

The Standard Bearer

A Reformed Semi-Monthly Magazine • October 1, 2015

CONTENTS

<i>Meditation</i>	Sovereign over the Storm REV. MICHAEL DE VRIES	2
<i>Editor's Note</i>	Upcoming Volume PROF. BARRETT GRITTERS	5
<i>Editorial</i>	What It Means to Be Reformed (8), The Church PROF. BARRETT GRITTERS	5
<i>Letters</i>	Visiting Mission Fields REV. MARTYN MCGEOWN	8
<i>All Around Us</i>	The US Supreme Court's Legalization of Homosexual Marriage REV. CLAY SPRONK	9
<i>Guest Article</i>	A Christian Doctor's Perspective on Vaccines DR. BRIAN DECKER	11
<i>Taking Heed to the Doctrine</i>	God's Covenant with Noah (3) REV. JAMES LANING	14
<i>Things Which Must Shortly Come to Pass</i>	Premillennialism (7) PROF. DAVID ENGELSMA	16
<i>Strength of Youth</i>	To Teach Them War (7) REV. BRIAN HUIZINGA	19
<i>Bring the Books...</i>	<i>Songs of a Suffering King</i> REV. MARTYN MCGEOWN	21
<i>Activities</i>	News From Our Churches MR. PERRY VAN EGDOM	22

Sovereign over the Storm

“And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

Mark 4:35-41

Many of us have very busy lives. Jesus did too. When we consider the ministry of our Lord Jesus, we cannot help but be struck by the fact that Jesus was very busy. Jesus gave Himself fully to His labors—teaching and preaching, performing signs

and wonders, spending much time in prayer. And the day in which this great wonder of the stilling of the tempest occurred was no exception. Jesus had been laboring along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, very likely near Capernaum. He had been busy preaching and teaching before a great multitude. In this instance, the multitude had so pressed upon Jesus that He had been compelled to enter into a ship, and from there He preached to the multitude on the shore.

By evening Jesus was weary and worn from the labors of the day. He desired to leave the large crowd of people that He might rest. And soon Jesus would be sleeping in the ship as the disciples departed for the opposite shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Nevertheless, though physically very tired, Jesus would reveal His divine power to control all things. Mere man cannot control the wind and the sea so that they obey his command. But Christ is Lord of the wind and the sea. And by this miracle, Christ gives His disciples and the church of all ages a marvelous sign. Christ reveals that as our mighty Lord He preserves His people throughout all the storms of life. Christ points us to the day when as the mighty Lord He will finally put an end to every storm!

Rev. DeVries is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

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
Website for PRC: www.prc.org

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

The Frightening Storm

In the evening of that busy day of teaching, Jesus had said to His disciples, "Let us pass over to the other side." Jesus needed immediate rest, and in this way He could escape that large multitude. Jesus saw no possibility of rest on that busy western shore of the Sea of Galilee. But, in sharp contrast, the eastern shore with its wild and lonely hills would surely offer Him a secure and quiet retreat. So after they sent away the crowd, the disciples took Jesus "even as He was" into the ship. Jesus had made no special preparations for the voyage, but the disciples took Jesus as He was, exhausted and in urgent need of rest. Very likely, as soon as He had lain down in the stern, the back part of the small ship, Jesus had fallen fast asleep. Verse 38 indicates that Jesus was asleep on a pillow, likely the hard cushion on the steersman's seat.

Suddenly, a violent storm arose. Literally we read, "And a great storm of wind arises and the waves were beating into the ship so that the ship was already filling up." Now, the Sea of Galilee was well known for its sudden, violent squalls. But in this case, it was no ordinary storm upon the sea. Bear in mind that several of the disciples were fishermen and experienced sailors. They were well acquainted with the Sea of Galilee. They knew how to handle their fishing boats, even during the storms that frequently occurred. Perhaps, at first, they were confident that they could handle the situation. Yet these experienced seamen soon find that they are unable to manage their ship in this terrible storm. The waves from this great storm were beating into the ship, crashing into it. Their ship was already filling up with water. The disciples were afraid that the ship would soon be swamped or capsized in this fierce tempest!

We must see the significance of this storm. We must remember that the idea of a storm is very important in Scripture. It is clear from Scripture that a stormy sea pictures the wicked world. In Isaiah 57:20 we read: "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt" (see also Dan. 7:2, 3 and Rev. chapters 13 and 17). Therefore, the stormy Sea of Galilee symbolizes the constant opposition of a godless world. That world hates God and His cause. Because they hate God, they hate His people too. That wicked world attempts to destroy the church. And remember, at this time the disciples were the church, the very founda-

tion of the new dispensational church! They, with their Savior, represented the cause of God in the midst of this world. Therefore, this storm constituted a real threat to the church. If this terrible storm succeeded in destroying Christ and His disciples, there would be no more church! The cause of God would be destroyed! We see that the disciples were experiencing figuratively what the church would experience throughout her history in this world.

Now, the fierce storm appears to have no effect upon Jesus. Neither the roaring wind, nor the angry waves, nor the pitching of the rapidly filling boat disturbed His sleep. Jesus sleeps with a perfect trust in His heavenly Father. Though He did not have a cozy, dry place to sleep during this storm, Jesus sleeps peacefully during all the raging of this frightening storm.

But quite a different picture we have of the effect of this storm upon the disciples. What a contrast they present next to the sleeping Savior! The disciples were terrified. And they were not inexperienced seamen. Practiced hands were navigating the boat. Though they were not given to unreasonable fear, in the face of this frightening storm they became timid and afraid. That is clear from the rebuke that Jesus gives them after calming the storm. He asks, "Why are ye so fearful?" Any moment they expect the stormy sea to overcome and destroy them. They feel that they are on the verge of perishing!

Therefore, the disciples, in desperation, appeal to the sleeping Jesus: "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" It seems as if they are rebuking the Lord for sleeping in the midst of their dire circumstances. And Jesus later rebukes their unbelief, "How is it that ye have no faith?" Certainly they ought to have known that all was well with Jesus aboard. Nevertheless, we do see a small measure of faith on the part of the disciples. For they turn to Christ in their fear. They do not abandon all hope and huddle together weeping in the bottom of the ship waiting to be destroyed. No, they rush to awaken their Lord who was sleeping. Somehow they know Jesus can help.

The Mighty Lord

We read, "And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still." Christ rebuked the frightening storm. Literally, "Be silent; be muzzled!" These words emphasize that peace and silence must prevail. A graphic picture is presented of a mad dog or a wild animal that

must be calmed down and silenced. And it is a command! Christ charges the storm to be still and silent.

Immediately after Christ's rebuke to the storm we read: "And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." The effect of Christ's words was immediate. The storm did not gradually die down. Miraculously, the violent attack of wind ceased and the sea was calm. The surface of the sea was suddenly smooth as a mirror, quiet as a calm summer evening.

That this was a great wonder was confirmed by the disciples. We read that they "feared exceedingly." But this word for "fear" is not the same word used by Jesus in His rebuke of them, referring to their cowardly attitude. This word refers to a fear combined, not with cowardice, but with awe and reverence! The disciples more and more realized how great their Master was. We see this too from their words. We read that they said one to another, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" They knew who Christ was all right, but the point is that they were very impressed by Christ's divine power and majesty. They were left awestruck by Christ's mighty power over even the wind and the sea. The disciples were no doubt answering their own question in their minds and hearts, "This man is very God, His only begotten Son!"

