greatest evil, earns complete forgiveness, and gives the highest good, namely, perfect righteousness in the sight of the holy and glorious God. This good news of the Savior from sin removes all dread of God’s wrath. It dispels all fears. The reason is that the Savior is the incarnate Christ. The Christ is God and man, and came into human flesh in order to redeem us from all of our sins. He delivers us from the power of the devil and makes us to be subject to Himself. The reality is that we belong to Him, body and soul.

His answer to our fears is to show us that God delights in mercy and has cast all our sins into the depths of the sea (Mic. 7:18, 19). He is gracious and dwells in fellowship with us in all His light and glory. The great joy is that we are forgiven! Our sins and all of our sinfulness are gone from the sight of God. We do not have to fear the judgment day. We are so righteous in Christ that God declares that we have the right to dwell with Him in all His glorious light, for He will make us to share in His light, so much so that His glory shall be revealed in us (Rom. 8:18).

### **The Fearless Recipients**

This joy is “to all people.”

It is universal in the sense that it is to all kinds of people. Not just to the rich but also the poor. Not just to the old, but also to the young. Not just to Jews, but also to Gentiles. It is for harlots who repent, like Rahab. And it is for Moabites, like Ruth. It is to the elect out of every

nation. And as such it comes to the lowly, uneducated shepherds in humble Judea. To the lowly and to the insignificant in society comes the message directly out of heaven.

And the glorious message of Christmas is personal. The angel brings the good tidings to “you,” that is, directly to you and to me personally. The Spirit takes this Word

of God and speaks directly to you who know the guilt and shame of your sin. He speaks joy to the contrite and humble, to the weary and heavy laden. He comes declaring, “Fear not!”

Hear the good tidings of great joy that the Savior is born. Believe! And respond with an inner joy and peace.



EDITORIAL

PROF. RUSSELL DYKSTRA

## The Urgent Need for 2,189 Covenant Youth: Excellent Teachers!

**T**he need is obvious. Over 2,100 students in eighteen schools. Growth and expansion, common. Teaching positions not filled in the current school year, and more openings coming for the 2017-18 school year. The point of these articles is to stress the importance of the cause of covenant education represented by the Protestant Reformed Christian schools, and the need for the youth seriously to consider before God whether they are called to the kingdom work of teaching. The previous editorial began to treat these matters.

This editorial will step up to a higher level. What the schools need is not merely college graduates with education majors to fill openings, mere bodies in the classroom. Rather, these Protestant Reformed schools need *excellent* Protestant Reformed teachers in the classroom. The heart of the Christian school is

the Christian teacher. If the teacher has the qualifications for teaching, is dedicated to the Reformed faith, and loves the children, the Christian school is an inestimable blessing to the covenant homes. On the other hand, if the teacher lacks any of the above, the school is in trouble, and the school can be a burden to these homes.

In their history, Protestant Reformed schools have had some of both kinds of teachers. In the providence and grace of God, the schools have had far, far more teachers who were a blessing to the schools. From my own experience—as a student, parent, and colleague—I will testify that Protestant Reformed schools are blessed with godly teachers who are innovative, energetic, interesting, involved, and imaginative. They strive to make their subjects live for their students—“their” covenant children. Excellent teachers.

What does it take to be an excellent Protestant Reformed school

teacher? Realizing that the answer to this involves some subjectivity, I will nonetheless set forth some qualifications that I judge to be requisite for a quality teacher in a Protestant Reformed school.

First, he or she must possess *the ability to teach*. That should be rather obvious, but it must be recognized. Most people somewhere in their education have had an instructor who could not teach well. The classic example is the college professor who obviously knows his field but is not able to teach it effectively. A teacher is a communicator. He must be able to communicate effectively to his students. This involves the ability to organize material logically. A good teacher is able to grasp the main points of the material to be taught, and recognize which are the subordinate ones. He is able, then, to communicate the ideas in a way that is understandable to others. That in turn requires a good command of the language and the

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*Previous article in this series: December 1, 2016, p. 100.*



awareness of the level at which the instruction should be given, which is to say, at the level appropriate for the particular students.

In addition, the ability to teach demands some *leadership qualities*. A teacher must have the confidence to stand before people and speak to them with some authority. An individual who wilts before the stares or glares or impudent looks of an audience will not be able to teach effectively. Closely related to that is the ability to maintain order—proper discipline in the classroom. A lack of discipline has destroyed many a good lesson plan.

All this is based on the premise that a teacher is born, not made. Certain God-given qualifications are necessary for one to be an effective teacher. This does not mean that an individual must be a polished teacher before he or she enters the education department of a college. Of course not. Training and experience will significantly improve the ability of an instructor to teach effectively. And, allowance must be made for differences of abilities from one teacher to the next. But effective educators have it in them—the ability to teach.

The second requirement of an excellent Protestant Reformed teacher is that *he or she be Protestant Reformed*. By this I do not mean merely that he is a member in good standing of a Protestant Reformed church. That is the formal requirement in all Protestant Reformed schools. But formal membership is scarcely the extent of this requirement. A teacher must have a thorough understand-

ing of the truth that God has given the PRC. She must not only know the Reformed faith; she must also understand the doctrinal issues that God used to shape the PRC. This includes the issue of 1924—sovereign, particular grace, over against the error of common grace, and the right understanding of the preaching, over against the well-meant offer of the gospel. Above all, a teacher must grasp the doctrine of the covenant of grace—the unconditional covenant that God sovereignly establishes with His people elected in Christ, and maintained with believers and their seed in the line of continued generations. He must fully understand the place that children have in the covenant. All these doctrines are set forth in the “Declaration of Principles” adopted by the synod of the PRC in the early 1950s.

However, all that is simply knowledge. The teacher in a Protestant Reformed school must be *committed* to these truths with all her heart. It is expected that she loves this truth, that she continues to grow in her understanding of these truths in her reading and study.

Is not also that requirement obvious? A Protestant Reformed school is established by Protestant Reformed believers for the instruction of their children. They hire teachers who stand in their place. The teachers must be committed to the same doctrine as the parents if they are to stand in for them.

Here, too, however, certain clarifications must be made. There are people who jump to this requirement, and are willing to overlook

the first one (ability to teach). That is to say, they insist that the teacher must be Protestant Reformed, and if he is teaching in harmony with the truth that God has given to the PRC, that is sufficient, regardless of whether or not the individual can teach effectively. That view of Protestant Reformed education is to be rejected—emphatically rejected. There may be times when a school board finds itself in a pinch, and has no choice but to hire one who is not as gifted a teacher as they would like. But it is not tolerable to relax the standards for instruction, and console oneself that at least it is Protestant Reformed.

In addition, some might question whether *all* PR teachers must understand Protestant Reformed doctrine. Is it truly necessary that a kindergarten teacher grasp these doctrines? Is it not enough that she be a good Christian, and teach her class good Christian truths and morals?

My answer is, no, that is not enough. Perhaps the best way to demonstrate the fallacy of that view is by way of illustration. Many years ago, fresh out of college, I was hired to teach grades 6-8 and carry out the duties of an administrator in a relatively small, Protestant Reformed school. Early on in my time as administrator, a man and his wife met with me to investigate the possibility of sending their first child to the school. They were members of a Netherlands Reformed congregation and had no school of their own. Their concern was that their child would be taught doctrines different from what they were teaching their

children. So, the rather pointed question was, “How much Protestant Reformed doctrine is taught in the school?” In my response, I affirmed that the school definitely taught from a Protestant Reformed perspective, and certainly the doctrines maintained in the PRC would be maintained in the school. But, I also expressed some reassurance that while there was a heavy doctrinal emphasis in the upper grades, that probably in the lower grades, their child would not encounter much of that.

My erroneous and uninformed understanding was soon to be corrected. One of the administrator’s duties is to visit the classrooms of the other teachers in order to help them improve in their teaching. In the providence of God, I was visiting the lower grades room (K-2) during Bible class, and the lesson was on Abraham. More specifically, it was on God establishing His covenant with Abraham. And there, before my very eyes and ears, the teacher was effectively teaching the Protestant Reformed doctrine of God’s covenant of grace at a level very appropriate for these five, six, and seven-year-old students. And what, pray tell, would she have been teaching on that lesson if she had not possessed an excellent understanding of the truth of God’s covenant, and if she were not thoroughly committed to the truth as maintained in the PRC? A “generally Christian” view of the covenant (whatever that might be)? My experience taught me that teachers in a Protestant Reformed school at

every level of instruction must be thoroughly Protestant Reformed.

