

# *The Standard Bearer*

A Reformed Semi-Monthly Magazine • December 15, 2015

## CONTENTS

<i>Meditation</i>	It Came to Pass in Those Days <b>REV. RON VAN OVERLOOP</b>	122
<i>Editorial</i>	Not Ashamed to Be Called Their God <b>REV. KENNETH KOOLE</b>	124
<i>O Come Let Us Worship</i>	God Judges the Church's Worship (11b) <b>REV. CORY GRIESS</b>	127
<i>Pertaining to the Churches...in Common</i>	The Calling of the Local Church to Do Mission Work <b>REV. JAMES SLOPSEMA</b>	130
<i>Search the Scriptures</i>	Robbing Christ of His Honor (15) <b>MR. DON DOEZEMA</b>	132
<i>God's Wonderful Works</i>	Foundational Principles (4) Miracles <b>REV. JAMES LANING</b>	135
<i>Ministering to the Saints</i>	The Elder's Ordination (4) <b>REV. DOUGLAS KUIPER</b>	137
<i>Church and State</i>	The Supreme Court Finds a Right to Homosexual Marriage <b>MR. BRIAN VAN ENGEN</b>	141
<i>Bring the Books...</i>	Book Review: <i>The Message of Daniel</i> <b>REV. MARTYN MCGEOWN</b>	142
<i>Activities</i>	News From Our Churches <b>MR. PERRY VAN EGDOM</b>	142

# It Came to Pass in Those Days

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, everyone into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David;) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Luke 2:1-7

Our text is the most familiar of the accounts of the birth of the Lord Jesus.

Joseph and Mary travelled about ninety miles from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea. It seems that the command of Caesar to be enrolled for a future tax came rather suddenly, forcing Joseph and

Mary to travel so late in Mary's pregnancy. It is understandable that they would have arrived after many others, as they were slowed by Mary's condition. And it seems that on the night of their arrival at Bethlehem Mary was delivered of her firstborn child.

She wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger. The story is told so simply! Yet it is so profound.



God inspired Luke to detail the unusual circumstances of those days. Today, we might have told the story by giving more details about the misery of the trip or the difficulty of the delivery; and we certainly would want to know the weight and length of the infant. But God tells us about the emperor and his desire to increase his income by taxing everyone in his empire. The sovereign God, in His infinite wisdom, wants us to know that He is in control of every circumstance and that He uses all things to accomplish His purposes. God's ways are past our finding out, but we do certainly see that He controls all things and that He does so for His own glory and for the sake of His beloved people.

Here we see the sovereign God of heaven use the Ro-

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

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

#### Reprint and Online Posting Policy

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

#### Editorial Policy

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

#### 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

#### Subscription Price

\$23.00 per year in the US, \$35.00 elsewhere  
New eSubscription: \$23.00  
eSubscription for current hardcopy subscribers: \$11.50.

#### Advertising Policy

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

Website for RFPA: [www.rfpa.org](http://www.rfpa.org)  
Website for PRC: [www.prca.org](http://www.prca.org)

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

man emperor in far off Italy to bring about the location of the birth of the Messiah in little Bethlehem in Judea of Canaan. Israel was no longer an independent nation, governing herself. Instead she was, in those days, a part of the Roman empire. How had the glory departed from Israel! Sensitive to their lack of national dependency and strength, the sons of Abraham in those days thought primarily in terms of an earthly Messiah, not a spiritual one. Their focus was only on the earthly restoration of the glorious kingdom under David and Solomon.

But God is sovereign over all! His control is not limited to the realm of the spiritual. He controls all things in every part of the world in order to accomplish His purposes. Caesar serves the God of heaven! Whether he knew it or not! “The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever He will” (Prov. 21:1). Caesar’s purpose was to take a census or enrollment of all the people in the empire with a view to taxing them (which would take place twelve years later). God’s purpose was to bring Joseph and Mary out of the northern region of Canaan (Nazareth of Galilee) down to Bethlehem in Judea, where it was foretold that the Messiah would be born (Micah 5:2). The powers of darkness, without knowing it and even in spite of themselves, are used by Jehovah to accomplish His purposes for the salvation of the church of Christ.



The greatest wonder in the history of the world is told in a most simple way: “the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.”

This is the record of God’s only begotten Son being manifest in human flesh and entering into this sinful world. This is the most significant moment in the history of the world as well as in the kingdom of God. That is why it constitutes the “fullness of the time” (Gal. 4:4). It is the central part of history for it is *the* wonder, the most profound mystery: God became man! He would be great and called the Son of the Highest, and He would sit on the throne of His father David (Luke 1:32).

But the wonder is almost lost from sight. It is told in the simplest language. The text by itself gives no indication that Mary’s child is the Son of God Himself. There is no divine glory shining around that manger. There is no “breaking news” interrupting regular broadcasting to

tell everyone in the world. Instead, all is quiet. Yes, there is the visit of the angel and the heavenly host, but that is heard and seen only by a few lowly shepherds. And there is nothing of the wonder that can be seen—all we see is the likeness of flesh, sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3). Jesus was brought forth in the same way as all other babies. He came only when her days were accomplished—she reached her due date. He was flesh of her flesh. He was as helpless as any other baby, needing to be washed and wrapped, nursed and laid down. Truly it can be said that in the flesh of man He was of no reputation (Phil. 2:7). He had no glory or beauty that He should be desired (Is. 53:2).

Further, it came to pass in those days that there was “no room for them in the inn.” Thus, He was laid in a manger in a stable area. The greatest wonder takes place, not in a royal palace, but in a barn! So striking is this part of His birth that it serves as the sign that the angel gave to the shepherds so they might identify Him as the Messiah (v. 12).

Yet more evidence of the wonder being lost from human sight is the fact that this greatest of all wonders takes place in Bethlehem. It may be called the city of David, but in those days it held little significance. It was at that time little among the thousands of Judah (Micah 5:2). And then consider that the King of kings was hidden in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger as an expression of His abject poverty. The most basic necessities of a new born child are the poorest of all. “...For your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (II Cor. 8:9).

If the unbelieving world had been in charge of this wonder, they would have advertised it as broadly and as much as possible. But God’s ways are not man’s ways. God’s ways are not merely different from man’s ways, but His ways are so much higher than man’s ways (Is. 55:8, 9).



What significance can be drawn from this description of the birth of the Messiah?

It is God’s will that the description of the birth of the promised Messiah forcefully convey His true humanity. He was very real man, body and soul. His birth was like that of every other human. In addition, this description of the Messiah’s birth powerfully communicates His

humility. He “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7).


He came into the world that did not welcome Him. There was no room for Him. There was no reception—no baby shower. They did not want Him. He came into the world and the world knew Him not (John 1:10). He came unto His own, and His own received Him not (John 1:11).

He was rejected! The powers of spiritual darkness hated and despised Him. The world did. Herod was Satan’s instrument to attempt to kill Him (Matt. 2). And the church of His day did. Also the church of our day has nothing to give to Him or to help Him. And that is the way God would have it, for no power, riches and glory of this world could aid Him in the establishment of His kingdom. No amount of good works can help Him. His abject poverty represents our complete spiritual poverty: we are dead in sin and misery. We have nothing

to contribute to His work of saving His people. No one and nothing can aid Him in the work of redemption!

This description of the Messiah’s birth declares that it is all of Him who gave His all to accomplish the work of redemption. The Person of God the Son entered into sinful flesh and was laid in a manger with absolutely nothing of this world. Though He was rich, for our sake He became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich (II Cor. 8:9). In this way He brings the perfect sacrifice of Himself for our sin and delivers us from all the dominion of sin. He fights His way into righteousness and life by the power of His grace.

This is the way the life of the Savior (from sin) begins! He even must and does make room for Himself in the hearts of those given Him of the Father. By the irresistible power of His grace He accomplishes everything that is necessary to save His people from their sin.

Thus all the glory is His! Praised be His name forever and ever! 

EDITORIAL

REV. KENNETH KOOLE

## Not Ashamed to Be Called Their God

“What is man...that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels: thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands...”

Hebrews 2:6, 7

“...wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God.”

Hebrews 11:16

**T**he birth of our Lord, Mary’s firstborn, God’s own Son.

---

*The body of this editorial was given as a chapel speech at the PRC Seminary a few years ago, now edited for the SB to mark the Advent of Christ.*

Visited by God.

No small honor.

Revelation of God as Jehovah God, God of promise, God of friendship, God of love. Mind you, revelation of a love for a fallen human race.

Christ’s birth is the very heartbeat of God’s love for a people chosen in Him from before the foundation of the world.

“For God so loved...,that he gave...” (John 3:16).

In that connection, consider that phrase found in Hebrews 11:16, which reads “...wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God.”

The more one reflects upon this

phrase, the more astonishing it becomes. Not only astonishing, but moving!