Certainly this revelation of divine power was possible because Jesus *is* the only begotten Son of God in our flesh. God had ordained that in Christ He would reveal His glory through the salvation of His church. God purposed to accomplish that salvation by having us live antithetically in the midst of a stormy world, a world that opposed God and His cause. Christ faced those opposing storms too as He suffered all His life long. The cross itself would be the storm of all storms for Christ! But Christ conquered the storm of the cross. There He gained the victory over all of His enemies. And as the risen and ascended Lord in heaven, all things were put under His feet. He reigns, Lord of lords and King of kings!

The Marvelous Sign

Thus, this miracle is a sign of the fact that Christ preserves His people throughout all the storms of life. The church often is rocked violently by storms—storms of apostasy, storms of strife, storms of persecution. It

may seem as if the cause of God will be defeated by the powers of darkness.

And apart from Christ that would certainly be the case! We perish! Our ship sinks! But the sign of this miracle demonstrates that if we are aboard with Jesus, all is well. When He is Captain, no storm can prevail. He uses all things to serve His purpose—the wind, the sea, and the evil world.


But the sign of this wonder also points to the end of the ages, when Christ as our mighty Lord will finally put an end to each and every storm. The storms of suffering and persecution do not continue forever. When Christ returns and has stilled the antichristian storm, He will deliver us from this world of storms. Christ will utter the words, "Peace, be still," and every storm will be forever ended. In the new heavens and earth only peace and tranquility will reign. And we will forever glory in the Captain of our salvation!

Yet, we must not overlook the fact that Christ put His disciples to shame for their foolish worries and fears. Christ by this sign assured His disciples that because He is Lord of the wind and the sea, they need not fear the storms of life. So Christ rebukes His church, also today, when she becomes afraid because of the storms of tribulation. And Christ assures His church that He is able to calm any storm with which she may be assailed.

The storms of opposition of the unbelieving world arise for us as individuals too. We, especially the younger generations, may suffer at the hands of those who hate the cause of Christ. The sacrifice required will no doubt become greater. We will find less and less tolerance for those who would maintain the truth of Scripture. Trusting in ourselves, we will be filled with doubts and fears. Against such storms of opposition we perish if we are not with Christ!

By this sign Christ teaches us to place all of our confidence and trust in Him who is sovereign over the storm. Trusting in ourselves or in this present world, we surely drown in the tempest. Our calling is to flee to Christ! If we are aboard with Christ, we need not fear. For He is able to utter the words: "Peace, be still," and calm the stormy seas of life. He is a faithful Captain, who will surely see His vessel, with all its passengers, enter into its heavenly haven. As we sing from Psalm 77:

Thy way was in the sea, O God,
Through mighty waters, deep and broad;
None understood but God alone,

To man Thy footsteps were unknown;
But safe Thy people Thou didst keep,
Almighty Shepherd of Thy sheep. 

EDITOR'S NOTE

At the PR seminary this past June, as takes place every year, the *Standard Bearer* Staff (all the writers) met to plan the next volume year, which begins with this issue—October 1.

There are very few changes for the upcoming year. A few (younger) ministers have been asked to write guest articles. One writer, Rev. C. Griess, has asked for a year off. Otherwise, the writers and rubrics remain the same. Welcome back!

The *SB* staff approved two special issues. First, our annual Reformation issue, coming soon. This year, 2015, the writers will treat the history leading up to the Reformation, anticipating in two years to treat the great anniversary of God's mighty acts in 1517. Second, our spring special issue will treat a Reformed wedding. We hope you enjoy reading—and the writers producing—these special issues.

We welcome letters. If you agree, and especially if you disagree with an article, the pages are open. Iron sharpens iron. The *SB*'s purpose is to speak truth and contest error. The readers have a place in both.

God be thanked for giving us the privilege to produce the magazine—for the 92nd year! May this gracious God of the covenant be pleased to allow the Staff and the RFPA to continue to cooperate with the common purpose: to produce a magazine faithful to its heritage and purpose, to God's glory.

To all who read: May God use the magazine to edify you. This is why we write. If the *SB* has accomplished that purpose, even in a small way, please pass the word. May our witness of God's truth and grace grow.

—BLG 

EDITORIAL

PROF. BARRETT GRITTERS

What It Means to Be Reformed (8)

The Church: My Chief Joy

Introduction

For some Christians these days it's almost trendy to claim a Reformed identity. But *being* Reformed takes more than *claiming* "I am Reformed," just as being a Christian does not come from saying "I am Christian." Being trendy is not what we are about. All of us who have "Reformed" in the name

—WIMTBR—
COVENANTAL
CALVINISTIC
CHURCH
CONFESSIONAL
CHRISTIAN LIFE

of our church need to be concerned that we *are* indeed Reformed.

In these editorials¹ I have sug-

¹ The editorials treating this subject can be found in the issues dated February

gested that to summarize accurately what it means to be a Reformed Christian, we must emphasize and be committed to five "C"s: Covenant, Calvinism, Church, Confessions, and a particular view of the Christian life. Formerly, when I taught the older catechism classes, I emphasized three "C"s. Each week I said to the young people, "To be Reformed means that we are Covenantal, Calvinistic, and Confes-

Previous article in this series: May 15, 2015, p. 365.

15, 2015 through May 15, 2015.

sional,” and then asked the students carefully to explain what each of these meant. But to be more comprehensive, two other “C”s ought to be added—Church and Christian life—because without a proper view of and emphasis on these, one’s identity as Reformed is incomplete, if not suspect. In this editorial I begin to explain the “C” of “Church.”

Love for the Church

A Reformed believer loves the church. *I love the church.*

I love the church, the bride and body of Jesus Christ. I love the particular church where my family has its membership in Hudsonville, Michigan, USA. I love that visible, instituted church, in her offices and members, her worship and government, her work and missions. I love the denomination that my particular church is part of—the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. I also love the true church of Jesus Christ wherever she shows herself in the world.

I don’t love her weaknesses, faults, and imperfections (and there are plenty); but I love her even when I see these flaws, and pray for God to correct her errors and strengthen her in holiness. My love for the church is not as extensive as it should be either; but each year when I travel and see more faithful churches throughout the world, that love broadens. My love for the church is not as strong as it should be; but it grows stronger every year, and I am thankful for that grace of God. By God’s grace, my love for the church is “above my chief joy” (Ps. 137:6).

A Reformed member’s love for the church reflects a profound reality: Christ, who loves the church with a profound love, lives in the believer. That is, Christ creates that love in the believer when Christ Himself comes to live in him. Christ said, “I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18), and now Christ in us responds: “Build her!” Christ says, “I love her well” (Psalter #368, from Ps. 132); and Christ in us says, “We also love her!” Our love grows when we read Christ’s word in Ephesians that God exalted Him over all things *to*, or *for the sake of*, the church (Eph. 1:22, 23). “From heaven he came and sought her.” Now, *in* heaven, He governs all things for the church’s sake! As Ephesians teaches ecclesiology—the church’s blessedness, election, redemption, unity, holiness—it reaches one of its pinnacles when chapter four explains why Christ gave gifts to men: for the edifying of the *church*. The entire Scripture teaches the importance of the church, ending in Revelation’s letters to the seven churches. And if there remains any question whether a Christian ought to love the church above his chief joy, the question will fade when he understands that, when Christ returns, He does so in order to marry this *church* and love her forever (Rev. 19:7ff.; 21:2).