What parents desire, then, are teachers who are Protestant Reformed to the core. These teachers, if raised in the PRC, showed diligence and genuine interest in catechism from their youth. As they grew older, they demonstrated an appreciation for the preaching, and, one would hope, an interest in reading Protestant Reformed literature. If they were not raised Protestant Reformed, they do not suddenly

*What parents desire, then,  
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to the core.*

became qualified to teach by becoming a confessing member of a Protestant Reformed congregation. No absolute rules can be made here, because people join from different backgrounds. Some are thoroughly Reformed and fully committed to the truth of the PRC—with understanding—when they join. Others do not have a good grasp of the doctrines even after many years in the PRC.

Something similar to this happens in connection with the seminary fairly regularly. A young man comes to the PRC, is filled with enthusiasm for the truth, and soon wants to be a minister in the PRC. The advice from the seminary in almost all instances is that he sit in the pew for four or five years,

become acquainted with the PRC doctrine and churches (and let the churches get to know him a bit), and then decide whether he is called to be a minister in the PRC. I strongly advise school boards to follow a similar tack.

That brings up a related matter. Not long ago a school board member of a Protestant Reformed school conveyed to me that when he was part of the committee that interviewed prospective teachers, he liked to ask them what they read. Specifically, he asked them whether they read the *Standard Bearer*, the *Beacon Lights*, and the RFPA books. The answers were disappointing, to say the least. Few read these publications with any consistency. What makes this worse is that college students are offered a subscription to the *Standard Bearer*, free for the asking. A teacher who wants to stand in the place of Protestant Reformed parents to teach their covenant children from the perspective of the parent, should be *reading*, and he should be reading *Protestant Reformed* literature.

The first two requirements for an excellent teacher in a Protestant Reformed school are, first, that the instructor be able to teach effectively, with all that this involves, and, second, that he is thoroughly and knowledgeably, Protestant Reformed. Other qualities are required, which will be explored, but these are foundational requirements.

Do you know any youth who demonstrate these two essential qualifications?

... to be continued. 

# The Dialogue of Baptism (12b)

## Introduction

The sacraments are God-ordained elements of worship. The primary purpose of the sacraments as elements of worship is to be part of the holy dialogue between God and His church. God is speaking to His church when the sacraments are administered in worship. We are to respond to His speech. What is He saying to us in baptism, first of all (next time the Lord's Supper)? And how do we respond?

## You Need a Washing

The main thing God tells us in baptism you have already been taught. He tells His church about an invisible, spiritual washing He has performed and will continue to perform for His people. In Acts 22:16 Ananias tells Paul that baptism is a symbol in which God declares to Paul the washing away of his sins.

Washing away of his *dirty* sins. If God is speaking to us about a washing, it means He is also telling us we *need* washing. We are dirty. We and our children, as the Baptism Form puts it, "are conceived and born in sin." "You are spiritually dirty people who have gathered before me," He says, "and you need a washing."

## I Wash You

That washing He gives us is twofold. It is a washing that deals with sin's *guilt* and with its *power*. God declares to us that the *guilt* of sin is washed away in justification, and then the *power* of sin is washed away in sanctification. Both aspects are involved in what it means to be washed. The Heidelberg Catechism explains that God speaks of both in baptism. "What is it to be washed?" Question 70 asks. And this is the answer:

It is to receive of God the remission of sins, freely, for the sake of Christ's blood, which He shed for us by His sac-

rifice upon the cross; [that's justification!] and also to be renewed by the Holy Ghost, and sanctified to be members of Christ, that so we may more and more die unto sin, and lead holy and unblameable lives [that's sanctification!].

The Catechism says that in baptism God speaks of both aspects of washing because Scripture does: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). That refers to the pardon for sin, part of *justification*. And then in Romans 6:3, 4 Paul says that in baptism God speaks to us of the washing of *sanctification*: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should *walk in newness of life*."

Paul is dealing here with an objection to the gospel. If we are saved by grace alone, then we might as well live in sin. And Paul says, no, that is impossible. For one who is justified will also be sanctified. And the reason for that, he says, is the speech of God to us in baptism. His people are washed in both ways; it cannot be merely one without the other. In baptism God says, "My dirty people, I wash you of sin's guilt *and* power. I do that for you. It is a work of sovereign grace. You do not speak to me in this sacrament saying you will wash yourself. I speak to you. This is what I do for My people by grace. I wash them!"

Is that what you hear when you watch the baptisms take place in your church? Were you listening to God's speech to His church? Or were you thinking about how nicely the baby was dressed?

## Other Aspects of Salvation

God speaks not only about justification and sanctification in baptism; He also speaks in this sacrament about our regeneration: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by

Rev. Griess is pastor of the Calvary Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa.

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the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). The *washing* of regeneration.

Further, God speaks to the church of our unity with one another by virtue of the new birth and the washing we receive: "For by one Spirit are we all *baptized into one body*, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (I Cor. 12:13).

### Union With Christ

We must hear God speak to us of all these things in baptism. And we must hear Him tell us that all of these things are ours because He unites us to Jesus Christ. This is the *covenantal* assembly. God's speech to us is covenant speech. He tells us we are united to Christ by a living bond, and because we are, we have all these benefits—justification, sanctification, regeneration, unity with the body of Christ. That is really the heart of what we read in Romans 6. Romans 6 tells us not only that God speaks of sanctification in baptism, but also of why we will be sanctified. We have been buried with Christ in His death and raised with Him in His resurrection: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized *into* Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4). We are united to Christ eternally by election and then in time by the Spirit. So are we legally and actually united to Him; so do we receive His benefits by that union. It is as though we were personally being buried for our sin and being raised in new life when Christ was being buried for our sins and raised in new life. In baptism God says we are united with Christ and receive what He receives.

### Our Response

And the church must together respond to that! All of God's people, not only the parents, not only the adult being baptized, but all of us; for He is declaring these truths to all His people gathered before Him. In this connection, I want you to notice something about the liturgy for baptism given in the Reformed Form for the Administration of Baptism that maybe you had not thought of before. It was deliberately designed to capture

this idea of holy dialogue in the worship of God's name: God speaking and His people together responding.


The form first, from Scripture, explains what speech of God will be heard in this sacrament momentarily because we cannot hear the speech unless the Word first tells us what to hear. And then, what does the form do next? It leads us in prayer! The church responds in prayer to God to what she has been told to anticipate. And in that prayer the form uses the first person plural; "we," "us," "we," because it is the *church* together responding.

Then the form (in the infant baptism section) has the couple speak, giving their vows as they are the portion of the church that occasions this sacrament among us in that instance. But with them the other parents remember their vows of baptism and, in a sense, say them to God again in their mind. And not only that, the whole church stands behind the parents and vows to help these parents raise these children in the fear of the Lord, holding these parents accountable for the vows they make.

Then, the actual baptism takes place, where God speaks sacramentally to us. And at that point, in the old Dutch tradition, we sing in response to the speech we just heard in the sacrament, usually with Psalter 425. We respond to His declarations! We do not merely sit there having received this declaration from God in the water upon the head; we respond having heard God speak in baptism.

In song... and then in prayer. We pray in thanksgiving to God: "Almighty God we, [we!] thank and praise Thee that Thou hast forgiven us and our children all our sins." And we pray *that* because that is what God has just told us. He washes us; He forgives us our sins.

It is worship, the holy dialogue of worship. God sovereignly engages His church in a holy dialogue. Were you aware? How does that affect how you sing Psalter 425, stanza 5, if your church does that? When you do so, are you responding to what God spoke to His church in baptism? Did you pray that last prayer in the form out of worshipful response to what He swore to us here, or was it simply going through the motions? There is a meeting going on in baptism—God speaks, we respond.

Next time we will see what God says in the Lord's Supper and how we respond. And then we will go on to see the *way* God speaks in the sacraments, and how that should affect the *manner* in which we respond. 



## Chapter Five

## Premillennialism (11):

## The 70 Weeks of Daniel 9

## Introduction

Of equal importance to dispensational premillennialism with Revelation 20, if not more importance, is Daniel 9. Daniel 9:24-27 is the prophet's "vision" of seventy weeks. To the prophet in Babylon with the nation of Judah, in answer to his prayer confessing the sins of the people and making supplication that Jehovah God would remember and fulfill His promise through Jeremiah that God "would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem" (vv. 2, 20), was given confirmation that God would fulfill His promise to deliver His covenant people. The angel Gabriel renewed the promise and explained the fulfillment of it in the form of the prophecy of seventy weeks.

"The interpretation of Daniel 9:24-27 is of major importance to premillennialism."<sup>1</sup>

Dispensational premillennialism forces this prophecy to serve its doctrine of the last things. It does this especially by means of four gross errors of interpretation of the Old Testament prophecy. First, in alleged keeping with its law of the literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecy, it explains the seventy weeks as a definite period of time. This period of time is supposed to be 490 years. Premillennialism arrives at this period of time by explaining the seventy *weeks* as seventy weeks of *years*. That this is obvious violation of premillennialism's own iron-clad law that prophecy must be interpreted literally seemingly escapes these literalistic exegetes of the Old Testament. The literal interpretation of the seventy weeks is bound to understand the period of time as 490 *days*, not as 490 *years*.