And instructive as well.

In fact, the more we reflect on this phrase, the more we are convinced that it is one of those texts that could be inscribed on a plaque and placed upon one’s wall, like the text, “But as for me and my house, we shall serve the LORD” (Josh. 24:15).

Appropriate for a believer’s kitchen; a constant reminder to self and others of whose presence looms large in that home and whose Word rules.

So with the phrase “...wherefore



God is not ashamed to be called their God.”

It is a phrase, we are convinced, that would be particularly well suited for the wall of a minister’s study.

It would serve as a constant reminder of what a wonder God’s grace is—when you consider with whom Jehovah God is pleased to identify Himself.

And also, when you consider who it is God is pleased to use to represent Himself to His people, His church!

To be sure, when the text speaks of those of whom God is not ashamed, it is speaking of His people. But let every minister (and really every officebearer) remember, we also are numbered with those people of whom—wonder of wonders—it is said that God is not ashamed!

Which brings this reminder: how shall we repay Him who is not ashamed of us? By bringing shame upon His Name? God forbid!

A phrase that certainly has great application to ministers.

It is a declaration and reminder of how to look at those to whom one ministers. These are a people whom God is not ashamed to call His people. Whatever their sins and weaknesses (which are not a few, and often anything but small), yet for all that, these are those whom God is not ashamed to call His people, with whom He identifies Himself. It is with this understanding that ministers are to labor in Christ’s church.

“Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God.”

Quite a statement! A statement that sets forth what one is inclined to call “the largeness and graciousness” of Almighty God.

Quite the declaration when you consider both *with whom* God is not ashamed (shall we say “embarrassed”) to be identified, and *who* this God is who is not ashamed to have us be identified with Him.

Hebrews 11:16 is an astonishing statement in light of who Jehovah God is. He is the Great Creator.

If you recall, this is the truth with which Hebrews 11 begins. “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God” (v. 3). God Triune spoke, “Let there be!” And there was! The creation with its sun, moon, and myriad of stars in the vastness of a universe, which, the more we learn about, the more staggering its vastness is, all brought into being by His almighty word, a world and universe displaying the splendor of His mind.

That Almighty One.

And we have not even spoken yet of the wonder and glory of His Son, whose radiance outshines the splendor of the sun, in whom He visited us.

It is this God who is not ashamed (embarrassed?) to have it known: “These are my people.”

It would be one thing if the text read, “Wherefore a remnant of men are not ashamed to call Him God,” or “We are not ashamed to be called His people.”

That would be understandable, that God’s people are not ashamed to call Him their God, but consider it a singular honor, a privilege to be known as His people.

That would be one thing, that we declare ourselves to be those who want the world to know, “This sovereign, holy, righteous God is our God! This God of Scripture, whose words of truth in Scripture (for all your *professed* loved of God) you so despise and hate, this is our God with whom we openly identify ourselves. And we do so without embarrassment or shame.”

That would be one thing.

But that is not the text.

Rather, God is not ashamed to be our God and to be known as such.

That is the astonishing thing.

All you have to do is read the Scriptures and consider with whom, that is, with what kind of sinner-saints, God identified Himself throughout history, and the wonder is brought home.

Just consider the ancestry of Christ Jesus.

Judah and Tamar come to mind. A story so sordid that one hesitates to teach it to little catechism children. Wasn’t Judah married? And he went to bed with whom?! And then, when Tamar was found to be with child, he was ready to do what to her, until he was also exposed in the sin?

And then there is Rahab the harlot. And Ruth the Moabitess. But Moab was the son of whom? Of drunken Lot and his daughter! The Christ coming from such?! And of David and Bathsheba, who committed what together? And then to cover it up, David murdered whom?

The ancestry of Christ. Not exactly something of which to boast.

And God is not ashamed to be called the God of such?

And the time would fail me to tell of Samson and of Solomon and of who knows how many other stumbling 'saints'.

It is about such that we must speak in catechism classes and from pulpits, and then identify ourselves with them.

One might think Almighty God would want to keep this secret. "I stand in a covenantal relationship with you, but I would just as soon that not be noised abroad. I will be your God, but let's not let everyone know about it, shall we?!"

It is like having an unfaithful spouse or wayward children. Who cares to noise it abroad and have everyone talking about it? It is rather embarrassing, don't you think?

And yet Hebrews 11 declares of such God that He is not ashamed to be called their God. Which is to say, He considers it, in the end, to be an honor to be identified with them; and by implication, with those to whom we minister. And with ourselves as well.

Maybe 'astonishing' is too weak a word.

And Hebrews 2:11 says something along the same lines: "...for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."

This speaks of Christ, of course, as the great Son of Man, who is God come in our flesh. And calling the likes of us His brothers. And not embarrassed to do so and having the world know that it is so. "These are my adopted brothers and sisters, with whom I am happy to share my inheritance and all the rights and privileges of my Father's house. They are sons of God. And

you, worldlings, had better recognize them and treat them as such, or you will have Me to answer to."

Indeed, what is man? And who are we?

Such is the implication of the phrase "not ashamed to be called their God."

And we sometimes are hesitant, embarrassed, and ashamed to identify ourselves openly with Him and His cause and truth. Why? Because if we do in this increasingly anti-Christian, anti-biblical age, some may scoff or mock, or even hurl invectives at us, "You fundamentalist, hyper-Calvinistic, Christians you!"

After all, our reputation and name is involved. What will people think!

What *people* may think?

We, ashamed of God and of Christ whom He sent, who, as almighty God, is not ashamed of us and of having it declared in the world? Yet we, at certain times, embarrassed to be identified with Him and His truth? Beginning with a virgin birth and the appearance of angels and so on. Just as you find in the gospel accounts and also beginning with Genesis 1 (six-day creation?) and ending in Revelation 22 (which speaks of a return of this Jesus in glory with His holy angels and in final judgment).

"You still believe those things? Literally? How childishly simple you folk are."

What such men think of us rather than what Jehovah God thinks of us, according to which 'thoughts of love' He sent His Son into the world and visited us? That governs our conduct and witness?

God forbid!

Rather, let us be like those sinner-saints listed in Hebrews 11, who by faith counted the promised heavenly land and city of greater value than the earthly and worldly. How does Hebrews 11 characterize Moses? As "...esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than [all] the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect unto [an eye for] the recompense of the reward."

Of such a believer God is not ashamed, and with such He will be identified in this world.


It was exactly to make such a man, such a believer out of Moses (and later, out of a fearful Simon Peter, out of a Pharisaical Saul of Tarsus, and out of a timid Timothy), that God visited mankind some 2,000 years ago, entering our flesh in the Person of His Son.

God sending His Son into this world, because out of the likes of us, by His sanctifying power, He would make unto Himself a people of whom He would not be ashamed but glad to have identified with Himself.

And if He could sanctify to His service the likes of those of whom you read in the Scriptures, then He can sanctify whom He wills to be His ministers, as well as those with whom we labor and to whom we bring His Word.

Astonishing is the power of God who saves.

And, when you consider for whom the Lord God sent and gave His Son, amazing is His love.

When it comes to the gospel, how sweet the sound. 

# God Judges the Church's Worship (11b)

Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself. Selah. Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee:

Psalm 50:5-7

But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?

Psalm 50:16

## Introduction

In Psalm 50 God comes as Judge to sit at His bench on Mount Zion to judge His church's worship. He has two charges to bring against two distinct groups in His visible church, the believing element and the unbelieving element. The charge against the believing element is formalism in worship. The charge against the unbelieving element is hypocrisy in worship. God will not sit silently by when heartless worship is given Him in His church.

## The Charge of Formalism

God brings His first charge against believers in Israel. We must take careful notice of the language of the Psalm. For though God says He will do something very frightening to His own—testify against His people (v. 7), He takes great care to communicate to this first group that they are still just that, His people. He calls Himself *the LORD*, that is, Jehovah, the covenant God of *His people*, in verse 1. This first group is *my saints* (v. 5). He comes to judge *His people*. Therefore, this charge comes as chastisement to them—a very serious chastisement, for those who are called by His name are supposed to honor Him, but they are not. The fact that He tells them He is their covenant God makes the charge all the worse. If it is the neighbor down the street that testified against your reputation, that is not so bad. But when it is your

Father speaking against your reputation, you feel utterly guilt-ridden. This is God, the covenant Father, who will not forsake His own, who loves them, but who still brings this charge; this is why the offense is so great.

The charge is formalism. People who are His own, have fallen into the sad routine of formal, heartless worship. He has come to unmask before all the world their ritualism void of love. That charge is brought in verses 7-13:

Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?