Reformation History

A Reformed believer’s love for the church also shows that he knows something about history. “Reformed” is defined by history (as I hope to show in the editorials on Reformed being defined as “Confes-

sional”), and Reformation history is history of the *church*. What is often forgotten is that Reformation history is as much about ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church) as it is about soteriology (the doctrine of salvation). The Reformers took issue with the Roman Catholic Church, not only because Rome corrupted the doctrines of salvation (“Calvinism”) but also because Rome wrongly defined the church. What is the church? How should she be governed and what should her worship be like? Rome and the Reformers disagreed. When the Reformers separated themselves from Rome, Rome herself declared that ecclesiology was the main issue.

The relationships between the doctrine of salvation and the doctrine of the church were clear to the Reformers as well. Among other connections, remember these: 1) Only the true church has the instruments by which God is pleased to *work* salvation. 2) Only the doctrine of a truly gracious salvation enables the church to worship as she should—reverently, humbly, gladly—that is, in the right way and with the right motives.

Reformation Confessions: Passion for the Church

When the Reformers wrote their creeds, they articulated their ecclesiology precisely. They also wrote in such a way as to make plain their passion for the church, even their willingness to die for the body of Christ. If we want to own the name *Reformed*, we will too.

A Reformed Christian confesses what the Belgic Confession does in

Articles 27-29. What a beautiful confession of the church we Reformed Christians make!

We believe and profess, one catholic or universal Church...[which] hath been from the beginning of the world, and will be to the end thereof.... This holy Church is preserved or supported by God, against the rage of the whole world.... No person...ought to withdraw himself, to live in a separate state from it; but...all men are in duty bound to join and unite themselves with it. Out of [this church] is no salvation.

For the Reformers, joining the church was the only way in which they were truly “bowing their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ.” Then, since “all sects which are in the world assume to themselves the name of the Church,” the Reformed fathers spelled out very carefully for us how to identify the true church, so as to join her and not just any church. In addition, joining the true church meant that they “separate themselves from all those who do not belong to the Church.” And they understood the cost: “even though the magistrates and edicts of princes were against it, yea, though they should suffer death or any other corporeal punishment.” Guido DeBrés, the author of these words, did.

Our Heidelberg Catechism is just as beautiful, even if briefer. After it explains the essence of the church, it has us exclaim: “and I... am and forever shall remain, a living member thereof(!)” To confess that without an exclamation point is impossible for me!

Almost a century later, our Presbyterian brothers in Great Britain spelled out their confession of the church, echoing their relatives on the continent. “The visible church...is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.”² These Reformers also distinguished the true church from the false, called the people of God to join the true church, and emphasized the “special privileges” of the church: “of being under God’s special care and government; of being protected and preserved in all ages...of enjoying the communion of saints...and (for the elect) union and communion with [Christ] in grace and glory.”

To be Reformed is to confess and love Christ’s church.

The Reformers were but following the lead of the ancient church. When the earliest church fathers confessed their apostolic faith in “the twelve articles of faith,” they confessed the Trinity: God the Father and creation, God the Son and redemption, and God the Holy Spirit and sanctification. Listen carefully to your church’s confession next Sunday evening. Immediately after, “I believe in the Holy Spirit” comes, “I believe an holy catholic church,” because the central work of the Holy Spirit of Christ in the world is the creation, gathering, and preservation of the *church*. The Reformed accent on *church* is ancient Christianity.

The Reformers were not trumpeting “Kingdom, Kingdom, King-

dom!” as though kingdom (wrongly defined, increasingly today, as “Christianized culture”) is the main thing and church but one of many instruments—and probably not even the essential instrument—to bring about this more important “Kingdom!” Rather, when the Reformers prayed “Thy kingdom come” they were praying, “that is... preserve and increase thy *church*” (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 48).

Highest Regard for the Church

So, *being* Reformed is more than *saying* we are Reformed. And *loving* the church is more than *mouth-ing* those words. Reformed folk practice what they preach. If the church is above our chief joy, it will show. Highest regard for Christ’s body means:

We will commit ourselves and our generations to a *high view of and an utmost respect* for the church—not only the invisible church, but the visible church institute: my church and my denomination, for starters (assuming, of course, that “my church” has the marks of the true church). If we forget to speak well of that church, may our right hands forget their cunning. If, God forbid, we speak poorly of that church, may our tongues cleave to the roofs of our mouths.

Second, we will commit ourselves and our children to *membership in the church*. Reformed Christians do not float aimlessly from church to church; or endlessly sample churches smorgasbord-

² See Westminster Confession of Faith, 25-31, and Larger Catechism, 61-65.

like, as though that will give them good ecclesiastical balance; or even sit in one church but without membership in it. We will find the church that manifests most clearly the marks of the true church in the world, attach ourselves to her officially, and never separate ourselves from her whatever the costs, personally or otherwise. And we will not easily transfer to another church when life in our church becomes difficult but will, for the sake of the generation learning from my example, stick it out and keep a long-term perspective.


Third, we will commit ourselves to living *among the people of God who are members* of the church—first of all the congregation of which we are members; then the people

of God who are members of the denomination who confess like precious faith; and so too the church members who are closest to our denomination in confession and walk. We who love the church cannot be isolationists, loners. Faithful to the antithetical life, we sing: “No forward man or evil shall my companion be.” We also sing: “The faithful and the upright shall minister to me...” (Psalter #271). And we will live in such a way that we allow them to do so.

Fourth, we will commit ourselves and our families to a *brave defense of the faith* our church confesses, a *life that harmonizes* with that confession, and a *humble submission to the authority of the elders* of the church. More on those next time.



In most of us, God planted that high regard for the church institute through the faithful, prayerful (and probably tearful) labor of our parents. They taught us to love the church, not by tedious exhortations: “Love the church!,” but by their humble example of heart-felt devotion to the church. Most Reformed believers who love the church have their parents to thank. Which points back to our explanation of “covenant.”


And ahead to “Christian life.” There was a day when the *life* of most Christians had its center in their church. I dare guess that today you will find most of their children where you would have found their parents—living in and for their church. 

LETTERS

Visiting Mission Fields

I agree with Prof. Dykstra’s editorial on the importance and value of visiting mission fields and the smaller, isolated churches and groups. Everything he said, both about the joys and sorrows of mission work, rings true for us here in Ireland also. Let me add to it by extending a welcome to the saints of the PRCA to visit *your* sister churches. The CPRC and LRF love to have visitors, and Ireland is a beautiful place to visit. I include a special word for the young people: study abroad programmes are possible. You can study for part of your course, typically a semester, in Ireland. The University of Limerick is very well situated for such programmes. Simply ask your university if they participate in such schemes. Although you would be far from home in an unknown

land, the LRF stands ready to provide for your spiritual needs. We have twice been enriched by the presence of students from the PRCA and the CERC in recent years. Such students have worshipped with us, attended our Bible studies, and added immeasurably to the life of the congregation here in Limerick. We would love to see that happen more frequently. In addition, of course, for those who are not students, or who would like to visit for a shorter time, I highly recommend the biennial British Reformed Fellowship Conference. Whenever you come, you will receive a warm welcome. My visitors’ book is always ready for new entries!

Rev. Martyn McGeown
Limerick Reformed Fellowship 

The US Supreme Court's Legalization of Homosexual Marriage

The Decision

On June 26, 2015 the Supreme Court of the United States redefined marriage and effectively legalized homosexual marriages in all 50 states. The next day Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr. explained the decision:

Everything has changed and nothing has changed. The Supreme Court's decision yesterday is a central assault upon marriage as the conjugal union of a man and a woman and in a five to four decision the nation's highest court has now imposed its mandate redefining marriage on all fifty states.