<sup>1</sup> John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 25.

*Prof. Engelsma is professor emeritus of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.*

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The second error is the application of the prophecy strictly to the nation of Judah (Israel). The church may not be in view in the prophecy in accordance with premillennialism's absolutely fatal and inexcusable error, that the church is an (unknown) "mystery" in the Old Testament. The vision of the seventy weeks, therefore, is all and only about the earthly nation of Judah (Israel). It has nothing to do with the church.

Thus, premillennial strips one of the most full and glorious prophecies of the redemptive work of the Messiah on behalf of the church of all its spiritual riches and comfort. At the same time, it strips the church of all the Messianic comfort of the passage. The only other passage in the Old Testament that rivals Daniel 9 as gospel of the saving work of the coming Messiah is Isaiah 53.

Third, in what can only be described as one of the most astonishing pieces of exegetical *tour de force* in all the sorry history of forcing Scripture to conform to one's religious presuppositions, premillennialism separates the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy from the preceding sixty nine by the entire span of the present, New Testament age—some two thousand years. The seventieth week of the prophecy is still future, according to premillennialism. This wresting of Scripture may well serve as the monument to premillennialism's vaunted faithfulness of biblical exposition.

Then, fourth, disregarding a basic law of interpretation of Scripture, to say nothing of the laws of literature, which require that a pronoun shall be referred to the immediately preceding, suitable subject of the passage, premillennialism explains the "he" of verse 27, who confirms the covenant, as the ungodly "prince" of verse 26, rather than the "Messiah" of verse 26, who is also the dominate subject of the entire prophecy. This explanation of verse 27 ignores that the "prince" of verse 26 is not even the subject of the sentence and action of the verse. The "*people*" of

the prince is the subject of the action in verse 26: "The people of the prince...shall destroy," etc.

### The Premillennial Explanation of Daniel 9

The premillennial explanation of the prophecy of the seventy weeks assumes that the entire prophecy is exclusively about and for national Israel, the Jews. There is nothing in the prophecy about the church. This is a basic assumption of premillennialism with regard to all of Old Testament prophecy concerning Israel. The church is not the fulfillment and reality of Old Testament Israel. The church is not in view in Old Testament prophecy. Old Testament prophecy concerns Israel.

The seventy weeks are explained as a definite period of time. But this period is not literally seventy weeks, or a little more than one year. This period is too short to serve the purposes of premillennialism. Each of the seventy weeks must be understood as a week of years. The seventy weeks of Daniel's vision are, therefore, the definite period of 490 years.

Having arbitrarily established the time, premillennialism must then exercise its exegetical skills upon the passage in order to accommodate it to the facts of history. The starting-point of the seventy weeks regarding the covenant people's salvation, according to verse 25, is the "going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem." The obvious reference would be to the decree of Cyrus, king of Persia, that all the Jews were permitted to return to Canaan and that they should rebuild the temple (II Chron. 36:22, 23; Ezra 1:1-4). Ezra 1:1 states that this decree by the Persian king fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah that the captivity of Judah would last seventy years (Jer. 29:10; II Chron. 36:21). Since Cyrus decreed the freeing of the Jews to return to Jerusalem in 537 BC, sixty-nine weeks of years, that is, 483 years, are too few to reach to "Messiah the Prince," on the literal reckoning of premillennialism. Daniel 9:25 prophesies sixty-nine weeks between the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem and Messiah the Prince. Therefore, premillennial theologians propose other starting-points for the period of the seventy weeks.

Some suggest the time of the letter of King Artaxerxes, authorizing Nehemiah to undertake the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Neh. 2:1-8). This time was about 445 BC. But neither is this date entirely satisfactory. Sixty-nine

weeks of years, or 483 years, would not reach to the birth of Messiah the Prince but would extend to some time after His death. Therefore, other fanciful theories about the starting-point of the seventy years are put forward by the premillennial scholars.

Verse 25 of Daniel 9 divides the time of the sixty-nine weeks between the decree to rebuild Jerusalem and the appearing of Messiah the Prince into two parts: seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks. The seven-week period, which premillennialism explains as forty-nine years, is the time of the actual rebuilding of Jerusalem. This period ended approximately at the time of the conclusion of the Old Testament Bible. The period of sixty-two weeks, which premillennialism explains as 434 years, is the long period between the testaments, up to some point in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. What this point is proves controversial. Some premillennialists refer to Christ's baptism; others, to His triumphal entry into Jerusalem at the end of His earthly ministry.

### The Seventieth Week

It is dispensational premillennialism's explanation of the seventieth week of Daniel's vision, however, that is the most important aspect of the premillennial interpretation of Daniel 9. This explanation lies at the very heart of the premillennial doctrine of the last days.

The last week of the seventy, which for premillennialism is a definite period of seven years (on their notion that the weeks of the vision are weeks of *years*), is still future in church history. The seventieth week does not immediately follow the sixty-ninth week. Between the sixty-ninth week and the seventieth week lie the two thousand years of our present age, roughly the time from the birth and ministry of Jesus the Messiah to the present day, and into the indefinite future.

Sometime in the future (from our standpoint in A.D. 2016), the seventieth week of verse 27 of Daniel 9 will come to pass. Tremendous events will occur in this week, which for premillennialism is seven years. At the juncture of the present (church) age, which is not at all in view in Daniel 9, and the beginning of the seventieth week, the church will be raptured out of the world into the air. At that time, Antichrist will appear. Antichrist is the "prince" of Daniel 9:26 ("the people of the *prince* that shall come"). Antichrist is supposed to be the "he" of

Daniel 9:27, who shall confirm the covenant with many.

Reformed believers should notice that this explanation of Daniel 9 removes the church from the world before Antichrist comes to power and thus exempts the church from persecution under the personal Antichrist. This fictitious deliverance of the church from the persecution by Antichrist is of the greatest importance to the premillennial throngs. Premillennialists regard escape from persecution under the Antichrist as one of the most attractive features of their theology.

For three and a half years, or the first half of the seventieth week (regarded as a week of years, that is, seven years), Antichrist makes and keeps a covenant with Israel, which has been restored to the “holy land” of Palestine. The borders of the land will have been extended to their farthest limits, according to the promises of God in the Old Testament. This is the premillennial explanation of the first part of Daniel 9:27: “He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week.”

Suddenly, however, in the “midst of the week” (Dan. 9:27), that is, on premillennial reckoning, after three and a half years, Antichrist will turn on the Jews in Palestine and begin persecuting them, with a view to destroying them utterly. For three and a half years, national Israel will be persecuted. This persecution of the Jews by Antichrist—a Hitler in spades—is supposed to be the “great tribulation” of Matthew 24:21 and the war against the saints of Revelation 13, as well as most of the affliction of the people of God foretold in the New Testament.

At the end of the seventieth week, Jesus will return to earth in order to destroy Antichrist, save Israel, and set up the millennial, earthly kingdom for one thousand years. During this millennium, Jesus will reign as king from earthly Jerusalem with national Israel as His glorious kingdom.

... to be continued. 

WHEN THOU SITTEST IN THINE HOUSE

REV. ARIE DEN HARTOG

## Teaching our Covenant Children about Work

One of the most important areas of instruction that we must give to our children in our covenant home is that of their future daily occupation. To neglect this subject in the instruction of our children would be serious. Attitude and behavior in this sphere of life will have a dramatic impact on the future of our children. Years ago, sons were usually trained in the trade and occupation of their fathers. Daughters were taught by their mothers to be good homemakers. Things have obviously changed in major ways in our modern world. Most jobs today involve complex training. Opportunities for good jobs usually require extensive study and preparation. Many will have to do their work as part of large corporations. There will be great need for being able to work together with many others in the workplace. Many women now have careers outside of the home, whatever we may say about this.

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*Rev. denHartog is pastor of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.*

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The Bible speaks often about the calling to work. Adam and Eve in the state of righteousness were given the calling to dress and keep the garden of Eden. Central to God’s command to Adam and Eve to exercise dominion over the earth was their calling to work at a daily occupation. After the Fall, God said to Adam that because of the curse of sin man would have to struggle greatly and with much sorrow in his daily labors to sustain himself in the earth. Man’s work after his fall and disobedience to God would become much more difficult and exhausting. The fourth commandment teaches us about the blessed rest of the sabbath that God provided for man. This blessing of the sabbath comes after six days of diligent labor.