The Israelites had fallen into a pagan notion of worship. Part of pagan worship was the offering of sacrifices. But when pagans offered sacrifices, they believed that their god was lacking something and that their sacrifices filled that lack. The imagined pagan god could not care less about the hearts of the people who brought him sacrifices, just as long as they did the right thing, went through the right motions and brought the right sacrifice. The purpose was merely to satisfy a hunger the god had. There was no heartfelt love in the worshipper. By bringing sacrifices they were offering something to earn their god's favor. Sacrificial worship was a work that earned the right to have the god leave them alone for awhile. And because it was that, worship was a purely formal thing. Their sacrifices were routine rituals that paid their god off for the time being. Offering worship to the pagan gods meant dragging yourself out of bed, bringing the god a sacrifice to keep him off your back until the next time, making payment so that you could have a blessing or two, and then going back to your normal, everyday business. There was no relationship, no fellowship, no covenant.

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

Previous article in this series: April 1, 2015, p. 306.

The Israelites had begun to think this way about their worship of Jehovah God. It probably happened gradually, and perhaps many of them did not even realize it, but they began to treat Jehovah as the pagans treated their gods. The problem was not in what they did. They brought the right sacrifices to Jehovah, just as He had prescribed. They did all the right things. They came for the morning and evening worship. They worshipped in the right way, the worship God had regulated in His Word.

And notice in the Psalm that God has no problem with that. He even applauds them for that aspect of their worship: "I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me" (v. 8). God says, in effect, "I have no charge to bring against you as far the things you are doing. I will not reprove you for the sacrifices themselves. You have done what the Word commands. You have followed the regulative principle as far as how to perform the sacrifices and what to do and when to do it. But here is the problem, your heart is far from Me when you are doing it."

The Israelites had begun to think that the reason they were called to worship was that God needed their worship. There was something lacking in God that they had to supply. God needed that bullock and that goat. Worship was only about satisfying some need God has, as you pacify a baby by bringing him a bottle. Simply go to worship, get it done, and keep God happy, and then carry on with what we really care about in our lives. This is why God says to them in the text: "I will take no bullock out of your house or goat out of your fold." In other words, I do not need these sacrifices you are bringing. They do not fill up some lack in Me. That is not why I command you to make a sacrifice regularly before Me. Besides, even if I did need the goat or the bullock, do you really think I would come to you for it? I own all of it already (vv. 10-11). I own "the cattle on a thousand hills." I am God of heaven and earth. I am the Mighty One. I created the worlds in the beginning and all of it is Mine. Who do you think you are, acting as if *you* need to supply *Me* with something I don't have. How could I lack anything? I am Jehovah God.

When Israel began to think this way, their worship lost its true motive. It lost its heart; they had fallen into a dead, cold formalism. When they began to think that their worship was for the purpose of giving something to God that He did

not have, it became completely outward. There was no more heart to it than when you have to take the trash out in the morning or feed the dog. You just worship to get it done, and you carry on till next week when you do it again. It was all ritual, mere outward activity. And it ended up being a form of works-righteousness. The only motive to keep worshiping was that they thought this was the way they earned God's favor until the next time they had to do it. They thought this was the work that God demanded and, therefore, they must fulfill it to earn the right not to have Him breathing down their necks until next week. There was no desire, no covenant life, no relationship, no heart.

What do you think? Would God be righteous to bring such a charge against us?

He has nothing to say, I am convinced, about the way we worship. He says to us what He said to the Israelites in verse 8, "I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me." That is, "I have nothing against the songs that you sing, and the order of your worship, and the reverence of it. You are following the regulative principle of worship and that is good. You must, and you have. But has it become a mere heartless ritual to you? Perhaps without immediately noticing you have begun to treat Me like a pagan god."

How easy to fall into this, but how dangerous if we do, if we think that God demands our worship because it supplies some lack in Him. He is God, perfectly self-sufficient. We do not come to worship Him because He is a deity that has lost His self-esteem. He does not need His people to sing nice songs about Him and make prayers to Him in order for Him to feel good about Himself. Do not think of Him as a mighty abused child, that just needs us to supply some lack in His psyche in order for Him to carry on with His job of ruling the world. He is Jehovah God, the Mighty One. He did not create this world because He needed to. He did not save His people because He needed them. He is perfectly at peace and complete in Himself. He is the Triune God, fully satisfied in His life as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This world is not here to make Him feel good about Himself. We are here because His desire is to set such great grace upon His people, and bring them into His own state of perfect peace and fellowship. And unbelievers are here to reveal His wrath and justice as God.



Do not fall for the dangerous notion that our worship is a work that we do to make God be favorable to us, that we come to offer our praise in order to earn the right to have Him not be breathing down our necks for another week—keep Him happy, pacify Him until next time. Do not think that if we do not worship, something bad might happen. There is no better way than this to turn worship that ought to be a joy into an empty formalism. When we think this way, consciously or sub-consciously, then we crawl out of bed Sunday morning just to go through the motions. Give God His due, appease Him, make Him happy, maybe even sleep through part of the worship service, just so I can say I was there. Then I can buy Him off, and go home until the next time, and He has nothing on me. This worship becomes simply a ritual, a going through the motions, with no heart, no covenantal love and relationship, and no warmth. And it is not worship.

God does not call for an “either-or” worship. He does not call for worship that is *either* according to His Word, *or* worship that is from the heart. He calls for “both-and.” For worship that is *both* according to His own Word, *and* worship that is from the heart. Have we fallen into a dead formalism? Then God has somewhat against us. For this is the covenant God, and He wills to have and to give life, heart, relationship, and love. This is the first charge.

### The Charge of Hypocrisy

In verse 16 God turns His eye to a different group of people and brings a charge against their worship. Psalm 50:16 tells us who this second group is: “But unto the wicked God saith.” This charge is not brought against believers who have fallen into formalism as the first charge stated. But neither is it brought against the wicked in the world outside the visible church. Rather, it is brought against those who are unbelieving in the church—the outwardly orthodox, but inwardly and completely unbelieving, at least for the time being.


And the charge is outright hypocrisy (vv. 16-20):

What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou

sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother’s son.

These people were a part of the regular worship of God. They grew up in the church. They came and declared God’s statutes, and took God’s covenant in their mouth (v. 16). They sang the songs of the covenant; they spoke the words of the covenant. At worship, all looked good; everything was in order. They knew the right things to say and the right way to act. But when it came down to it, they loved sin and not God. Verse 17 says they took God’s words upon their lips, and then they cast them behind them—as if they did not need them! They hated instruction, though they went along with it in an outward show while in worship. When they left church and saw thieves, they did not steer clear. When they saw adulterers, they joined in (v. 18). The same tongue that sang the songs of Zion, later was given to corruption and lying (v. 19). The driving principle of their hearts was the pursuit of sin. They came to worship, but not to repent. There was no broken heart and no desire to separate from sin. They wanted sin; they loved it. They were a part of the people of God and knew that the only way to maintain that standing was at least to go through the motions. But they forgot one thing: the Lord sees the heart. Others may have been fooled, but God was not. A hypocrite is one who says he is someone that he is not. That is what these people were.

Are there any like that reading this article? Any that live like the world during the week, and then come to God’s house and act as though all is fine and dandy? God says, “How dare you come here and take the words of My covenant upon your lips with no love for Me? How dare you come and sing My praises as though it were no matter at all that you have no heart for Me and that your life is a life of seeking sin?” Young people, or young adults, does this describe any of you? Does the world have your heart, but God only your outward motions? It is one thing, God says, if you sin and come with a broken heart, a heart of repentance before Him. But to the people addressed by the text, God charges, “you participate with no sense of your sin. You go through the motions and you have all others fooled, but not Me.”

We will consider His sentence upon these two groups next time. 

## The Calling of the Local Church to Do Mission Work

**T**he Domestic Mission Committee (DMC) has been developing and promoting the concept that each local church needs to be involved in mission work in its own area. We envision our churches reaching out into an area with a hundred-mile radius to develop a core group that, under God's blessing, will result in the establishment of another church. This work could well be the work solely of the local church or it may become the work of the churches in common. This concept is in harmony with Article I of the DMC's Constitution: "Although mission work is the calling of the local church, by virtue of the voluntary church federation some mission work may also become the work of the churches in common." The New Fields Subcommittee of the DMC has been promoting this idea with a presentation on the outreach of the local church that it has given to many of our evangelism committees and even church councils.

The DMC plans to present three articles on this topic. In this article we will emphasize the calling of the local church to do mission work. The next article will speak to how this local mission work is best done. And finally, we plan an article introducing a proposal that the DMC has for the 2016 Synod for calling a missionary to create his own field of labor and whose work in part will be to work closely with our individual congregations in their mission endeavors.

But now we consider the topic of the calling of the local church to do mission work.

The calling of the church to do mission work was set forth by Jesus shortly before His ascension into heaven.