As Chief Justice Roberts said in his dissent, "The majority's decision is an act of will, not a legal judgment."

The majority's argument, expressed by Justice Kennedy, is that the right of same-sex couples to marry is based in individual autonomy as related to sexuality, in marriage as a fundamental right, in marriage as a privileged context for raising children, and in upholding marriage as central to civilization. But at every one of these points, the majority had to reinvent marriage in order to make its case. The Court has not merely ordered that same-sex couples be allowed to marry—it has fundamentally redefined marriage itself.¹

Polygamy

This is not the place to analyze the legal merits of the majority's decision to legalize homosexual marriage. But we can make the observation that almost everyone agrees that the decision, by redefining marriage, opens the way

to the legalization of polygamy. Chief Justice John Roberts argued this point in his dissent, as Mohler explains:

The Chief Justice...pointed to another very telling aspect of the majority opinion. The Kennedy opinion opens wide a door that basically invites looming demands for the legalization of polygamy and polyamory. As Chief Justice Roberts observed: "It is striking how much of the majority's reasoning would apply with equal force to the claim of a fundamental right to plural marriage." Striking, indeed. What is perhaps even more striking is that the majority did not even appear concerned about the extension of its logic to polygamy.

As the decision approached, those of us who have warned that the redefinition of marriage will not stop with same-sex unions were told that we were offering a fallacious slippery-slope argument. Now, the Chief Justice of the United States verifies that these concerns were fully valid. You can count on the fact that advocates for legalized polygamy found great encouragement in this decision.

There is much proof for Mohler's assertion that the decision has encouraged advocates for the legalization of polygamy. *CBS News* has reported that a Montana man, Nathan Collier, "said....that he was inspired by [the] U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing gay marriage to apply for a marriage license so that he can legally wed his second wife." *Politico.com*, a major mainstream source for news on the internet, published an article by Fredrik deBoer in which he argues for the legalization of polygamy. Here is an excerpt:

While important legal and practical questions remain unresolved, with the Supreme Court's ruling and broad public support, marriage equality is here to stay. Soon, it will be time to turn the attention of social liberalism to

¹ <http://www.albertmohler.com/2015/06/27/everything-has-changed-and-nothing-has-changed-the-supreme-court-and-same-sex-marriage>.

Rev. Spronk is pastor of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan.

the next horizon. Given that many of us have argued, to great effect, that deference to tradition is not a legitimate reason to restrict marriage rights to groups that want them, the next step seems clear. We should turn our efforts towards the legal recognition of marriages between more than two partners. It's time to legalize polygamy.²

Religious Freedom

The Supreme Court's decision also jeopardizes the ability of Christians to maintain and express their belief that homosexuality is a sin. Mohler writes:

The threat to religious liberty represented by this decision is clear, present, and inevitable. Assurances to the contrary, the majority in this decision has placed every religious institution in legal jeopardy if that institution intends to uphold its theological convictions limiting marriage to the union of a man and a woman. This threat is extended to every religious citizen or congregation that would uphold the convictions held by believers for millennia. Justice Clarence Thomas warned in his dissent of "ruinous consequences for religious liberty."

One of the most dangerous dimensions of this decision is evident in what can only be described as the majority's vilification of those who hold to a traditional view of marriage as exclusively the union of a man and a woman. Justice Samuel Alito stated bluntly that the decision "will be used to vilify Americans who are unwilling to assent to the new orthodoxy." According to the argument offered by the majority, any opposition to same-sex marriage is rooted in moral animus against homosexuals. In offering this argument the majority slanders any defender of traditional marriage and openly rejects and vilifies those who, on the grounds of theological conviction, cannot affirm same-sex marriage.

Currently, both houses of the US Congress are considering a bill called The Equality Act. The proposed bill "seeks to expand the 1964 Civil Rights Act's protections against racial and sex-based discrimination to include discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity."³ This "anti-discrimination" bill "would prohibit discrimination against LGBT persons in categories ranging from employment and housing to education and

jury service, and would broaden where discrimination would be illegal in a public accommodation to include everything from shopping centers and banks to travel agencies and funeral parlors." This bill does not appear to limit religious freedom, at least not overtly. Personally, I do not see why a Christian would object to a business transaction with an LGBT person any more than they would any other person who may be living in some other kind of sin.

But, it is a concern that society now views condemnation of homosexuality as bigotry that is akin to racism. Perhaps on a city, state, or national level there will be "anti-discrimination" laws that take away the freedom of churches to express their disapproval of homosexuality.

The Goal

It is reasonable to be concerned that the LGBT community will continue to seek to silence any criticism of homosexuality. Dr. David Murray explains the reason that the LGBT push so strongly for homosexual marriage: "Gay marriage is not primarily about gay marriage; it's mainly about silencing gay consciences."⁴ Murray explains that "few homosexuals and lesbians marry when given the legal opportunity." This leads to the question of why the LGBT has so insistently demanded the right to marry. Murray found the answer to this question by reading *The Trouble with Gay Marriage*, an article written by Brendan O'Neill about the homosexual marriage movement in Ireland.

O'Neill explains in his article that the main reason for a vote to approve homosexual marriage in Ireland was to make "people feel good" and relieve "adult anxiety." Murray takes O'Neill's conclusion that same-sex marriage is about soothing homosexual consciences and explains why this is so important for homosexuals. He writes:

The answer lies in Romans 1:18-32, where the Apostle Paul explains what desperate measures that homosexuals (and other unrepentant sinners) take to silence the voice of their conscience. They hear God's prohibition and condemnation in their consciences, hate it, and do everything they can to shut it up—including, in our own day, getting gay marriage legalized everywhere, even if relatively few ever make use of it. Because, in most cases,

² <http://www.Politico.com/magazine/story/2015/06/gay-marriage-decision-polygamy>.

³ <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/polygamous-montana-trio-applies-for-wedding-license>.

⁴ <http://headhearthand.org/blog/2015/06/08/gay-marriage-is-not-about-gay-marriage-2>.

it's not about the right to marry; it's mainly a vain attempt to muffle the inner voice of conscience by multiplying and amplifying external voices of approval.

Of course, this attempt to sooth the consciences of homosexuals and lesbians is vain. Murray explains: "In effect [Rom. 1:18-32] says that even if gay marriage is legalized everywhere, and even if every dissenting voice is extinguished, gay consciences will still scream 'Wrong!' and 'Guilty!' Deep inside they will still know 'the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death' (Rom. 1:32). That's the 'nagging shadow' that forever stalks gay consciousness."

Because of the need to drown out their consciences with public approval, it is unlikely that the LGBT community will be content merely with the legal right to marry. They want the church's voice of opposition to be turned into a loud voice of approval. And already there are many in the church who are giving such approval.

The More Things Change...

So the Supreme Court has brought a change—homosexual marriage is now legal in the United States. But things really have not changed that much. Explains Mohler:

In one sense, everything has changed. And yet, nothing has changed. The cultural and legal landscape has changed, as we believe this will lead to very real harms to our neighbors. But our Christian responsibility has not changed. We are charged to uphold marriage as the union of a man and a woman and to speak the truth in love. We are also commanded to uphold the truth about marriage in our own lives, in our own marriages, in our own families, and in our own churches.