In spite of the Fall, work is a great blessing of God to man. This is true, of course, in the end only for the Christian. God blesses the labors of our hands. By His sovereignty over His creation He causes the seasons to follow regularly in the earth for seedtime and harvest. When man’s life has increased in the earth and he becomes rich, he must not glory in himself and say in his heart that by

his own power and might he has become rich. We must always remember with profound thankfulness that the Lord alone is the One who gives us power and wisdom to work and get wealth in the earth.

The book of Proverbs gives much wise instruction concerning the blessing of working. "Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house" (Prov. 24:27; see also Prov. 28:19). Proverbs 31, which highly praises the virtuous woman, portrays her as a woman of many highly developed gifts, one who has learned to be tireless in her diligence in her work in the home. Being such a woman, she brings great blessing to her husband and her children. A slothful, undisciplined woman whose home is normally in the state of chaos and virtual disaster will do great harm to her family, and be the cause of great strain between herself and her husband.

The book of Proverbs has many warnings regarding the sin of laziness and its shameful consequences (Prov. 6:6-11; 10:4, 5; 20:30-34). There are many more verses indicating how urgent these warnings are. In most cases this instruction and these warnings are given to sons of the inspired father who is the human author of the book of Proverbs. It is evident from the book of Proverbs that working hard with our hands, diligently laboring, is so much more than just a natural and earthly concern. Working diligently is our moral, spiritual calling before God. Slothfulness is regarded and judged by God as a great sin, which God in His providence will severely chasten. Often slothfulness of sons and daughters is the result of poor parenting. The mothers in these homes are going from house to house as talebearers rather than being serious in their calling to keep their homes in good order. Fathers are hardly ever home and make little effort to interact with their children in a meaningful way.

The New Testament also has much to say about work. Through the blessing of God's providences He enables us to care for ourselves and for our families. On the other hand, when a man does not work and, as a result, is unable to provide for his own household, he is said to have "denied the faith and is worse than an infidel" (I Tim. 5:8).

In their inspired letters to the churches, the apostles of the Lord address both servants and masters. Servants are called to be obedient to their masters according to the

flesh, with fear and trembling in singleness of heart as unto the Lord (see Eph. 6:5). Masters are to forebear the threatening of their servants, knowing that they have a Master in heaven who is their Judge. It is evident that the instruction given in the New Testament both to servants and masters must in our modern times be applied to employees and their employers. This instruction makes plain that how Christians behave in their daily work has spiritual, moral dimensions. Members of the church must be instructed in the preaching regarding working. The perspective we have on how we behave at work must be motivated by the fact that we have been redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ and that therefore we must serve Him and glorify Him in this.

We all have the responsibility to maintain ourselves in the world. The Christian in normal situations should not depend on benevolence from the church or charity from fellow Christians when he or she is able-bodied, strong, and healthy. The Bible instructs those who do not work that they ought not eat (II Thess. 3:10). That is strong language! The man who is not diligent in his daily occupation to provide for himself and his family should not be made the object of charity by the deacons of the church.

Not only is every Christian who is able to be diligent in his earthly labor to support himself, but he is also to do this for the support of the poor, and in order to be able to contribute to the church and to the cause of the kingdom of Christ, for the maintaining of the church in the world. Paul addresses a pointed word to those who have put off the old man and put on the new man by the grace of Christ. If our sinful nature controls us, it will make us lazy, careless, and irresponsible. According to the new man in us, we must think not only of ourselves but also of the needs of others: "Let him that stole steal no more: but let him labour working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Eph. 4:28).

The Word of God instructs each member of the church to labor in order to support the cause of Christ's church and kingdom. Reformed people, in harmony with their covenant calling, if possible, support Christian schools together. We as parents must be willing to work diligently to support these schools for our own children as well as for others who are poor and unable to bear



this burden on their own. Christian schools are expensive to maintain. Christian schools are greatly aided by those who have financial potential to give and are ready and willing to do so with liberality and cheerfulness. To whom much is given much is also required.


At the same time, the Bible reminds us that the love of money is the root of all evil. None of us should set our hearts on being rich. “They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into foolish hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition” (I Tim. 6:9). These are strong warnings. It is not wrong to be rich, but riches have a powerful temptation to make one covetous and materialistic. In our homes our children must be trained to understand that our daily occupation has a higher purpose than just enriching ourselves, building castles for our homes, driving expensive cars, and going on luxurious vacations. Instruction in this area for our children is urgent because the temptations of having riches are very great (see I Tim. 6).

Our children must be trained in our covenant homes to conduct their occupation in honesty and uprightness, and in care and concern for the neighbor, especially our brethren, if they, in God’s providence, should be in our employment. Our world is a dreadfully corrupt, deceitful, and covetous place. Because we are Christians, we must

be distinctive and different in this sphere of our life. Our children need to be trained to be different, distinctively Christian.

One of the most beautiful passages in all of the Scriptures on the subject under our consideration is found in Colossians 3:22: “Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye service, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.” This passage has many practical implications concerning the proper Christian attitude toward and perspective on work.

Many of our daily labors involve a measure of drudgery, some even more than others. Most of us have to work so hard to support ourselves, our churches, and our Christian schools that we are reduced at times to utter exhaustion. The passage quoted above gives the Christian a sense of the right purpose, meaning, and joyful thankfulness to God in the performing of our daily occupation. All of this must be taught to our covenant children.

I have sought to lay out some of the main principles in this article. In my next article I want to outline some practical implications that follow from these principles for the instruction of our children. 

## STRENGTH OF YOUTH

## REV. BRIAN HUIZINGA

“To Teach Them War” (12)

# Knowing War’s Origin: Within Us

**A**re you a born-again believer?  
And if you have been regenerated (born again), how can you tell?

### An Important Question

These are important questions, first of all, because of what regeneration is. Regeneration (and now we are us-

ing the term in what Reformed theologians have historically called “the narrower sense”) is the first implanting of the principle of the new life of Christ in your heart by the Holy Spirit, so that you, the formerly spiritually dead, totally depraved, elect sinner, have become spiritually alive in the depths of your being. It is a spiritual rebirth. It is what Jesus calls being born of the Spirit (John 3:5-6). Everything you will ever become spiritually is contained in that principle of life. Regeneration is not something we do or even something we choose. Regeneration is not man’s work. Regeneration is an astonishing work of God’s

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

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sovereign grace (John 1:13; 3:1-8; Ezek. 36:26; Eph. 2:1-5).

Regeneration is not something ordinary or minor, like having a driver's license. The difference between a yes or no answer to the question "Have you been regenerated?" is incalculable; it is the difference between life and death. Are *you* regenerated?

Secondly, this is an important question because no one has ever consciously experienced regeneration. If I ask you, "Have you ever had a haircut?" You could say, "Yes, and not only does my short hair presently bear the evidence, but I remember sitting in my aunt's basement last week Wednesday afternoon while she cut my hair, even nicking me just behind my right ear. Boy, did I yelp!" But no one can ever say, "Of course, I have been regenerated. I distinctly remember the sensation I felt when the Spirit first came into my heart. I was sitting in church (or I was being baptized, or I was lying in bed, or I was walking through a meadow, or I was a toddler being cuddled by my mother). One moment I was dead, but then, like the feeling of cold water moving down my throat, I could feel the Holy Spirit coming into me, pervading my inmost recesses, and going deeper and deeper into my heart. It was amazing to feel Him softening my heart and infusing new qualities into my will. Gentle tremors of heavenly ecstasy moved through my whole body." You could sooner explain your experience of being born than being born again. That is, you could sooner explain what you consciously experienced coming through the birth canal of your mother than you could your rebirth by the Holy Spirit.

We sometimes misapply Jesus' words to Nicodemus in John 3:8 to refer to the Holy Spirit in His mysterious working. Although the Spirit's working is mysterious like the movement of the wind, Jesus draws a different parallel when He states, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Jesus does not compare *the Spirit* to the wind ("...so is the Spirit."), but He compares the *Spirit-born individual* to the wind ("...so is every one that is born of the Spirit."). If you have been regenerated, you are like the wind. The wind is mysterious and can only be discerned by its effects. We do not know its origin or destination. Similarly, we born-again believers

do not know whence we have come. We know not our spiritual origin. We know objectively and doctrinally from God's infallible revelation to us in Scripture that it is in regeneration, but we have never experienced that new birth. Nor do we know whither we go with this new life. Objectively and doctrinally we know we are going to heaven, for that is the goal and destination of the life of regeneration; but exactly what heaven is like and where it is, we know not. Of regeneration the Canons of Dordt III/IV, Article 13 teach, "The manner of this operation cannot be fully comprehended by believers in this life." Part of what makes the full comprehension of our rebirth presently impossible is that we have never consciously experienced it. Then how can we know if we are born again? Are *you* regenerated?