To the eleven disciples, who represented the New Testament church, Jesus gave the charge, "Go ye therefore, and teach (the word is really "disciple") all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt 28:19-20). In Mark 16:15-16 we find a slight variation of this, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Any command that Jesus gives the church is important. But the importance of this command is underscored by the fact that it was given by the risen Lord shortly before His departure into heaven. In fact, He further emphasized this call to the church at the very time of His ascension, when He told the disciples, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

The commission to disciple the nations by the preaching of the Word is not the only calling of the church. She must also care for and build up her own members. She must be faithful to preach the gospel to them, administer the sacraments to them, and exercise Christian discipline for their good. In that context she must contend for the faith, teach her covenant youth, care for the poor, as well as train ministers of the gospel. Far too many churches have become so caught up in mission work that they neglect these duties to their own demise. But in addition to ministering to her own members is the important work of discipling the nations. Mission work must not be seen as a luxury or something the church should do only when she has extra resources. Mission work is essential to her work as church.

And the work of missions is a great privilege that

---

*Rev. Slopsema is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches and secretary of the Domestic Mission Committee.*

Christ has given to His church. Mission work belongs to the great work of God to gather His church. Understand well, the gathering of the church is broader than mission work. God gathers His church not only from the ungodly outside the church, but also from the line of the covenant within the church. But the gathering of His church is God's greatest work in history. All other works of God stand in the service of the gathering of the elect church. And the church already gathered is privileged to be used by God to accomplish this great work of church gathering through the preaching of gospel that He has entrusted to her and through the godly witness of her members. When a church neglects either aspect of her work, whether it is ministering to her own or discipling the nations, she robs herself of a great privilege God has given her. God will gather His church. But the church that fails in either aspect of her work is unfaithful to her calling and robs herself of a great privilege.

Mission work is to be directed to different kinds of individuals. The preamble of the DMC Constitution states, "We believe that this missionary activity includes the work of church extension and church reformation, as well as the task of carrying out the gospel to the unchurched and heathen." This speaks of three objects of mission work. First, there are believers that have strayed from the truth or who may be sound in faith but find themselves in churches that are no longer faithful to the gospel. This is implied in the statement that "mission activity includes the work of church extension and church reformation." This kind of work certainly is the calling of every true church. That is evident from Jesus' response when He saw His own countrymen as sheep having no shepherd. He declared that "the harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matt. 9:37-38). This prompted Jesus to send out the twelve to the lost sheep of the house of Israel to preach the gospel of the kingdom (Matt 10:5-7). On another occasion the full harvest prompted Jesus to send out the seventy (Luke 10:2).

In addition, the DMC Constitution speaks of "carrying the gospel to the unchurched and heathen." The unchurched are those who in their generations belonged to the church but have fallen out of the covenant. The heathen are those who in their generations have stood

outside the covenant. The Foreign Mission Committee's Constitution indicates in Article 1 that foreign mission work is with those that are heathen. Domestic missions, therefore, is concerned with believers in need of church reformation and the unchurched. Having said that, it is interesting to note that with the influx of third-world immigrants into our country there is work among the heathen in our own cities.

Next must be emphasized that this important call to do mission work comes to the local church. It is not the place of synod, nor of classis, nor of a mission board to do mission work. This privilege belongs to the local church. The great commission Jesus gave the church to do missions was to disciple the nations by means of preaching the gospel and baptism. This is the work of the local church. In addition, each believer in the local church holds the office of prophet, so that each is equipped to bring the word to others in the power of the preaching. Christ uses this witness along with the preaching to gain others to Christ and thus gather His church.

Not only does the great commission to disciple the nations come to the local church, it also comes to each local church. Not just to the large churches that have many resources, but also to the smaller congregations that have little strength (Rev. 3:8). At present we have two of our larger congregations that are developing works in Myanmar and India. Not every church has the resources to do this. But each congregation has the ability to work in its own community. In fact, this is where the mission work of each church must begin and only then extend out as the Lord gives opportunity. To the two travelers to Emmaus the risen Lord said, "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). And to return to Acts 1:8, we find that at His ascension Jesus instructed the apostles, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Mission work must be the desire and work of the entire congregation rather than just a few. This desire proceeds from the office of believer that makes every believer a prophet. This office of prophet implies not only the ability to speak the word of God but also the desire to do so. Remember, the Old Testament word for "prophet" has the

basic idea of bubbling over. A prophet is one so filled with the wonderful knowledge of God that it bubbles over in his life.

A wonderful example we have of believers exercising the office of prophet is the church of Thessalonica. In the opening chapter of his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul recalls how that the gospel came to them not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit (v. 5). Paul adds that the Thessalonian Christians became examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia (v. 7) in that the word of the Lord sounded out from them far and wide (v. 8). The word translated “sounded out” is literally “to echo.” The idea is that the Thessalonian saints eagerly spread the word that they had heard from Paul, so that it was as though the gospel was echoing back and forth in Thessalonica and beyond. And the key was that they had received the word with joy in the Holy Spirit (v. 6).

This zeal found in Thessalonica for the spread of the gospel needs to be cultivated from the pulpit, in the catechism room, in our Bible Study groups, in our homes, in the *Standard Bearer* and *Beacon Lights*, and on every level. The church can expect the Lord’s blessing on its mission work only when it lives in the hearts of her members who support it financially, in prayers, and

with a godly witness in their own community. By comparison, what blessing do you suppose we could expect on our children and grandchildren were only a few in the church concerned about their salvation? What if only the minister and a few elders along with a committee of the church were really interested in the training of the church’s youth, but the rest of the congregation, including parents and grandparents, had little heart for it? You can be sure that the Lord’s blessings would not be found in that church and that the covenant would soon die out in a few generations. It is no different with the important work of discipling the nations. The church cannot expect the Lord’s blessings on her mission work when only a few are actively involved and there is little heart for the work generally in the membership of the church.

Let us be faithful to our calling as churches to preach the gospel to the nations. Let us begin in our own communities. As the Lord gives us opportunity, let us reach out farther, even to the ends of the earth. When the work becomes more than one church can handle, let it become the work of the churches in common.

But let us be faithful!

And the Lord will bless our work!

He will also bless our churches! 

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

## MR. DON DOEZEMA

Upon This Rock (23)

# Robbing Christ of His Honor (15)

“**W**hy tarriest thou,” said Ananias to a Jew newly converted to Christianity, “arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins” (Acts 22:16). That was Saul of Tarsus.

---

*Mr. Doezeema is a member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.*

*Previous article in this series: December 1, 2015, p. 106.*

Having been taught “at the feet of Gamaliel” (Acts 22:3), he was well versed in the Pharisaistic system of legal righteousness. And he had rejected Christianity. With a vengeance. Before being able fully to comprehend a righteousness that is by faith, therefore, Saul, in a very real sense, had to unlearn the whole of his dogmatics. It was to *this* man that Ananias was able to say, “...be baptized, and wash away thy sins”—and not have to clarify that by



adding, “but please understand that we are talking here about a *sign*. The remission of *sins* cannot be effected by a washing with mere *water*.” Saul would simply have taken that for granted. And we, in turn, take for granted, do we not, that Saul would have done so—in spite of the fact that he had, still, much to learn about the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus.

We are ready to take that for granted, I think, because it is the language of the new dispensation. Post-Pentecost. But what about the *old* dispensation? Leviticus 17:11 is telling. Moses could say to the people of Israel concerning the sacrificial victim of the burnt offering that “it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul”—and he did not have to add, “but please bear in mind that we are talking *symbolism* here. You must understand that sheep’s blood can neither cover sin nor cleanse the conscience. What God is saying is that He accepts this offering from your hand as *symbolical* atonement for your souls.” The saints of God, from the very beginning, *understood that to be the case*—even though they had, still, much to learn about the cleansing power of the blood of the promised Messiah.

Which explains why David’s contemporaries would not be bewildered by the prayer to God that he penned for their benefit in Psalm 51:16. “Thou desirest *not* sacrifice, else would I give it: thou delightest *not* in burnt offering.” Those who read, and sang, the words of this psalm understood full well that the psalmist, their king, would not for a minute *condone* neglect of the ceremonies of the law. God had *prescribed* them. He would in fact *delight in them*. And His saints would, through them, be blessed with the assurance that their transgressions were forgiven and their sins were covered (Ps. 32:1). But they knew *this* too, that it was not the blood of beasts that cleansed their souls. Nor was it the smell of a burning carcass, *as such*, that was a “sweet savor unto the Lord” (Lev. 3:5). Every slaying of an innocent animal on behalf of sinner-saints impressed anew on their minds these truths, not only that the justice of God requires that satisfaction be made for sins committed against Him, but also this, that, though they deserved death for their sins, God in His mercy had provided a way of escape. And it was not the blood of an animal. In fact, their experience was that, as we have observed before, God refused to grant relief to their troubled consciences, in their bringing

of sacrifices to His altar, till they looked *away from the slaughtered animal* and cast themselves on *His mercy*. The blood of a sheep? *Symbolical* atonement for their souls. This they knew. And this they would immediately ‘read into’ the words of the psalmist in Psalm 51:16.