We are called to be the people of the truth, even when the truth is not popular and even when the truth is denied by the culture around us. Christians have found themselves in this position before, and we will again. God's truth has not changed. The Holy Scriptures have not changed. The Gospel of Jesus Christ has not changed. The church's mission has not changed. Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. ☞

GUEST ARTICLE

DR. BRIAN DECKER

A Christian Doctor's Perspective on Vaccines

You may have seen the pictures from the 1950s of families lined up waiting to receive the polio vaccine. Maybe you even remember waiting in that line. If so, you probably also remember the relief that came with knowing the dreaded disease of polio could be

prevented. Finally something could be done about a disease that caused parents to have genuine fear and concern, as well as many sleepless nights, worrying whether or not their child would have devastating long-term effects from polio. In the years following widespread vaccination of children, polio was eradicated from the United States.

Besides polio, vaccines were developed to fight childhood illnesses such as measles, mumps, rubella (German measles), pertussis (whooping cough), as well as bacteria that frequently cause infections in young children. A quick look at graphs of the incidence of these diseases shows a sharp decline in the number of cases after vaccination became commonplace. For many years parents

Dr. Decker is a member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan and a practicing physician.

Dr. Decker submits this article at the request of the editors. The public press and other religious magazines have covered this topic. We believed it would be helpful to have a professional in the medical field submit his judgment on the matter for our magazine.

gladly and dutifully immunized their children, and it is inarguable that vaccines work to prevent disease.¹

However, in the last few years, some parents are questioning whether they should vaccinate their children. More and more parents are choosing either to limit vaccines or not to immunize at all, a practice seen in the Christian community as well. This is a disturbing trend that seems to arise out of misinformation and unsubstantiated fears regarding vaccines.

The human body is truly amazing, and one especially discovers this when closely examining the details of how each system of the body works. We certainly are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps. 139:14). God gave each person an immune system to help ward off ever-present viruses and bacteria. Our bodies encounter foreign substances all the time which, in the context of the immune system, are called antigens. Antibodies are created specifically to fight and combat each different antigen. Vaccines work on the following principle: inject a small amount of virus or bacteria (the antigen) into the body so that antibodies can be formed, thereby conferring immunity to the disease.

Many different objections are made against using vaccines. One argument is that it is harmful to expose infants and little children to so many antigens at one time when they are vaccinated. However, as soon as babies leave the sterile environment of the womb and enter the birth canal, they are immediately and constantly exposed to antigens. Their intestines, essentially free from bacteria *in utero*, are in a very short time colonized by bacteria. Subsequently, their immune systems are continually bombarded by antigens. In contrast, a child that receives every recommended vaccine would be given around 130 antigens with the *entire series*. Vaccines do not overload the immune system.²

¹ One disclaimer before continuing. There are two vaccines that could be considered as “lifestyle vaccines”—hepatitis B and human papilloma virus (HPV). Hepatitis B is an infection contracted by IV drug use, contaminated blood products, or sexual activity. Human papillomavirus is a sexually transmitted virus that causes genital warts and cervical cancer. Because these illnesses can be prevented by abstaining from certain activities and maintaining a certain lifestyle, vaccines are not vital to limiting the spread of the disease. The rest of the vaccines fight illnesses that are passed through contact with air particles or bodily fluids such as sputum, nasal secretions, or gastrointestinal fluids. For the sake of this paper, when I speak of vaccines, I am referring to the latter group.

² <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/Vaccines/multiple->

A second argument is that parents are concerned because they have heard that vaccines contain aborted fetal tissue. This is simply not true. What is true is that vaccines are produced by growing viruses and bacteria in cells. The viruses and bacteria are then used in some way (either live, weakened, or just a part of it) in the vaccine. Some viruses are so specific they need to be grown in human cells; they cannot be made in animal cells. Some of those human cell lines in use today came from fetuses that were aborted 35 years ago. While this fact may grab your attention, it is not a reason to avoid vaccines. The use of these vaccines does not support the abortion industry. Federal law prohibits the sale of newly aborted fetuses or their use in medical research; therefore, by using a vaccine, you are not encouraging or promoting abortion.³

A third argument used against vaccination revolves around whether or not they are safe. Questions are asked, “Didn’t you hear that they cause autism,” and, “Shouldn’t we keep those things out of our bodies?” Regarding the autism question, the short answer is vaccines definitively do not cause autism. In 1998 there was a single study published in the British journal, *The Lancet*, that purported a link between the two. A thorough and careful reading of the study showed shoddy scientific technique and data manipulation that resulted in retraction of the article. Furthermore, the head doctor lost his medical license. Many high quality studies have since dispelled both causation and correlation between vaccinations and autism.⁴

Many parents that refuse vaccinations do so because they believe it is unlikely that their child will contract any of the diseases for which there are vaccines. Essentially, they believe vaccinating their child is more risky than not vaccinating. Regarding this issue, it is of utmost importance to understand two concepts. The first is “herd immunity.” In the United States, the majority of children get vaccinated and develop immunity (“the herd”). As a result of this, the diseases are very rare. Because most of the herd is immune, if a child is *not* vaccinated, it is

[vaccines.html](http://www.vaccines.html); <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/109/1/124.full>.

³ http://www.drwile.com/lnkpages/render.asp?vac_abortion.

⁴ <http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa021134>; <http://www.bmj.com/content/342/bmj.d1678>.

unlikely that child will become sick. In this situation, it is very easy to be a proponent of not vaccinating children. Remember, however, the reason unvaccinated children will not contract the disease is because the majority of parents *continue to vaccinate* their children.

The second concept to understand is that a good vaccine will have more risk associated with receiving the vaccine than not receiving it. This seems counterintuitive, and to help explain this, consider the measles vaccine. When it was developed, the risk associated with contracting measles was significantly greater than the risk of the vaccine. However, because of the vaccine's effectiveness, measles has become nearly nonexistent, making the risk associated with the disease nearly zero. While vaccines are extremely safe, they are not perfect, which means that there is some risk associated with taking them. For example, there are people that have a true allergic reaction to vaccines, which is the greatest risk these agents present. Thus, the present situation is such that the risk associated with the measles *vaccine* is greater than the risk of getting *measles* itself. I understand why a parent would consider this fact and say, "Why would I give my child a vaccine that has some risk when there is virtually no risk of getting the disease?" Unfortunately, that thinking is very shortsighted. If all were to make that decision, measles would return along with its morbidity and mortality. The population needs to accept the slight risk of the vaccine in order to prevent the significantly larger risk of rampant disease.

Because many readers did not live through the era when these diseases were common, a brief explanation of them is appropriate. Polio is a flu-like illness that can cause meningitis in one in 25 cases and paralysis in one in a hundred. Measles is considered to be one of the most contagious viruses on the planet. After an infected person coughs or sneezes, the virus can survive in the air for two hours, resulting in 90 percent of close contacts of someone sick with measles becoming infected. For every 1,000 cases of measles, one to two people will die and one to two will get an infection in the brain serious enough to cause deafness or seizures. Pertussis, commonly known as whooping cough, will cause death in one to two percent of cases. Rotavirus can cause diarrhea that leads to severe dehydration requiring hospitalization. Even chicken pox can cause, on a rare occasion, a very

severe brain infection called encephalitis. These are not insignificant illnesses.⁵

In the medical community, there is a branch of science called public health. Public health officials concern themselves with disease prevention strategies, population health, and healthy lifestyle promotion. As expected, the use of vaccines is widely encouraged by public health officials as something nearly everyone in the general population should do. Some people react negatively to this simply because they do not like the idea of a government-funded organization telling them what they should do regarding their health. We all live in a community and are members of the body of Christ. There are people who legitimately are at very high risk if they were to contract many of the diseases for which there are vaccines, such as the newly born, those who are immune-compromised or deficient, the very elderly, those receiving cancer treatment, and pregnant women. Their health and ability to avoid many of these illnesses depend on the great majority of the population being immune, which is only possible with wide-spread use of vaccinations.