Thirdly, this is an important and necessary question to put to the youth. It is not only important to ask you, the young people of the church, this question in catechism as a pedagogical method to help you understand and think through the doctrine of regeneration, but also to make you honestly consider whether you are personally regenerated. It is not good to ask a confessing believer *repeatedly*, Are you regenerated?, leaving the impression that no one really may be sure he is regenerated, thus casting a dark shadow of doubt over a believer's soul. Nonetheless, it is important to ask.

Our rich understanding of the everlasting and unconditional covenant of grace that God establishes with His elect people and their elect, spiritual seed in their generations demands that we view and treat our children, not as unsaved, unconverted little demons in need of our best evangelistic efforts, but as the children of God, sanctified in Christ. God saves children. God saves and incorporates into His everlasting covenant children *as children*. God can regenerate unborn babies in the womb (the Reformed have often cited Jer. 1:5, Luke 1:15, 44, and sometimes even II Tim. 3:15). We do not find the basis for the baptizing of our infants in our presumption that all of our children are regenerated by the Spirit and sanctified in Christ. We find the basis for the baptizing of our infants in the covenant promise of God, who promises to be a God unto us and to our seed after us. Although we do not ground the baptizing of our infants on our presupposition that they are all regenerated, nonetheless, we view and treat our baptized children as regenerated

and sanctified in Christ. This view and treatment brings reproach to our covenant doctrine and the accusation that we think our children are all saved and everlastingly secure, so that we never call them to repentance and faith, never call them to conversion, never expect to see the fruits of regeneration but just assume, even when they give evidence to the contrary, that they are regenerated. Over against such a charge it is important to underscore the fact that we do take seriously a godly life of faith and repentance among our covenant youth. And thus it is important to ask the question. Are *you* regenerated? If so, how can you tell?

### The Way to Answer

We may know our rebirth by the *evidences* or *fruits* of it. We know the wind by its evidences in moving leaves, swaying branches, whipping flags, and whistles or roars. We know our physical, earthly, blood-birth of our mothers by its evidences in that we do what living people typically do in breathing, eating, sleeping, thinking, moving, feeling, and so on. Similarly, we may know our spiritual rebirth in regeneration by its evidences or fruits. If you have been regenerated, then you have the life of Christ in you and that life will come to manifestation. Even if you had a dramatic Damascus-road conversion experience (as some do), where you suddenly felt the powerful convicting work of the Holy Spirit, you were not experiencing the Spirit-birth of regeneration but the *evidences* of it. What are those evidences?

The evidences of regeneration are not the following: You were baptized by a minister. You can sing many of the songs of the Psalter from memory. You have been through *Beginners*, *Juniors*, *Seniors*, *Heidelberg Catechism*, and *Essentials* catechism classes. You have made confession of faith and partake of Holy Communion. You go to worship services twice every week. You can lead other people in devotions by reading the Bible and offering a prayer. An unregenerate, reprobate Esau could do those things. Let not the heart of the sincere believer be troubled by that fact. But it is true. While all of those activities are ordinarily essential aspects of the healthy believer's life, they are not necessarily the evidences of regeneration, for they are external actions that do not require for their completion the Holy Spirit.

Additionally, the evidences of regeneration are not that

you used to lag behind others when performing mental mathematical calculations such as "what's 15% of this bill?" but now you are sharp and speedy. While regeneration would make your attitude toward your own mental deficiencies in mathematics pleasing to God, it would not change that particular compartment of your brain that processes numbers. Disciplined drilling and practice would improve your performance but not regeneration. The evidence of regeneration is not that you used to be shy and reserved, but now you are outgoing. The point here is that regeneration is not a change in our essential natural, physical makeup or personality as created by God, but a radical *inward* change in the spiritual-moral center of our being that orients us from sin to God so that we want to please Him in all we are, think, say, and do.

The evidence of regeneration is not the glory of sinless perfection. Regeneration makes us perfect in principle, but not in full. Our incredibly powerful and relentlessly militant sinful flesh cleaves to us until it is abolished on the day we die and go to heaven. Regeneration decisively breaks the dominion of sin within us, yet sin remains. Do not doubt your regeneration and salvation because you sin, and sin, and sin, and sin, and sin. This side of Eden only one man will ever walk this earth perfectly consecrated to God. You are not that man, nor am I. Jesus is.

The evidence of regeneration is that you fight. You know you are regenerated—born again from above with the life of the Lord by the Spirit of the Lord—if you fight. You know with unshakable confidence that you belong to Christ now and forever if you fight. The dead do not fight; the living fight. You fight against sin in and for the kingdom of God. You can see the kingdom by faith. You love the kingdom—the church, its gospel preaching, its holy people, and its living truth. You love God's King, your Savior, Jesus Christ. You love and set your heart upon the treasures of the kingdom—righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit. Because you love God, you hate and want destroyed the lie of false doctrine, wicked attitudes, alluring temptations, and all that is full of the vanity of wicked man. You fight for the Bible and the truth of the Bible contained in the Reformed creeds. The evidence of regeneration is not that you no longer sin, but that your sin bothers you before God. You fight against your own sins by sorrowing over them, hating them, and fleeing from them as Joseph fled Potiphar's house. You fight by

pleading with God to forgive you, and to forgive you yet again. You manfully fight against and overcome sin, the devil, and his whole dominion. Do you do that? I trust you do. You have been born again.


No? You don't fight? You never have? And you don't even care? Oh, dear reader, may God be so merciful to your perishing, hell-bound soul! I pray He may do what neither you nor I can do—regenerate your heart, give you faith, and move you to plead, “Deliver my sinking soul, I pray!”

The church may not view and treat as regenerated, believing Christians her youth who come to years of discretion and never manifest the fruits of the Spirit, but who stubbornly reject gospel admonitions and persist in a rebellious life of running in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries, all the while scoffing at the responsibilities of membership in the house of God. What a dishonor to Christ our doctrine and practice would be! As if Christ were still in the grave! As if Christ were a dead head of a dead body! Rebellious youth who come of age and manifest no allegiance to the cause of Christ must be cut off from the company of the living in the church of God. They are not for Christ; they are against Christ. They

are not alive; they are dead. Christ is the living Head of the living body, and when He comes to make His abode in our hearts by His Holy Spirit, there are evidences of that mysterious, supernatural, spiritual resurrection unto newness of life that we call regeneration. There is fight! And in the antithetical fight against sin, all of us must be exhorted repeatedly to faith and repentance. Believe! Repent today! Turn from your disobedience now!

Regeneration is the origin of war *within* us. No regeneration, no fight. Because the battle belongs to the Lord, here too—especially here—God sovereignly and graciously regenerates all whom He has predestinated unto life. We are by nature dead in Adam, allied to Satan, and thoroughly sinful, as we have already explained. To God be the glory for putting the battle within us.

Are *you* regenerated? You may know by answering one further question: do you fight sin? If so, you are regenerated and everlastingly secure. Show your gratitude to your sovereign King by going forth in His service and strong in His might to conquer all evil and stand for the right.

With this article we now conclude our lengthy, deliberately doctrinal—intensive, foundational chapter called “Knowing War’s Origin.” 

GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

REV. WILBUR BRUINSMA

Protestant Reformed Missions

## The Depression Years: Mission Methods Developed (1932-1939) [2]

**A**s promised in our last article, we now print in full the study committee’s report on defining the task of the Classical Home Mission Committee, presented to and adopted by the June 1, 1932 meeting of Classis (slightly edited).

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

*Previous article in this series: September 1, 2016, p. 473.*

“Beloved Brethren in the Lord,

Your committee had the mandate to present a definite delineation of the actual task of the Classical Home Mission Committee and to advise classis in regard to this matter. More than once complaints were raised about the labors of the existing committee. Yet the reason this committee failed to carry out much work, lay not in the committee itself, but rather in the fact that its task could not be said to be well-defined, that it had a definite man-



date, and that therefore the committee could not know what actually was required of it. In appointing this committee the classis obviously proceeded from the assumption that it would be obvious what was expected of the committee without further delineation. However, this proved not to be the case. Therefore, the previous classis appointed your committee to shed light on this matter.

The remark may well be made, first of all, that the entire matter of home missions and the actual task of the committee has need of a closer delineation and definition. Not only is it by no means clear to each of us what the distinctive task of the Home Mission Committee is, but also the task of home missions is not clearly defined.

Where is the field for this labor? What is its purpose? How must the work be carried out and by which means? There is no decisive answer to all these questions. Yet it will be necessary, in order to define the task of the committee, first of all, to give account of the actual task of home missions. Therefore, your committee placed itself immediately before the question, What is meant by home missions? We want to answer that question, as to the task of home missions, and only then to answer the question as to the task of the classical committee that will carry out this work.