Mere recognition of the symbolism involved is, however, not the last word on the insights of David expressed in this part of his prayer recorded in Psalm 51. Perhaps it would help for us to be reminded of the occasion for the psalm. The title, or inscription, reads “A psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.” That sin had lived in David’s soul for nearly a year. He repressed it, surely, and no doubt also tried to rationalize it away. It was, after all, the sword of the *Ammonites* that had slain Uriah. Not David’s. And once Bathsheba had become a widow, she was certainly available for an honorable marriage to the king. Nothing wrong with that. No reason to interrupt any of the exercises of his religion. Frequenting the house of God? Surely. Sacrifices? Business as usual. But the blood of bulls and goats... did nothing to quiet his guilty conscience. “When I kept silence,” he confessed in Psalm 32, “my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy on me” (vv. 3-4).

Then, at last, came Nathan the prophet. And the words “Thou art the man” found their mark.

Did David resort soon thereafter to the house of God, with sacrifice in hand? Almost certainly, yes. But never before, we think, had David ever gone to God with a more profound consciousness of the utter impotence of the blood of bulls and goats. Never before had David been so emptied of self-confidence and so painfully aware of the stark reality of his having to come to God... empty-handed. Will there be reconciliation between God and this wretched sinner, it will have to be entirely *gratuitous*. The purchase price of redemption will have to be paid, entirely, by *Another*. (Which is, of course, exactly the symbolism of the burnt offering.)

You can hear it in the penitential Psalm 51. “For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.” “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight.” “Behold,” he says in recognition of the depravity of his nature, “I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” And then: “Wash me,

and I shall be whiter than snow.” “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.”

No wonder, then, in that context, that David would say, “Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it.” No cleansing power in *that* blood.

Hardly, however, was David of a mind to dispense with sacrificing. “Because they were still under the yoke of the schoolmaster,” writes Calvin in another place in his commentaries, “David *could not* perform the worship of God completely except when it was (so to speak) clothed in this form.” “We must come to the kingdom of Christ,” Calvin adds, significantly, “for it to be completely true that God does not wish sacrifice.”

And David, I think it is fair to say, *understood* that. Although the devout in Israel did not, in the sacrifice, perceive the suffering and death of the promised *Messiah* (the Antitype), there was not a *disconnect*, in their minds, between the rite of sacrifice and the Christ. How the very *Son of God* could actually *be* the “Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), by way of incarnation, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension, belonged, as we have seen, to the mystery that “was kept secret since the world began” (Rom. 16:25). But the saints of old believed, with the confidence of faith, that the ceremonies of the old covenant foreshadowed, somehow, His saving work.

It is in light of *that*, that we can see in Psalm 51 an unmistakable reaching of David for Christ. Almost, we might say, desperately so. What he had learned from the devastatingly bitter evidence of his own depravity was surely this, that if there were no *Savior*, there was no hope for *David*.

David, as we have suggested, was not the first so to have grasped the symbolism in the sacrifices of the old dispensation. The saints of God did so from the beginning. That is, from Abel on. Of Abel and his offering we read only that he “brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof” (Gen. 4:4). Nothing said, there, about the spiritual disposition that prompted him to do that, but the rest of that short verse speaks volumes about what it must have been. We read that God “had *respect* unto *Abel* and to his *offering*.” God’s respect for Abel’s *offering* had everything to do, of course, with Abel’s having followed the prescribed *manner* of approach to God. A bloody sacrifice. God’s respect unto

*Abel*, on the other hand, must have concerned not the *deed* but the *heart*. Had Abel come with anything other than a deep sense of his own sin, a spirit of genuine contrition, a longing for pardon, and a firm reliance on the prescribed method of reconciliation; if he had come with something in his hand, something by which to render compensation to God, God would have found no more delight in Abel and his offering than He did in Cain and his. Hebrews 11:4 is the Spirit’s testimony to the truth of that. “By *faith*,” we read, “Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.” Faith in what? It could not have been in the blood of a firstling of his flock. It was faith in *God*, for the provision that *He* would make for the salvation of this unworthy sinner. Abel understood the symbolism. Which can only mean that, like David some 3,000 years later, Abel was very really reaching for Christ.

What, then, of Psalm 51:16? In introducing our consideration of this verse in our previous article, we made of David’s prayer here something quite remarkable, even “stunning.” But if the saints of God, from Abel on, had similar sentiments, why would we be inclined to marvel at David’s insights in Psalm 51? There are, I think, a couple of reasons for doing so.

Of some importance is this, that what is *implicit* in Abel becomes *explicit* in David. From the Genesis account, confirmed by the testimony of Hebrews 11, we can *infer* what Abel’s spiritual disposition must have been with regard to sacrificing the firstlings of his flock. David, on the other hand, puts his thoughts in *writing*, and in language almost that of the New Testament. “Thou delightest not,” David says, “in burnt offering.” Says the writer to the Hebrews: “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Heb. 10:4). And then, perhaps more especially, the very next verse in Psalm 51: “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” In his commentary on the Psalms, Calvin tells what he sees in this verse:

He [David] had shown that sacrifices have no such efficacy in procuring the Divine favor as the Jews imagined; and now he declares that he needed to bring nothing whatever to God but a contrite and humbled heart. Nothing more is necessary, on the part of the sinner, than

to prostrate himself in supplication for Divine mercy.... In order to exclude every idea of a pretended satisfaction, David represents contrition of heart as comprehending in itself the whole sum of acceptable sacrifices. And in using the term *sacrifices of God*, he conveys a tacit reproof to the proud hypocrite, who sets a high value upon such sacrifices as are of his own unauthorized fancy, when he imagines that by means of them he can propitiate God.... David is not speaking at this time of the meritorious condition by which pardon is procured, but, on the contrary, asserting our absolute destitution of merit by enjoining humiliation and contrition of spirit, in opposition to everything like an attempt to render a compensation to God.... The contrite heart abjures the idea of merit, and has no dealings with God upon the principle of exchange.... He [David] does not exclude faith, he does not condescend upon any nice divisions of true penitence into its several parts, but asserts in general, that the only way of obtaining the favor of God is by prostrating ourselves with a wounded heart at the feet of Divine mercy, and supplicating his grace with ingenious confessions of our own helplessness.

Did you hear, in there, the apostle Paul? “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy” (Rom. 9:16). “And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace” (Rom. 11:6). “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ” (Gal. 2:16). “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8). And then Paul’s confession: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (I Tim. 1:15).

Seeing himself to be “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,” David was reaching beyond the blood of an animal... to *Christ*.

In fact, can you not hear already in Psalm 51 a harbinger of the sixteenth-century Reformation principle of salvation in Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone?

But... there’s more. Next time. 

## GOD’S WONDERFUL WORKS

REV. JAMES LANING

### Foundational Principles (4)

# Miracles

**T**he Spirit of God spoke through men that He inspired, and the Scriptures are the one and only infallibly inspired record of what the Spirit has said. God has warned about the severe judgment that will come upon anyone who adds to that Word or subtracts from it. Many who hate what God says have taken no heed to His warning. In a variety of ways they have attempted to corrupt the Word of God by adding to it and subtracting from it as they see fit. Yet those who love the Lord cling to what He says, without adding or subtracting anything, and experience joy as they grow

closer to God by the power of His Spirit. Such is what we have considered thus far.

Now we proceed to consider the signs and wonders that were performed by some of the men through whom the Spirit of God spoke. What was the purpose of God with these signs? Are such signs still being performed by some people today? In this article we consider the purpose and the ceasing of them. In the next one, Lord willing, we will consider the lying signs and wonders done by false prophets of the past and still today.

### Miracles Confirmed the Word of God’s Messenger

When God spoke to Moses at the burning bush and gave him a message to bring to the Israelites, Moses re-

*Rev. Laning is pastor of Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa.*

*Previous article in this series: September 1, 2015, p. 467.*

sponded and said that the Israelites would not believe that God had appeared to him: “And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hear-ken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee” (Ex. 4:1). It was at that point that God gave Moses some miraculous signs to perform that would prove to the Israelites that God had spoken to him:

And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee (Ex. 4:2-5).

The signs would prove that God had sent Moses. The same is true of the signs that our Lord performed while He was on earth. Those signs showed that Christ was approved of God, and that God was the One who was working through Him to do and to teach what He did:

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know... (Acts 2:22).

Then Christ sent out His apostles and continued His work through them. That which these men had learned from Christ, they now went out and preached to the nations. Christ also worked in and through them to perform miracles, which were signs that served to confirm that Christ was the One who was continuing to teach the people through the apostles. “And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen” (Mark 16:20).