Our calling is simple, but not always easy: love God and love your neighbor (Mark 12:30-31). One who decides not to vaccinate must consider this in light of the calling to love the neighbor. Citing passages such as Romans 12:10, I Peter 3:8, and Colossians 3:12 which command us to be merciful towards each other, the Heidelberg Catechism's explanation of the sixth commandment ("Thou shalt not kill") in Q&A 107 calls the believer to "prevent his [the neighbor's] hurt as much as in us lies." As previously stated, it is easy to decide not to vaccinate when the risk of getting the disease is small. However, the more people that forego vaccinations, the more at risk the population is to have these illnesses become more prevalent. One case of whooping cough in a newborn who was in a nursery with an unvaccinated child, and this problem immediately becomes quite serious. The risk is real.

God has given us amazing bodies, and throughout time has given us the ability to understand even the most detailed aspects of its smallest parts. He has given us the *gift* of medicines, surgeries, therapies, treatments—and, yes, vaccines. May we all use these gifts wisely as we strive to make decisions that are best for our children, our family, the body of Christ, and the community at large. ☞

⁵ www.cdc.gov.

God's Covenant with Noah (3)

Only Believers Profit

God's everlasting covenant is first of all with Christ. Whenever we read in Scripture of God's everlasting covenant, we must remember this. The promises to Abraham were promises to Christ. The same is true of the promises to Noah. What God promised Noah, He promised to Christ and thus only to those who are in Him.

Many, however, maintain that God's covenant with Noah and His covenant with Abraham are not the same. They insist that God's covenant with Noah was a covenant not only with the elect, but also with all those who are outside of Christ. They argue that Noah and his house constituted the entire human race, and that God's promise not to send another flood benefits all human beings.

Yet such is not the case. First of all, the promise to Noah and his seed is a promise not to all the descendants of Adam, but to the new human race of which Christ is the Head. Noah and his house were the church at this time, and the promise to them is a promise to Christ's church.

Secondly, what God promised Noah and his house is beneficial not to all human beings, but only to those who believe in Christ. In this article we will consider that point in more detail.

Only believers profit from what God gives them each day

Unbelievers do not benefit from God's promise not to send another flood. The longer that an unbeliever lives, the greater the punishment that he receives, both in this life and at the final judgment.

Consider, for example, Judas Iscariot. Christ said

about him: "but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born" (Matt. 26:24b). Every day that Judas Iscariot lived, the worse it was for him. With each day he became more hardened in his sins, and the punishment he would receive at the final judgment became worse.

This is true not only of Judas Iscariot, but also of all those who hate God and His Son. Every day their judgment becomes heavier: "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom. 2:5). Therefore, it simply is not true that all human beings benefit from the fact that God does not send another flood.

When an unbeliever receives bodily health for another day, he is receiving from God something good, for which he should give thanks to God. But what he receives does not profit him, because he makes use of it only to sin more.

Believers, and believers only, profit from what God gives them each day. They alone are receiving the words that God speaks. And it is only when we receive God's Word along with His good gifts that we benefit from what He gives to us.

Only believers profit as they see the fulfillment of God's promise

God's promises benefit only those who truly believe what He promises. The promises do not benefit the blatant unbeliever, nor do they benefit those who merely acknowledge intellectually that what God says is true. It is only those who genuinely believe that benefit from what God says.

God's promises always direct us to think about the *kingdom of heaven*. This is true also of the promises to Noah. Yet only the believer thinks about and embraces what God says about that kingdom, and thus profits from it.

Contrary to what many say, the covenant with Noah is

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

Previous article in this series: August 2015, p. 441.

about the kingdom of heaven. Scripture tells us that when we consider what God said to our father Noah, we are to think about how our God in heaven has set the ordinances of heaven and how He directs all things precisely as He has promised, always accomplishing His will.

God said to Noah: "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22). In the prophecies of Jeremiah, this is referred to as God's covenant of the day and of the night:

Thus saith the LORD; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers (Jer. 33:20-21).

When we see that the cycle of day and night continues the same day after day, we are supposed to think about how our heavenly Father has set the ordinances of heaven. What man claims happens by "natural causes" is actually what He is causing to happen in fulfillment of His covenant promise.

Only a believer profits from this promise. Only he looks to the Scriptures to find the explanation of this promise and finds comfort. Unbelieving man thinks he can explain why there is this day/night cycle, and he explains it in such a way that God has nothing to do with it. It happens, says man, due to the laws of nature.

Man prides himself on thinking that he has discovered and now knows the ordinances. But God says the only one who truly knows the ordinances is the one who has set them. Consider the question that our Lord asked of Job: "Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?" Only God knows the ordinances. He alone has set the dominion of them in the earth. Only the child of God believes and humbly confesses this, finding comfort in knowing that his God in heaven is directing all things.

The prophecies of Jeremiah go on to say that when we see the day/night cycle continue just as God has promised, then we are also to be assured that all that God has promised to us in Christ will certainly take place. Notice how the verses below connect the promise to Noah, the promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the promise to

Israel, and the promise to David:

Thus saith the LORD; If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob... (Jer. 33:25-26a).

Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever (Jer. 31:35-36).

Throughout history, it is one and the same everlasting covenant that God has made with His people in Christ. When we behold and consider the fulfillment of God's covenant promise concerning the ongoing cycle of day and night, we are to be assured that the same God who has set these ordinances will certainly fulfill all that He has promised to us in Christ.

Only believers are comforted by this. They alone consider this, confess this, and are drawn by God's Spirit closer to the living God.


Only believers profit when they see the rainbow

Unbelieving man looks at the rainbow and thinks he can explain it only by "natural causes." Yet it is God's rainbow, and He put it there, as He Himself declares: "I do set my bow in the cloud" (Gen. 9:13a). Man has come to understand under what conditions an individual will see a rainbow in the sky, but God is the one who has set the ordinances so that a rainbow appears under those conditions.

When God spoke to Noah, He made a promise about the ordinances of heaven and then gave us a sign that would appear in the heavens. This promise and this sign are to remind us that just as the sun, the moon, and the bow in the clouds appear in the sky precisely as God willed it, so our salvation will be fully accomplished precisely as God has planned.

It is when we hear this promise, see this sign, and believe in our heart, that we profit from what God has said.

Then with joy in our heart, we praise God and say: “But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased” (Ps. 115:3). The ones who by faith truly

sing this song, these are the ones who have profited from the comforting promises our Lord made unto Noah and to all His people. 

THINGS WHICH MUST SHORTLY COME TO PASS

PROF. DAVID ENGELSMAS

Chapter Five

Premillennialism (7):

Its Explanation of Revelation 20

Introduction

Premillennialism explains Revelation 20:1-10 as predicting a “golden age” of a thousand years of earthly power, prosperity, and peace for the nation of Israel. Reigning over this earthly kingdom will be the risen, glorified Jesus Christ in the body on a throne in Jerusalem.