By missions we understand in this connection that official work of the church whereby it bears forth and proclaims the witness of the truth to those who never had heard the truth, such as the heathen, and also to the dispersed and who wandered away. The first, namely the mission among the heathen lies outside of our scope. Thus we are considering the labor among the dispersed, who for some reason or another have been separated from the instituted church and among those who wandered away from the church.

The purpose of this mission work must always be, first of all, the honor of our God and King through propagating of the truth and the proclamation of His name. In the second place, the purpose is to bring to manifestation the body of Christ by bringing into existence the instituted church. And finally, the purpose is to the dispersed and those who have gone astray. In our report we are dealing with home missions in distinction from heathen missions. The sphere is therefore limited by the term “home.” Unavoidably, the question arises as to what sphere is meant by this term. How wide is this area? All

kinds of answers can be given to this question. In the narrowest sense of the word this term refers to the sphere of the Protestant Reformers. According to this sense of the word our task is to labor among the dispersed and those gone astray in our own circles, among those who, especially in this present time of financial stress, or even for some other reason have moved away and cannot keep contact with a Protestant Reformed Church.

However, we do not need to limit ourselves to this sense of the word. Proceeding from the conviction that we are privileged of the Lord to maintain the pure Reformed truth in this time of spiritual laxity and apostasy, our field of labor must be sought among all Reformed people. This in the second place. They stand the closest to us as far as the formal confession is concerned. And if we also take into consideration the history, we can add to this, that outside of the narrowest circle of our own people, the Christian Reformed Church is designated to us as our mission field, and after that the Dutch Reformed Church [RCA]. The former have officially departed from the truth of Scripture and the Confessions in 1924, and may therefore rightfully be regarded as those who have gone astray; the latter are officially the Dutch Reformed Church of 1628 and form a denomination that is characterized by all sorts of departures and slackening in doctrine and in life. In the broadest sense of the word, we can understand under home missions the official labor of the church in propagating and proclaiming the truth in the entire sphere of Christianity, among the dispersed and those who have gone astray. From a practical point of view it is preferable, however, that we as Protestant Reformed Churches limit our labors to our own circle and the sphere of our erring brethren in the Christian Reformed and the Dutch Reformed Churches. To reach them by visiting them personally, by preaching and lectures, by means of books and pamphlets, to proclaim to them the truth, and thus, if they may be brought to conviction by the grace of God, to bring them, as much as possible, to the purest manifestation of the church, that is, as Protestant Reformed Churches—there lies the labor and purpose of the home missions.

This task must be carried out by the church, proceeding from her, through her offices that Christ has instituted in His church. It is true that every believer is an officebearer, according to the office of all believers, since

he is partaker of the anointing of Christ. Therefore, it cannot be denied, that every believer is called to witness of the truth. He performs this calling by his personal confession in the church and outside, in his walk and in his conversation in the midst of the world, with whom-ever he may come in contact. But when we are speaking of missions, we are dealing with the official labor and the official calling of the church. Christ is the Servant of the Lord; He alone is Missionary. He performs that labor by Word and Spirit. He also gathers His church, protects and preserves her in the midst of the world, and rules her even unto the end of the ages. But He brings His Word through the means of His church. By His grace she becomes co-worker of God in Christ. It has been the will of the Lord, that the church should come to manifestation, not only as organism, but also as institute, by the instituted offices, in order that His church might prosper and as church through the means of her office, might give witness to the truth. Thus it follows, that the work of missions must be regarded as official ministry, and this must be performed by the church.

When we speak of the church we refer to the local church. Another church besides the local church does not exist. Each congregation is an autonomous manifestation of the body of Christ. No other offices than those of the local church can be recognized. This principle must be maintained with might and main, in order that we do not once more fall into hierarchy. This principle must also be maintained in regard to the work of missions. Therefore, we must establish the principle that home mission work must proceed from the local church. Is it then, according to this principle, absolutely impossible to speak of a Classical Home Mission? We think not. Just as it is possible for autonomous churches, which stand on the same basis of faith and confession, to unite themselves on that basis in one denomination, so also it is possible that these churches work together in the work of missions. Yet this cooperation must always be carried out in such a way that the autonomous character of the local church is maintained. Working together on the basis of this principle there is system and order in the labor, the field can better be worked in its entirety, since there is more potentiality and there are also more means to carry out the work, instead of when these united efforts are broken down into individual striving. Therefore, it is

not only possible, but also desirable to speak of a Classical Home Mission.

The question arises, how and by what means should this Classical Home Mission work be carried out, and what is its peculiar task? We answer this, in the first place, by saying that it is very desirable that one or more Classical Home missionaries would be called, and that as soon as possible. These missionaries can work the field, look up the dispersed in person, bring back those who have gone astray, and by God's grace serve to the manifestation of the body of Christ in its purest form. Our churches have a need for this. The Committee advises that preliminary work be started toward calling one or more missionaries. That missionary would be called the Classical Home Missionary, not because he is called and ordained into office by the classis, but because the sphere of his labor is the field of the Classical Home Mission. He is called and ordained by the local church, whose missionary he is and remains. But his labor is defined and his field determined by the classis, or in deliberation with the classis, while he and his work are financially supported by the classis.

In the second place, there is naturally the means of the printed page. Books and pamphlets can be printed and distributed free of charge in all the areas of a designated field. This should be done both in the Dutch and English languages.

In the third place, there is the work of correspondence with those who are dispersed. Those who cannot readily be reached could be pointed to their calling through the means of correspondence.

In the fourth place, there is the task of instituting and organizing churches, of caring for them, as long as they are not able to help themselves, and thus to give support both morally and financially as may prove necessary.

From this follows quite naturally, that funds must be created, from which can be drawn to support all these undertakings. The classis is responsible for these funds, also over the possessions, buildings, tents or tabernacles, that may be needed to carry out this work.

Thus we gradually arrive at a definite task for the Classical Mission Committee. If the classis should decide to call a missionary-pastor, it will be the task of the Classical Mission Committee, in conjunction with the minister and consistory of the calling church, to study the field,

supervise the labor, to supply the missionary and his family with whatever they may need, to furnish him with the necessary means to carry out his work, and to give a report of his work and of the work of the committee to classis.

Moreover, the task of the Home Mission Committee shall be to assist, with the advice of classis, in organizing congregations, helping those congregations, not only with moral and financial support, but in every way to cause them to become a self-supporting church. The committee investigates, whether that be in consultation with the missionary-pastor, or without him, the needs of the churches, advises classis as to those needs, and reports in regard to their financial support.

This implies, in the third place, that our needy churches shall apply to the Home Mission Committee for financial aid, and from now on the classis will be advised by the committee in regard to the necessary financial support. In this connection, your committee suggests that the classis take into consideration, whether it would not be just if each congregation that receives aid from the Home Mission Fund would give up its pastor for this communal work, not more than two and not less than one Sunday

(the week included), for every hundred dollars support received.

In the fourth place, this committee should try to obtain the desired pamphlets and other printed material and to distribute these in consultation with the missionary-pastor, or without him, as the case may be.

In the fifth place, the committee has charge of the funds which will be necessary to cover the expenses for this work, and give report to the classis once a year, including the assessment for the churches.

In the sixth place, the committee shall have authority over all the possessions, and the right to procure whatever is necessary within the bounds of the amount set by the classis. We feel that in this way we can come to a well defined task for the Classical Home Mission Committee, even though your committee is of the opinion that this task will have to be more closely defined as this work is brought into practice.

Respectfully submitted, Your Committee,  
w.s. H. Hoeksema  
Wm. Verhil  
A. Hirdes"

## BRING THE BOOKS...

## MR. CHARLES TERPSTRA, review editor



*The Reformed Baptism Form: A Commentary*, Bastiaan Wielenga. Ed. David J. Engelsma. Jenison, MI: RFPA, 2016. Hardcover. 425 pp., \$39.95. [Reviewed by David J. Engelsma.]

This is the title of a book that is hot off the presses of the Reformed Free Publishing Association (RFPA). The book is an unusual publication of the RFPA. It is not authored by a Protestant Reformed man or woman. Nor is it an original piece of writing. Rather, it is the translation into English for the first time of a commentary on the Reformed Baptism Form. The commentary was originally written in the Dutch language by a well-known and highly regarded minister in the Netherlands. The commentary was published, originally, in 1906.

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*Prof. Engelsma is professor emeritus of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.*

The commentary, therefore, is of great value to all members of Reformed churches everywhere in the world who can read the English language. For the Reformed Baptism Form that many, if not all, of these members use often in the worship of their churches—whenever the sacrament of baptism is administered—is a grand, authoritative document in the churches and in the spiritual life of the members of the churches. Arguably, the Baptism Form is the most outstanding secondary confession of the Reformed churches. It is certainly the one most often read in their worship services.