### **The Ceasing of “Signs of an Apostle”**

It is important to note that New Testament miracles are referred to as “signs of an apostle.” “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in

signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds” (II Cor. 12:12). In the book of Acts we find repeated reference to the fact that miracles were being performed by apostles (Acts 2:43; 5:12).

There is a key passage in Hebrews 2 that explains why it was the apostles specifically who were performing them. The apostles had been taught and sent by Christ Himself, and they were preaching the word that they had heard from Him:

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will? (Heb. 2:3-4).

After our Lord ascended, He continued to perform miracles for a time by the hands of the apostles whom He had taught and sent. Once those apostles were no longer on earth, the time of such miracles was over.

There is a reason why miracles ended with Christ and the apostles who had heard Him. It served to indicate that Christ was the great Prophet that God had promised, and that after Him there would be no more prophets bringing additional revelation. It is true that there was a brief period of time when additional revelation was being proclaimed by apostles and prophets, but that was only during the time that the apostles were still on earth. For a time Christ continued making known new revelation through these messengers. But once those who heard Christ were in heavenly glory, that period of revelation came to an end.

Miracles served an important purpose in the days when the Scriptures were being written. It was a time in which God was adding to what He had revealed before, and the miracles served to confirm that this new revelation was from God. Now that the Scriptures have been completed and the apostles are no longer here with us, those miraculous signs have ceased.

### **The church continuing to profit from the miracles**


Though the day of additional revelation and of miracles has come to an end, the church today continues



to profit from the miracles that were performed in the past. We do not have to see a miracle with the eyes of the body to benefit from it. We profit when we believe what Scripture says about the miracles, and consider what they illustrate.

The miracles that Christ and the apostles and prophets performed were visible, symbolic illustrations of the message they were preaching. For example, Christ preached that He is the Bread of life, and then He fed the five thousand, which served to illustrate this. He said that He was the Light of the world, and then He demonstrated what He was talking about by healing a man

who was born blind. He proclaimed Himself to be the Resurrection and the Life, and then He gave the people a symbolic example by raising Lazarus who had been dead for four days.

Recognizing this relationship between the message and the miracle is of great importance. When reading in Scripture about a miracle, one who understands this relationship will stop to consider how that specific miracle went with the specific message that was being preached at that time. Considering the message and the miracle together, we grow to see even more so how the miracles done in the past greatly benefit us still today. 

## The Elder's Ordination (4)

# The Elements of the Ordination Ceremony

And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

Acts 14:23

**I**n our last three articles we have emphasized the need for elders to be officially put into office in a public ceremony. Public ordination (we have been using “ordination” and “installation” interchangeably) is significant both for the elder and for the congregation.

Having finished our treatment of the *necessity* of ordination, we turn to the *manner* of ordination: How must this ordination take place? Of what must this public ceremony consist?

### Biblical and Reformed direction

Scripture gives us clues to answer this question. Acts 14:23, quoted above, is helpful, particularly because it deals with the ordination of elders explicitly. Other passages, though speaking particularly to the ordination of missionaries and pastors, should not be overlooked. One of them is Acts 13:3: “And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.” Another is I Timothy 4:14: “Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.”

Also our Church Order helps us, for it speaks directly to this matter in two places. First, in treating the election and installation of elders in Article 22, it says that they must “be installed with public prayers and stipulations.”<sup>1</sup> Second, it speaks more fully to the matter in Article 4 in treating the election and ordination of ministers, particu-

---

Rev. Kuiper is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Edgerton, Minnesota.

Previous article in this series: October 15, 2015, p. 44.

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Confessions and the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches* (Grandville, MI: Protestant Reformed Churches in America, 2005), 387.

larly of those entering the office of minister for the first time:

Finally, in the public ORDINATION in the presence of the congregation, which shall take place with appropriate stipulations and interrogations, admonitions and prayers, and imposition of hands by the officiating minister (and by other ministers who are present) agreeably to the form for that purpose.<sup>2</sup>

We are helped in implementing the guidelines of Scripture and the Church Order by using the “Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons.” We view this form as a “minor” confession. In distinction from a major confession (confessions such as our Three Forms of Unity, which set forth the teachings of Scripture on a number of foundational matters), our Church Order and liturgical forms set forth the teachings of Scripture regarding particular matters in the government and worship of the church. So the “Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons” faithfully sets forth the teachings of Scripture regarding ordination of officebearers, and summarizes the duties of the elders and deacons toward the church, and of the church toward them. Its use in the ordination ceremony ensures that we abide by the principles of Scripture regarding how to ordain elders.

Let us note more closely the different aspects of the ordination ceremony as set forth in Article 4 of our Church Order. Of course, that article treats specifically the office of minister, not that of elder. But the fact that the offices are equal in authority is reason to use this Church Order article as a guide to understanding the best manner of ordaining elders.

### **Appropriate stipulations and interrogations**

The public ceremony should include a declaration of what is expected of the elder-elect (“stipulations”), and questions to him regarding his willingness to carry out what is expected of him (“interrogations”).

When someone begins a secular vocation or task, he is clearly informed what duties are expected of him. Likewise, when an elder begins his work, the church insists that he hear a summary of what that work involves. Our “Form of Ordination” is both comprehensive and concise

in setting forth the work of the office of elder. First, it involves “the oversight of the church,”<sup>3</sup> which includes the oversight of individual members in their doctrine and life, the guarding of the Lord’s table, and the work of discipline as needed. If the first aspect of the elders’ work regards oversight, the second involves pastoral care: being “assistant with their good counsel and advice to the ministers of the Word,” and serving “all Christians with advice and consolation.” Third, their work involves guarding the church against error, particularly by taking oversight of the minister’s doctrine and life.

Before her installation of these men, the church reminds her new elders that such is their duty. Those elders who shirk their duty are neglecting their office and failing to serve the church as she expects them to.

These interrogations are the church’s way of ensuring that the elders fully realize this. The “Form of Ordination” requires the church, through the officiating minister, to put three questions to the elders-elect: first, whether they believe they are truly called of God and of His church, and therefore, obligated to carry out their work; second, whether they believe the sixty-six books of the Bible to be the complete Word of God, and reject all doctrines that oppose the teachings of Scripture; and third, whether they understand what is required of them and promise “faithfully, according to [their] ability, to discharge [their] respective offices as they are here described”—so that they have a clear idea of what their work entails, and promise to do it faithfully.

By answering “yes” to these questions, the elder-elect expresses before God and the church that he will do his work faithfully and to the best of his ability. He may not later claim ignorance regarding what that work is. He may not later suggest that he was not called of God or the church. He opens himself to the charge of sin, which makes him worthy of suspension and deposition if he fails to do what he promised, or tries to do the work of another office.

Does the Bible provide any rationale for these aspects of the ordination ceremony?

It does, even if it is by implication, as well as by the application of passages that do not directly relate to the work of the elders.

<sup>2</sup> *Confessions*, 379.

<sup>3</sup> All of the following quotes are from the “Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons,” found on pages 290-294 of *Confessions*.

When the Lord called His disciples to be apostles, He made clear what their work was (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-18; John 20:21-23; Acts 1:8). When the apostles instituted the office of deacon in the early church, they set forth clearly what the sphere of the deacons' labor would be (Acts 6:2-3). When the church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to be missionaries, all understood what was that work to which God had called them (Acts 13:2). Concluding his third missionary journey, the apostle Paul reminded the elders of Ephesus of their calling (Acts 20:28-32). To Timothy, Paul said, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery" (I Tim. 4:14), and "...Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by putting on of my hands" (II Tim. 1:6).

All of these passages presuppose that officebearers in God's church, whether pastor, elder, or deacon, clearly know at their ordination what is expected of them.

### Admonitions and prayers

The public ceremony should also include exhortations to the elders to do that which they have said they would do ("admonitions") and fervent supplications to God on behalf of the elders ("prayers").

The latter point is no implication from Scripture; it is explicit. The early church set the deacons they had chosen "before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them" (Acts 6:6). When commissioning Paul and Barnabas, the church at Antioch "fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them" (Acts 13:3). And Acts 14:23, quoted at the beginning of this article, indicates that prayers were part of the ordination of the elders.

The admonitions are fitting. The elder has been told what is expected of him; he has vowed to do what is required of him; now he is admonished to do as he has vowed. The admonitions are not only the *church's* directive to the elders; they are *God's* admonitions to the elders through the church.

Nor are the admonitions for the elders only. As we noted in our last article, the ordination ceremony is significant for the whole congregation. Accordingly, the "Form of Ordination" directs admonitions to the congregation regarding how to receive their officebearers.

To these prayer is added, not only because the work

of the elders is God's work, but also because the power to do the work, and the grace to heed the admonitions, comes from God Himself. On the elders' behalf, the church prays that God will "replenish them more and more with such gifts as are necessary for them in their ministration—with the gifts of wisdom, courage, discretion, and benevolence." She prays further that God will give them grace "that they may persevere in their faithful labor, and never become weary by reason of any trouble, pain, or persecution of the world." The goal of the prayer is threefold: that the *elder* know that his power comes from God; that the *church* receive these men as from God; and that *God's* name be glorified.