This earthly glorification of and dominion by the restored Old Testament nation of Israel is the millennium of Revelation 20 in the theology of premillennialism. The age, or dispensation, of the millennium, with its glory for Israel, is supposed to be the goal of God with all of history.

Because Jesus is supposed to return to earth, bodily and visibly, before the millennium, this theology of the last things is known as *premillennialism*. In contrast, the teaching that Jesus will return in the body *after* a millennium of earthly splendor and power of the church is known as *postmillennialism*.

Premillennialism preaches a literal thousand years of an earthly kingdom of God among and for the Jews, on the basis of Revelation 20, because premillennialism is committed to a “literal” interpretation of the vision of John in Revelation 20. Even more compelling for premillennialism’s explanation of Revelation 20 is its insistence on a literal interpretation of the Old Testament prophets. The Old Testament in many places prophesied the salvation and glory of Israel. Because premillennialism is committed to a “literal” interpreta-

tion of the prophecy of the Old Testament, it must find the fulfillment of those prophecies concerning Israel in a future millennium of the glory of Israel.

Israel must have its day in the sun of God’s blessing yet in the future. The millennium of Revelation 20 fills the bill.

The literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecy is fundamental to premillennialism, by its own admission, indeed by its proud claim.

But the very principle in which premillennialism prides itself—a literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecy—is the undoing of this theology of the last days and the end of the world. Not only does the principle expose premillennialism as foolish, but it also runs that eschatology into grievous heresy. It renders premillennialism a denial of the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ for sin on the cross. It makes premillennialism a gross form of the apostasy from Christ that is condemned in the book of Hebrews—a reversion to the types and shadows of the Old Testament after the appearance of the reality, who is Jesus Christ, once offered for sin.

Premillennialism is such a denial of the cross, such apostasy from Christ, such reversion to Jewish shadows as is warned against in the book of Hebrews especially, though not exclusively, by its forced, literal interpretation of Ezekiel 40-48.

Literal Interpretation of Ezekiel 40-48

Ezekiel 40-48 prophesies the rebuilding of the Old Testament temple, with the altar of burnt offering and all the other paraphernalia of that temple, including of-

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

Previous article in this series: April 15, 2015, p. 323.

ficiating priests and Levites. The passage also prophesies bloody, animal sacrifices on the altar as sin offerings—bullocks, goats, and rams. Therefore, in accordance with premillennialism's avowed literal interpretation of prophecy, during the millennium there will be the construction of a material temple in Jerusalem for the right—indeed demanded—worship of God and a resumption of the worship of the old covenant, including animal sacrifices for sin.

According to premillennialist Erich Sauer (who is not one of the more extreme dispensationalists), in the coming millennium “God will resume the history of the earthly visible temple.” In that physical, earthly temple, “there will then be a service of sacrifices *after* the completed work on Golgotha; and...this will include burnt offerings, meal offerings, thank offerings, and sin offerings, a priesthood, and a holding of special feasts (Passover, Tabernacles...).”¹ “At the Passover there shall be offered daily exactly seven bullocks and seven rams as a sin-offering, and likewise exactly seven bullocks and seven rams as a burnt-offering.”²

Knowing full well the carnal, indeed antichristian, implications of the doctrine of a restoration of Old Testament, bloody sacrifices for sin in a Jewish millennium (*over which the Lamb of God, who was slain for sin, once and for all, presides—the Lamb of God who was sacrificed offers up animal sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins*), premillennial notable, John F. Walvoord, approves and defends this abomination—this denial of the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ for sin—at length.³

Thus, not only is premillennialism's vaunted, literal interpretation of prophecy conclusively exposed as fallacious, but also premillennialism denies the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross and falls away to damnable, Judaistic antichristianity. Nothing less severe than this

¹ Erich Sauer, *From Eternity to Eternity: An Outline of Divine Purposes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 5th printing 1966), 38, 39. The emphasis is Sauer's.

² Sauer, 180.

³ John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 13th Grand Rapids printing 1979), 309-315. Walvoord inculcates in this gross wickedness the whole of premillennialism and all premillennialists when he indicates the reason for affirming animal sacrifice for sin in the millennium: “Most thoroughgoing students of premillennialism who evince understanding of the relation of literal interpretation to premillennial doctrine usually embrace the concept of a literal temple and literal sacrifices” (315).

is the judgment upon premillennialism by the Reformed faith.

Dispensational premillennialism is a denial of the cross of Jesus Christ. “By one offering he [Jesus] hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:14). “There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins” (Heb. 10:26). “It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Heb. 10:4). “In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou [God] hast had no pleasure” (Heb. 10:6).

To premillennialism's literal interpretation of Ezekiel 40-48, especially its approval of bloody animal sacrifices as accepted—indeed divinely commanded—worship of God in the millennium, and, thus, to the theology of premillennialism in its entirety, Reformed amillennialism responds, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal. 6:14).

Indicating that they recognize full well the dreadful doctrine into which their literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecy presses them, especially the self-styled “moderate” premillennialists defend their teaching of a resumption of Old Testamental, bloody animal sacrifices by earthly priests (usurping the office of the great high priest, Jesus the Christ, as much as any Roman Catholic priest, indeed more grossly—Rome's priests do not practice bloody animal sacrifice) by explaining the animal sacrifices in a temple during the millennium as merely symbolic in nature, intending to remind believers of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

This pathetic and desperate defense of their horrendous doctrine of a resumption of animal sacrifice in the millennium fails in every respect. First, Ezekiel 40-48 does not teach animal sacrifices in a restored temple as merely symbolic and for the purpose of remembering the death of Christ. Ezekiel teaches animal sacrifices *as sin offerings*, in keeping with the nature of such sacrifices in the time of the old covenant.

Second, the New Testament sign and seal of the sacrifice for sin of the Lamb of God, appointed by Christ Himself, is not animal sacrifice, but the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. And this sacrament does not include the shedding of blood. After the bloody death of the Lamb of God for sin, there may never again be the shedding of blood for the taking away of sin in any sense whatever. This is one reason why in the time of the new covenant, circumcision is replaced by baptism.

Third, although such bloody animal sacrifices could serve, and *did* serve, to represent the cross of Christ to Israel in the time of the old covenant—the childish church (Gal. 4:1-3)—no such sacrifice may represent the cross to the church after Christ has come and died the accursed death of the cross. Now, after the death of Christ, a bloody sacrifice *competes* with the cross, *obscures* the cross, and, necessarily, by virtue of the shedding of blood, *denies* the cross. God’s way of setting the cross before the very eyes of the New Testament church and believer is the preaching of the truth of the gospel of the cross (Gal. 4:1).

What is of the utmost significance for revealing the gross heresy of premillennialism in all its forms and presentations is that all premillennialists—the more “moderate” as well as the more extreme—are agreed that there will, in fact, be bloody animal sacrifices for sin in the millennial kingdom. Although they clearly see the implications of this cross-denying doctrine (hence, their labored defense of the doctrine), they will not renounce it. They cannot. For they are committed to a literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecy. Giving up on a literal interpretation of prophecy would be the abandonment of dispensational premillennialism as false doctrine.

The more recent book edited by Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*,⁴ is recognized as a deliberate attempt by more “moderate” premillennialists to soften the sharp edges of the original premillennialists, to mitigate the more offensive teachings of the fathers of premillennialism, and to find some common ground with Reformed and Presbyterian covenant theologians.