The Baptism Form officially expresses the Reformed doctrine of baptism, especially infant baptism. Important aspects of the truth of infant baptism that the Form explains and confesses are the inclusion of the infants of believers in God's covenant of grace; the salvation of infants *in their infancy*; the necessity of this salvation for the required rearing of the children; and the relation of the covenant of grace, particularly with these baptized children, and divine election.

Lacking these many years has been a thorough, sound commentary on this vitally important Form of the Reformed churches. This lack is now supplied by the good services of the RFPA.

Explaining and applying all of the fundamental teaching of the Form, the commentary is rich and profitable. It will be profitable to Reformed ministers, who use and explain the Form in their preaching and teaching; to the parents of baptized children; and to all Reformed believers of all ages regarding the meaning of their own baptism, usually in infancy.

The chapter titles of the commentary are: “Nature and History of the Reformed Baptism Form”; “The Doctrine of Baptism in General”; “The Doctrine of Infant Baptism in Particular”; “The Prayer before Baptism”; “Admonition to the Parents”; and “Thanksgiving after Baptism.”

Nor does the commentary overlook, or slight, the practical teaching and implications of the Form. The commentary considers such a matter as the question whether it is more fitting to sprinkle the one being baptized three times or only once. More importantly, the commentary addresses the issue, whether the baptized child is to be viewed and reared as a regenerated, saved child of God, or is to be viewed as an unsaved “little viper.” The commentary settles this issue from the language itself of the Form.

By no means was the commentary written only, or even mainly, for the benefit of ministers, although it will be of the greatest interest and value to them. But the author wrote the commentary for Reformed people—for *all* the members of Reformed churches. The Reformed believer, without theological training, will profit greatly from the riches of the distinctively Reformed doctrine and practice of the covenant of grace uncovered in the Baptism Form by this commentary. Nor will the profit be only knowledge of the riches of the grace of God to his or her infant children. But the Reformed believer will know more deeply the riches of the grace of God sealed to him or her in his or her baptism many years ago.

...May the reader be assured that my endeavor was not first, not even most importantly, to provide material for an elevated theoretical, dogmatic view of baptism. But the ardent desire of my heart is that by the publication of this writing many people reading this work learn to regard baptism more purely, appreciate it more warmly, and more zealously plead the covenantal promises on behalf of be-

lievers and their children, before the throne of him who calls himself I Am That I Am (Preface, xvii).

The history of the Baptism Form commends its worth and authority. With this history the commentary begins. Ultimately, the form derives from John Calvin, and the earliest days of the Reformed Reformation. Because the Reformers who composed the liturgy of the Reformed churches leaned heavily on Calvin and even corresponded with Calvin about this liturgy, the author of the commentary on the Baptism Form declares that “Calvin stamped the mark of his marvelous spirit in this way also on our Reformed baptism form, although indirectly.” Already in 1574, merely some fifty-odd years after the Protestant Reformation began in 1517, the Reformed provincial Synod of Dordt worked on the wording of this Form. The Synod of Dordt, 1618/1619, adopted the official text of the Form. The Form, therefore, is the very early and official statement of the truth of the sacrament of baptism, particularly with regard to the baptism of the infant children of believers, by the Reformed churches in the Netherlands. The doctrine of the Form is that of John Calvin and others at the fountainhead of Protestant and Reformed Christianity, that is, the doctrine of Holy Scripture.

A significant element of the commentary is the official text of the Baptism Form as decided by the Synod of Dordt. With this, the commentary begins. Various important notes and observations concerning the text of the Form are included. One of these notes concerns the question whether the Form speaks of “two parts” or “two parties” in the covenant. Another concerns the phrase, “here in this Christian church.” Wielenga explains why in the questions to the parents at the baptism of a child, there occurs the mysterious reference to a “witness” or to “witnesses,” a reference that still is found in the Form used by the Protestant Reformed Churches, although it ought to be omitted.

The author of the commentary was the highly regarded Dutch Reformed pastor, Dr. Bastiaan Wielenga. Wielenga was a student and disciple of Herman Bavinck. The commentary represents the orthodox Reformed thinking about the covenant of grace deriving from Calvin and the Protestant Reformation and developed in the *Afscheiding* (Secession) and *Doleantie* (Grieving



Movement) in the Netherlands in the nineteenth century.

Wielenga was not pushing any particular theological agenda in his commentary. As he himself avowed, it was his purpose with the commentary simply to explain the language itself of the Baptism Form.

My main goal was not to provide a polemical treatise.... Nobody is impartial, but I have insisted on open-mindedness, which is necessary for proper exegesis. The question I continually asked myself was, what does the form say? How did the Reformed fathers account for their view of baptism in this act of the Reformation? ...It is not my idea of baptism...that I have tried to represent here, but a valuable liturgical heritage from the century of the Reformation (Preface, xvi).

With the rare exception, the commentary faithfully and convincingly, even powerfully, elucidates the doctrine of the Form itself.

This is not to suggest that, in the course of explaining the Form, Wielenga did not settle the controversies still troubling the Reformed churches, particularly, that of infant salvation and that of the relation of covenant and election. In fact, it was Wielenga's hope that "a truthful explanation of the form could assist in the sorely needed tempering of the still-continuing tremors of unrest" concerning infant baptism in the Reformed churches.

The language of the commentary is simple and often moving. Explaining the line in the Form concerning the spiritual condition of the infant children by nature, "we with our children are conceived and born in sin," Wielenga wrote:

We know that this tiny, fragile babe is born with inborn filthy sins, thus making him hideous before a holy God. That he is born to die and to suffer grief. That at the end of the narrow, bumpy path of life that begins at the infant's crib stands a coffin and awaits a yawning grave, and behind it, a mocking abyss. Behold, this should make the parents' heart tremble even more and in distress implore the great Judge to have mercy on this child (27-28).

There is even some most interesting church history in the commentary. Fascinating beyond all telling are the accounts of happenings in the Reformed churches in the Netherlands on the occasion of baptism at the time of

the conflict of the Reformed churches with the Arminians. During a baptism service, seeing the Arminian, Uytenbogaerdt, in the audience, because the child to be baptized was his grandchild, the preacher, Plancius, took the opportunity to preach "with great zeal against the doctrine of the Arminians." Then the Reformed preacher asked the Arminian theologian, who was functioning as the strange "witness," to respond positively to the question, whether he agreed with the doctrine taught "*here*" in this Christian church, pronouncing the word, "*here*," with the greatest emphasis.

On another occasion, the Arminian heretic, Episcopus, also functioning as a "witness" at a baptism, replied to the question about the doctrine "taught here in this Christian church" by mumbling and by paraphrasing in his answer the question put to him. Whereupon, the Reformed pastor publicly and loudly rebuked Episcopus for his conduct, which resulted in great commotion in the congregation.

Apart from indicating the importance of the phrase, "here in this Christian church," in the question to the parents, this history reveals that in that bygone time Reformed pastors were stalwart men, willing to contend for the (Reformed) faith once delivered to the saints (in the Baptism Form), and totally unschooled in ecumenical politeness.

This is a publication of the RFPA that is of such a nature as to warrant circulation far beyond the sphere of the Protestant Reformed Churches, indeed wherever in the world the Reformed Baptism Form is used and men and women can read English. It should indebt many to the RFPA.

The translator was the accomplished linguist, Annemie Godbehere. She did not live to see her work in print. Hardly had she completed the translation than she died of cancer. Her death affected the intention of the RFPA to publish the companion volume by Wielenga consisting of a commentary on the Reformed Lord's Supper Form.

The volume itself is a handsome hardcover of 400-odd pages. It sells for \$39.95, and can be ordered from the RFPA (1894 Georgetown Center Drive, Jenison, MI, USA 49428-7137). The e-mail address is [mail@rfpa.org](mailto:mail@rfpa.org); phone: (616) 457-5970. ☞

### Mission Activities

For many years the Hope PRC Council, along with recent help from Hope's Reformed Witness Committee (RWC), has been laboring with our fellow saints from the PRC of Yangon, Myanmar. Many of you are aware of this work to some degree, but others may not be as familiar with these labors.

The work in Myanmar began originally as an offshoot of the PRC's work in Singapore with the Asian Reformed Theological School. This work began first with Rev. J. Kortering, and was continued by the extensive work of Rev. A. denHartog, who made a total of seven different visits to Myanmar. Most of these trips involved teaching men from various churches at seminars. Rev. denHartog states that the most lasting legacy of his work in Myanmar is the continued existence of the PRC of Yangon, of which Rev. Titus Sanceulua is still the faithful pastor.