A beautiful prayer! How fitting that with it the installation ceremony in Reformed churches concludes!

### Fasting and laying on of hands

One cannot help but note that our Church Order makes no reference to fasting prior to an ordination ceremony, or to the laying on of hands during the ceremony. Especially this is noteworthy because the Scriptures mention fasting and laying on of hands in several places. Fasting in connection with ordination is mentioned in Acts 13:3 and Acts 14:23. The laying on of hands in connection with ordination is mentioned in Acts 6:6, Acts 13:3, I Timothy 4:14, and II Timothy 1:6.

Because of these passages, our Church Order's silence may not be taken to mean that fasting and laying on of hands in connection with ordination into office are improper. Others have defended the proposition that fasting, when it accompanies prayer, has a legitimate place in the life of the child of God in the New Testament.<sup>4</sup> The elders of an individual congregation may call their members to prayer with fasting before electing or ordaining new officebearers. And the elders may lay hands on new elders.

Why, then, do our elders not lay their hands on elders-elect?

In our next article, God willing, we will begin answering that question. 

---

<sup>4</sup> See Rev. Dale Kuiper's article "Fasting" in the *Standard Bearer*, vol. 69, p. 17 (October 1, 1992), and Rev. Ronald Hanko's article "Prayer and Fasting" in the *Standard Bearer* vol. 81, p. 402 (June 2005).

# The Supreme Court Finds a Right to Homosexual Marriage

On June 26, 2015, the United States Supreme court issued a decision in the case of *Obergefell v. Hodges*,<sup>1</sup> which dealt with the matter of the issuance of licenses for homosexual marriages. The decision was recognized as a landmark decision by those on both sides of the issue. Due to the importance of this decision, we will examine the court's ruling closely to see how the court reached its decision, the meaning of the Court's ruling, and the implications that the Court's ruling has for our churches and schools.

In evaluating the implications of the Court's decision, it is important to understand how the Court system works and what the Court does and does not do. Because of the high profile nature of this case, many commentators and media outlets have discussed the Court's decision, and many have erroneously indicated that the Supreme Court passed a law giving homosexual couples the right to marry. Based on this view of the Court's ruling, proponents of homosexual rights have declared that everyone is now bound to recognize the equality and rights of homosexuals. Many Christians have voiced the opinion that the magistrate has made a law and we must obey the magistrate; therefore, public officials who cannot in good conscience carry out duties such as issuance of marriage licenses must resign their office.

In the United States, the supreme law of the land is

not vested in a person, but in a document. The *Constitution* establishes the framework for government, and limits the powers of that government in favor of the people, who rule themselves indirectly through that government. The Supreme Court, at least theoretically, does not make laws or create rights or powers. It looks to the *Constitution* to see if those rights or powers already exist. For example, when the Supreme Court considered the validity of the Affordable Care Act, it did not give the government the power to create the health care system, but instead found that the power already existed within the government's power to tax the people.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, in the *Obergefell* case, the Court did not purport to create any rights for homosexuals, but found that a fundamental right to marriage was already embodied in the *Constitution*. While this distinction may seem slight, it does have practical implications for the legal impact of the ruling, as well as the way we as Christians respond to the Court's ruling. From a purely legal standpoint, the right of homosexuals to marry is simply another right that the courts recognize must be weighed against other rights, such as the Freedom of Religion embodied the First Amendment to the *Constitution*. We will discuss these competing rights later, but let us first look more closely at the Supreme Court's ruling.

The Court was divided 5 to 4 in its decision, as is often the case on social issues in recent years. Justice Anthony Kennedy, who is often the deciding vote when the court is divided, sided with the four liberal justices and also wrote the majority opinion. The majority gave four basic reasons on which it based its recognition of a right for homosexual couples to marry. First, individual

<sup>1</sup> *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 576 U.S. \_\_\_, 135 S. Ct. 2584 (2015).

Mr. VanEngen, a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hull, Iowa, is a practicing attorney.

Previous article in this series: February 1, 2015, p. 211.

<sup>2</sup> *National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius*, 567 U.S. \_\_\_, 132 S. Ct. 2566 (2012).



autonomy includes the right to personal choice in marriage; second, the marriage right is a fundamental right because it creates a union unlike any other; third, the right to marry safeguards families and children, since homosexuals also have children; and fourth, marriage is a keystone of our social order, and there is no difference between same or opposite-sex couples in this regard.

The Court found that this right to marry was protected by both the Equal Protection Clause and the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The Fourteenth Amendment was passed after the Civil War to apply to state governments some of the same restrictions on power that applied to federal government. The Equal Protection Clause provides that no state will deny any person in its jurisdiction the equal protection of the law. The Equal Protection Clause was used by the Supreme Court in the past to strike down state laws prohibiting interracial marriage.<sup>3</sup>

The Due Process Clause provides that no state will deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. There are several aspects of Due Process, and we are familiar with the concept of due process, even in church matters. Due process is the concept that states if a person is alleged to have done something, they need to be informed of the allegation and the evidence on which it is based, and then be allowed an opportunity to present their side before the tribunal that will make the ultimate decision in the case. However, the United States Supreme Court began to base decisions on “substantive” due process, which basically means that the *effect* of legislation deprives citizens of fundamental rights, rather than the actual process. The majority found that marriage was such a fundamental right and that state laws prohibiting same-sex marriage violated this right.

The remaining four Justices each wrote dissenting opinions in which they criticized the majority’s legal analysis. Although all four approached the issues differently, the main thrust of their argument was that the *majority* was overreaching in finding that the *Constitution* included a fundamental right for homosexuals to marry. The concept of “substantive” due process has been often criticized in legal circles for being used to find fundamental rights that are not spelled out in the *Constitution*. The Court has indicated in the past that

<sup>3</sup> *Loving v. Virginia*, 388 U.S. 1 (1967).

these rights are contained in the “penumbras” of the *Constitution*, even though they are not clearly set out.<sup>4</sup>

In light of recent lawsuits against those business owners who are unwilling to provide services for homosexual marriages, the Court’s ruling seems to guarantee that such difficulties will only increase for believers. The majority, towards the end of its opinion, made room for a right of conscience when it stated:

Finally, it must be emphasized that religions, and those who adhere to religious doctrines, may continue to advocate with utmost, sincere conviction that, by divine precepts, same-sex marriage should not be condoned. The First Amendment ensures that religious organizations and persons are given proper protection as they seek to teach the principles that are so fulfilling and so central to their lives and faiths, and to their own deep aspirations to continue the family structure they have long revered.

However, as Justice Alito stated in his dissent,

I assume that those who cling to old beliefs will be able to whisper their thoughts in the recesses of their homes, but if they repeat those views in public, they will risk being labeled as bigots and treated as such by governments, employers, and schools.

Justice Alito ended his dissent with this warning:

Most Americans—understandably—will cheer or lament today’s decision because of their views on the issue of same-sex marriage. But all Americans, whatever their thinking on that issue, should worry about what the majority’s claim of power portends.

In the next installment of this article, Lord willing, we will look at the other side of this issue, namely, the First Amendment rights of churches and religious organizations to continue to oppose the sin of homosexuality. The majority in the *Obergefell* case itself referred to these rights, and we will look at what needs to be done for our churches, schools, and other religious organizations to avail themselves of these rights. ☞

<sup>4</sup> *Griswold v. Connecticut*, 381 U.S. 479 (1965)(finding state prohibitions on contraceptives to be an unconstitutional invasion of privacy).

*The Message of Daniel: His Kingdom Cannot Fail*, Dale Ralph Davis, Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2013. Paperback, 169 pp. [Reviewed by Rev. Martyn McGeown.]

I enjoy the Old Testament commentaries of Dale Ralph Davis. He has written quite a number, mostly on Old Testament narrative texts (Joshua, Judges, I-II Samuel and I-II Kings). He has also written on the prophets Micah and Daniel, all of which commentaries I have read.

This new commentary on Daniel does not disappoint. It is vintage Davis.

Davis interacts—only when necessary—with the higher critics in order to defend the inspiration and authority of the Word of God. As he writes in the introduction, “we have to face it because others have made a big deal of it” (15). The fundamental problem with critics is not their scholarly acumen. It is their unbelief:

The main problem with predictive prophecy is not theological or practical but presuppositional, a built-in antipathy to the very possibility of predictive prophecy. The last thing people—including some biblical scholars—want is a real God running around loose and having the chutzpah to order history ahead of time (22).