When the Contact Committee of the PRC decided that the work in Myanmar did not fit within the scope of its Constitution, the 2007 Synod adopted Hope PRC's recommendation that they continue the work with the PRC in Myanmar. Hope provided both financial support and spiritual guidance, along with technological tools for improved communications. This improved communication proved to be indispensable and helped

the spiritual development of the Yangon congregation grow by leaps and bounds. Rev. Titus no longer had to wait for delegation visits to have real-time correspondence with Hope PRC's Council.

Delegates from Hope PRC have made a total of five visits to Myanmar over the course of six years. The main objective of each visit went from initially learning the details of the work in Yangon to spiritual guidance and establishing that the PRC of Yangon is a properly instituted church with officebearers lawfully called and installed. The most recent delegation provided instruction in church government, which ranged from managing a church budget to establishing and maintaining proper church membership. This led to the Yangon congregation reaffirming its membership by formal public confessions of faith. Hope PRC's Council hopes to continue the work in Myanmar with at least one visit per year.

As you will learn in subsequent reports from Rev. Titus, a large part of this continued labor will involve assisting in organizing new congregations with the eventual goal of forming a functioning Reformed denomination of churches in Myanmar. Due to the daunting amount of work, the many opportunities available, and the many other responsibilities that consistory work brings, the Hope RWC has offered to assist Hope's Council in their work in Myanmar. This help will consist of updating

the denomination on progress in addition to several other initiatives that involve working directly with Rev. Titus and the PRC of Yangon. There will be regular updates in the future that include the progress of the work in Myanmar and reports from Rev. Titus and delegate visits. Also please look this work up on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/HopeProtestantReformedChurch/> and on Hope PRC's website at <http://hopeprchurch.org/outreach/myanmar-mission/>.

Delegates from the FMC (Rev. Doug Kuiper and Ike and Phyllis Uittenbogaard) and from Georgetown PRC (Joel and Ellen Bruinooge) left November 9 for a two-week visit to the PRC of Vellore, India pastored by Pastor Paul Raj. Rev. Kuiper preached and taught in the Vellore congregation, led seminars for area pastors in aspects of the Reformed Faith, spoke at a retreat for members of the Christian Medical College of Vellore, and participated in Village Outreach Ministry of the PRC of Vellore.

### Congregational Activities

The Lord God blasted the tri-state area of Iowa, Minnesota, and South Dakota (fondly known as Siouxland) with its first winter blizzard on November 18. The five PRC congregations there experienced snow, blowing, and drifting; school was called off and things nearly came to a standstill (except for the mailmen<sup>1</sup>). Psalm 148: 7-8

<sup>1</sup> Ed. note: Our readers will want to know that Mr. Van Egdome delivers mail.

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

came to mind: "Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps; fire and hail; snow, and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling his word." Such storms make us confess God's power and also His almighty care toward us, His people, who cannot stand before His cold.

### Minister Activities

Rev. Nathan Decker, pastor at Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI, was led by the Lord to decline the call extended to him by the congregation at First PRC of Holland, MI.

Rev. Brian Huizinga, pastor at Hope PRC of Redlands, CA, declined the call to Southwest PRC in Wyoming, MI.

First PRC, Holland, MI announced a trio of Rev. A. Brummel (Heritage PRC, Sioux Falls, SD), Rev. C. Haak (Georgetown PRC, Hudsonville, MI) and Rev. R. Kleyn (Covenant of Grace PRC, Spokane, WA). On November 20, Rev. A.

Brummel received the call from the congregation.

Rev. Cory Griess, pastor at Calvary PRC, Hull, IA, planned to answer the call from Byron Center PRC to be PRC home missionary on November 20. After asking for a one-week extension, he declined the call on November 27.


The Council of the PRC in Doon, IA announced a trio from which to call a third missionary to the Philippines. The men at Doon planned to call from Revs. A. Brummel, B. Huizinga, and R. Kleyn on November 22. At that meeting, Rev. Kleyn received the call.

### Young People's Activities

The Young People's Thanksgiving Mass Meeting was held at Hope PRC on November 20 at 2 P.M. with a speech given by Rev. David Overway. All young people were invited to attend for a time of growth and fellowship.

### Denominational Activities

In early November Rev. Nathan Decker and Rev. Ken Koole traveled to Pompton Plains, NJ for the meetings of NAPARC (North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council, a gathering of 13 conservative Presbyterian and Reformed Churches where information about denominational activities and labors is exchanged and issues faced by the Reformed church world can be discussed). A delegation attends these meetings each year as observers on behalf of the Contact Committee and in accordance with the decision of Synod 2016. That decision can be found on pages 33-34 of the 2016 PRC *Acts of Synod*.

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

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The congregation and Council of Crete PRC express Christian sympathy to Steve Zandstra; Ryan and Melanie Zandstra and family; and Brian and Amber Lenting and family in the death of their father and grandfather,

**HENRY ZANDSTRA.**

"As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Psalm 103:15-18).

Rev. Nathan Langerak, President  
Ed Stouwie, Clerk

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The congregation and Council of Crete PRC express Christian sympathy to Ed and Mary Stouwie; and Gys and Joanne Van Baren and family in the death of their father, grandfather, and great grandfather,

**EDWARD STOUWIE.**

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Corinthians 5:1).

Rev. Nathan Langerak, President  
Ed Stouwie, Clerk

### Classis East

■ Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, January 11, 2017, at the Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, Michigan.

Jon J. Huiskens  
Stated Clerk

### Wedding Anniversary

■ With thanksgiving and praise to our God we rejoice with our parents,

**HOWARD and LAJEAN  
BONESTROO,**

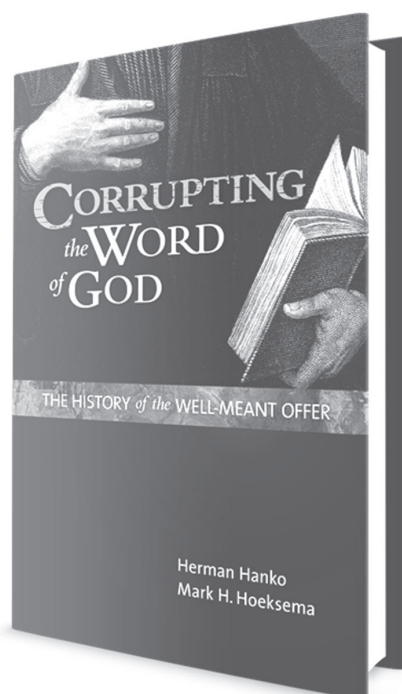
on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary on December 16, 2016. We are thankful for the many years God has given them together and praise God for His mercy shown to them and the blessings He has bestowed on their family. Our prayer is that God will continue to bless and uphold them in His love and faithfulness. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

Their children,

22 Grandchildren,

6 Great grandchildren

Doon, Iowa



## NEW RELEASE

### CORRUPTING THE WORD OF GOD: THE HISTORY OF THE WELL-MEANT OFFER

Does the eternal, unchangeable, all-powerful, and sovereign God *really* have a temporal, changeable and weak desire to save those whom he has unconditionally reprobated (Rom. 9:22), for whom the Son did not die (John 12:31) and whom the Holy Spirit will not regenerate, sanctify or glorify (John 3:8)?

Pelagianism, semi-Pelagianism, Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism, Anabaptism, Arminianism, Amyraldism, and Marrowism say yes to the well-meant offer of the gospel. The biblical, Augustinian, Reformed, and creedal position is no!

Emeritus professor of church history, Herman Hanko, guides us through fascinating doctrinal controversies in the early, Reformation and modern eras of the church, taking us to North Africa, Switzerland, France, England, Scotland, the Netherlands, and America, and emphasizing the teaching of the great theologians, such as Augustine and John Calvin, on God's particular grace, which is always irresistible and never fails or is frustrated.

In dealing with the historical perspective of God's absolutely sovereign grace versus the well-meant offer, this book fills a gap in the literature, and does so in a way that is warm and easily understood.

Hardcover, 272 pages

Retail Price: \$24.95 | Book Club \$16.22, \$17.46

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## Called to Watch for Christ's Return

by Martyn McGeown

A few days before Jesus gave his life on the cross, his disciples asked, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matt. 24:3). Christ responded with the Olivet Discourse, a detailed teaching on the doctrine of the last things.

We need to understand the signs of Christ's coming for our comfort as we look for "that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

Christ had two concerns. First, his disciples must know the signs of his coming, which are footsteps of his approach. But Christ is not satisfied with mere "sign-gazing," which can lead to speculation and idle, foolish living. He did not give signs to satisfy our curiosities, but so that we will be ready for him when he returns. Therefore, Christ's second concern was the readiness of his disciples, which is expressed in his urgent and repeated warnings to watch for his coming in light of the signs.

Watch, pray, and serve the Lord with an eye to the signs of his return!



Coming December 2016

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