Davis’ style is quite “quirky,” which sometimes makes for humorous reading. That comes out in some of the

---

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


chapter headings: “Saints in the hands of a saving God” (chapter 3); “The strut stops here” (chapter 5); “The case of Mr Hyde and Mr Hyde” (chapter 13). A quirky writing style also makes a writer quotable. And I like quotes for the bulletin.

The book expounds the prophecy of Daniel—both its historical narrative and apocalyptic prophecy—very skillfully. Davis has the knack of making the history come alive by throwing in intriguing and searching illustrations, while he carefully (but without becoming too technical) analyses the Hebrew and the structure of the passages. Davis excels at literary analysis without ever becoming boring.

Of interest to Reformed readers is the fact that Davis is Presbyterian and amillennial.

The main theme of Daniel is the triumph of God’s kingdom over all the kingdoms of men. Davis develops, illustrates, and applies that theme to the comfort of God’s people. “What has not changed even though we have been carted off to Babylon? And the text of Daniel 1 answers: God. God has not changed” (27). “Babylon, the hairy-chested macho brute of the world, has dropped with a thud into the mausoleum of history.... Remember that the servants of God will simply out-endure the kingdoms of this age” (37). “He rules the kingdom of men: smelly, sinful, selfish, scheming men. There’s nothing more ‘down to dirt’ than that. In our darker moments, we may lose sight of this comforting assurance” (65).

Many other quotes could be offered, but read the book for yourself.

As Davis says, “You can walk into the future with a God like that” (45). 

## NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

## MR. PERRY VAN EGDOM

### Minister Activities

Rev. Douglas Kuiper, pastor of the Edgerton, MN PRC, recently observed the occasion of his 20<sup>th</sup>

---

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

year as minister of the Word and sacraments in the Protestant Reformed Churches. The congregation at Edgerton presented him with a commemorative plaque and together they shared a special cake. In addition to the church at Edgerton, Rev. Kuiper has served

as pastor of Byron Center, MI PRC and Randolph, WI PRC and has also capably functioned as the Stated Clerk of Classis West for a number of years now. We rejoice with Edgerton and with Rev. Kuiper for God’s goodness to him through the past twenty years!

## Denominational Activities

Rev. Nathan Decker and Rev. Garry Eriks traveled to Quebec in November as observers from the PRC Contact Committee at the meeting of North American Presbyterian and Reformed Churches (NAPARC).

## Missionary Activities

When Rev. Richard Smit resided in Antipolo City of the Philippines as a missionary, it was customary for him to make a once-a-month trip to the island of Negros (Occidental) which lies about 300 miles to the southeast of Manila as the crow flies. He would depart Manila airport on Saturday and preach in Bacolod City on Sunday. On Monday he would be joined by fellow missionary, Rev. Daniel Kleyn. The men would conduct a Monday Bible study in Bacolod and travel by car to Sipalay City to conduct a Tuesday training class for pastors there. Since Rev. Smit has moved to Michigan, there is no longer Protestant Reformed preaching in Bacolod City, as Rev. Kleyn's schedule does not allow it. However, the once-a-month trips to Negros do continue for Rev. Kleyn and his wife Sharon. What follows is a summary of such a trip.

Although the flight from Manila airport does not usually leave until 9:30 Monday morning, the Kleyns leave home at 5:15 A.M. to be at the airport by 7:00. A contributing factor to the early travel is the fact that their car is not allowed on Manila roads or streets after 7:00 A.M. on Mondays. Each car in the metro Manila area is not allowed to travel in the city on one day of the

week. This is to alleviate a bit of the congestion on the roadways. One's license plate number indicates the day he is not allowed to drive the car, and fines are awarded if you disobey this law. If the Kleyn's flight is on time, they arrive in the airport in Bacolod City, Negros around 11:00 A.M. A driver from a rental car company meets them at the airport with their car. According to Sharon, the car is usually white. According to Rev. Kleyn, it would be something like a Toyota Innova or a Mitsubishi Adventure, a diesel, and with a manual transmission. The Kleyns check into their motel and have a late lunch/early supper at a nearby mall.

The class that evening begins at 5:00 P.M. and is held on the second floor of the building which houses the Corpus family pet store on the ground level. The Kleyns enjoy the friendship of the Corpus family and others who attend the study. Rev. Kleyn teaches the Essentials of Reformed Doctrine and there is time after the study for visiting while eating the delicious food the ladies prepare. The Kleyns are usually back at their motel around 7:00 P.M.

Tuesday morning is another early one. The Kleyns leave the motel at 5:15 for the 3-1/2 to 4-hour drive south on a two-lane highway to Sipalay City. The motel usually has a breakfast packed and ready to take along. This consists of rice, sausage, fish, bacon, and a banana. This is eaten on the way, though the fish (with bones in it) can be a challenge for Rev. Kleyn as he drives! The drive is rural with much beautiful scenery such as mountains, ocean

views, and sugar cane country—God's creation in all its splendor! The cane grows as tall as good Iowa corn, and creates the same beautiful vistas of blue sky and green crops as far as the eye can see. It is very interesting to witness from one visit to the next the process of planting and harvesting the sugar cane. It is not as much fun to be stuck behind the large trucks transporting the cane to various factories during harvest time. The trip is slowed also by tricycles (small motorcycles with side cars), bicycles, animals, towns, and people so that the 105-mile trip takes at least 3-1/2 hours, an average speed of about 30 mph.

The Kleyns arrive in Sipalay in time for class to begin at 9:00 A.M. Ten or twelve pastors arrive via motorcycle or bus from towns to the north and to the south. The meeting begins with singing from the Psalter (which some of the men know very well, making for invigorating singing), then devotions. Rev. Kleyn lectures on the Church Order until 10:30, when the group breaks for merienda (instant coffee, rolls with meat and egg filling). After break, the group has been viewing lecture videos from the PRC Seminary, currently Prof. R. Cammenga's Dogmatics lectures on Anthropology. The class periods are filled with many questions and much lively discussion, making them enjoyable. After the classes are finished, a delicious lunch is served with questions from the class carrying over into lunch time.

The Kleyns depart around 2:00 P.M. for Bacolod, sometimes dropping off a couple of the pastors on

## Standard Bearer

1894 Georgetown Center Dr.  
Jenison, MI 49428-7137

PERIODICAL  
POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
AT JENISON,  
MICHIGAN

the way. They arrive in Bacolod in time for supper, filling the car with fuel at 45 pesos per liter. (Can you figure the cost per gallon?) Sometimes they hurry to the car rental office so they can be taken to the airport, and sometimes they stay overnight in Bacolod. If they fly back to Manila on Tuesday night, their car headlights shine on the main gate of the Beverly Hills subdivision, and

a few blocks later, on the gate at 34 Sunrise Drive at about midnight. That makes for a *very* long day, but in that case they have the advantage of a normal Wednesday at home. If they stay in Bacolod Tuesday night, it makes for more leisurely travel, but they do not arrive home until mid-afternoon on Wednesday.

May God continue to be with the Kleyms and bless them in their labors!

## Evangelism Activities

On November 13 Bethel PRC, Roselle, IL invited Prof. Barry Gritters to speak on the topic “Anti-Christ,” a vital subject for Christians today.

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

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

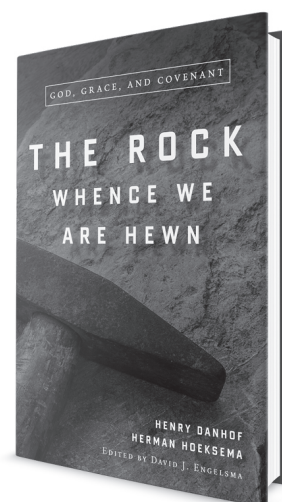
### THE ROCK WHENCE WE ARE HEWN

HENRY DANHOF & HERMAN HOEKSEMA | EDITED BY DAVID J. ENGELSMA

The publication of this book accomplishes several purposes on behalf of the defense and maintenance of the gospel of grace with its accompanying Christian life of separation from the world of the ungodly. The book recalls to the members of the Protestant Reformed Churches their doctrinal and historical origins: “Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn” (Isa. 51:1). Their doctrinal origins were the confession of salvation by sovereign grace, embedded in predestination, and their insistence on a holy life of separation from the world of the ungodly.

The book exposes the theory of common grace as heretical. This theory consists of a well-meant offer of Christ to everyone in the preaching and of a cultural grace that unites believers and unbelievers in the grand calling of establishing on earth a glorious kingdom of God.

The book is evangelistic. With urgency, it calls not only Reformed and Presbyterians, but also all Protestants back to their origins in the sixteenth-century Reformation of the church: the gospel of salvation by sovereign, particular grace and antithetical holiness of life. And to martyrdom!



**Coming December 2015** | Reformed Free Publishing Association | [rfpa.org](http://rfpa.org) | 616-457-5970

### Classis East

■ Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, January 13, 2016 at the Trinity Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, MI.

Jon J. Huisken, Stated Clerk