Although the subject does not receive nearly the attention it requires, the “issue [of]...the abolition of sacrifices in Hebrews” is brought up by editors Blaising and Bock at the very end of the book as part of their “assessment” of the contents of the book. The editors, who are representatives of the “moderate,” “progressive” wing of premillennial dispensationalism, *deny* that “any retention of [bloody animal] sacrifices [by a restored Levitical priesthood in a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem—DJE] is a return to ‘weak and beggarly’ shadows of the Old Testament.” They argue *on behalf* of the resumption of such

sacrifices in the millennium: “The only sacrifices that Hebrews prohibits are those related to sin” (as though the sacrifices taught in Ezekiel 40-48 are not there related to sin). These “moderate” premillennialists conclude by asserting that “the possibility of national cultic activities [that is, bloody animal sacrifices for sin, offered to God on a material altar in Jerusalem by merely human priests—DJE] [is not] automatically excluded.... It is possible...that some of these features [specifically, bloody animal sacrifices—DJE] are included in ‘the restoration of all things’ (Acts 3:21).”⁵

Which, being interpreted, means that all dispensational premillennialists teach that in the most glorious of all the earthly dispensations—the coming millennium—the cross of Jesus Christ will be obliterated by the shadow of bloody animal sacrifices for sin.

The cautious language of the editors describing future animal sacrifices in the millennial kingdom of God as mere possibilities is deception, serving the ecumenical purpose of the book. In fact, the premillennialists, “moderates” as well as extremists, are committed to the *reality* of such sacrifices. Literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecy demands these sacrifices. So also does the Jewish nature of the theory itself of the millennium demand the resumption of sacrifices in an earthly temple.

To the premillennialists thus advocating or allowing bloody sacrifices by a revived order of earthly priests in an earthly temple in the Jerusalem that is below (see Gal. 4:25, 26), the Reformed faith witnesses the truth of the apostle in Hebrews 8:1-6:

We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law.... But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises [realized in the one bloody sacrifice of Himself, once and for all].

... to be continued. 

⁴ *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, ed. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

⁵ *Dispensationalism*, 390, 391.

“To Teach Them War” (7)

Knowing War’s Origin: In Man’s Fall

The Fall

“And he did eat.”

“...she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat,” (Gen. 3:6).

“And he did eat.” With that very brief and unadorned statement, the Bible recounts a literal, historical, creation-changing event. A man named Adam ate. Adam’s eating is what we, in catechism class, call “the Fall.” We say “fall” because Adam sinned, and by sinning he fell away from God—his loving Maker and Friend—and into darkness and death. We say “*the* Fall,” but not because this was the first fall in time. As we explained last time, *Satan* fell before Adam. Also, Adam’s wife *Eve* broke God’s commandment and fell before her husband. Strictly speaking, Eve’s rebellion against God was the first sin committed by a human being. But we say “*the* Fall” because Adam was the head of humanity and king of creation. In his fall the human race fell, and all creatures were subjected to the bondage of corruption.

The historical event of “the Fall” is recorded in Genesis 3. We must join the faithful church of all ages and read the opening chapters of Genesis as literal history. Today, a lively battle rages in seminaries, pulpits, classrooms, libraries, homes, and on the Internet over the historicity of Genesis 3 and its surrounding chapters. The literal Adam of the inspired, infallible, trustworthy, authoritative, perspicuous Bible is dying as more and more of his sons try to kill him by denying his historical existence as expressed in Genesis. With greater and greater ecclesiastical acceptance of evolutionary theory as the explanation of origins, the opening chapters of Genesis are increasingly rejected as the stuff of fairy tales. A six-day creation?! A literal

human being named Adam as the father of us all?! A special garden with two special trees?! A *talking* serpent?! A “Fall?!” Death for all?!

We must believe God created Adam and Eve, the first two human beings. The Bible says so. Adam was as surely a man who lived on this earth as Paul was a man who lived on this earth, and as you and I live on this earth. Adam was as surely a man who lived on this earth as Jesus, the last Adam, was a man who lived on this earth. The New Testament affirms that Adam was a literal, historical figure (Luke 3:38; Rom. 5; I Cor. 15; I Tim. 2).

Adam and Eve were made in God’s own image. They lived together in love for their Maker and in love for each other. They had dominion over all the creatures in the garden in which God placed them. God granted them freedom to eat of all the trees of the garden, except one. Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they were forbidden to eat. Should they eat of *that* tree, they would die according to God’s own, clear warning. I trust you know the history well. By the instigation of the devil, who spoke through the serpent, they chose to eat. They fell. Adam’s fall was “the Fall.”

The Fall as War

The first declaration of war and act of aggression in human history occurred with that fall of Adam in the garden of Eden about six thousand years ago. No formal written declaration of war was drafted and stamped. No swords clashed. No guns blazed. No bulwarks crumbled. No ground shook. No blood spilled. No cries sounded. A commandment was broken. A good commandment of God was wickedly transgressed when Adam ate a piece of fruit he was commanded not to eat. Adam transgressed the covenant. Adam dealt treacherously against God. This eating was war, and war of staggering proportions, for it was man’s war against Almighty God. The conducting of warfare in human history does not begin with any physical aggression between men, but with Adam’s

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

Previous article in this series: May 15, 2015, p. 375.

spiritual assault against God in rebelling against God's commandment.

The Genesis account of "the Fall" does not describe it as warfare; nevertheless, the language of the first three chapters of Genesis implies that Adam's sin was war. First of all, that God threatened Adam with the punishment of *death* should Adam eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17) implies that eating from that tree was an act of warfare against God. For God kills His enemies. God called Joshua and Israel to kill His enemies. The Psalms speak often of God destroying His enemies. That God threatened to *kill* the law-breaker in Eden implies that the law-breaker was a warring enemy in opposition to God. Secondly, God's promise of enmity in Genesis 3:15 ("And I will put enmity...") implies Adam's sin against God was war. In order for God to save Adam, Eve, and their spiritual seed, God had to put "enmity" or war between them and the other party that consisted of the devil and his seed. God had to put war between those two parties, because through the Fall, our parents had joined an unholy alliance with the devil. The devil was at war with God. When Adam chose to obey Satan rather than God, he joined the war against God.

Wicked war! The wickedness of this warfare was not that Adam waged war against God unjustly, say, perhaps, in failing to follow some officially adopted protocol for declaring war on another party. There are no circumstances in which war against God may be justified. The wickedness was the very fact that Adam declared war against God. Adam said "Yes, I shall" to God's "Thou shalt not." Doing so, he made the infinitely good and ever-blessed God of covenant fellowship his enemy. He made his Maker in whom he lived, and moved, and had his being the object of his hatred. He was against the One who was only ever for him. Moreover, by eating that fruit Adam declared, "Honorable Satan, my wife and I would count it a privilege to be numbered with your principalities and powers and join your militaristic cause of overthrowing God, so that we can sit on the throne of the universe, determining for ourselves right and wrong." Eating a piece of fruit was not a minor slip-up. Some challenge the idea that Adam's eating was sin, and sin so serious it required death. They say Cain's murder of Abel was sin, or the great violence before the flood. But

eating a piece of fruit?! *That* is sin?! Indeed, as is every sin, Adam's eating was wicked rebellion against God.

Foolish war! What foolish pride Adam exhibited in declaring war against his good and mighty God! It was the human against the Almighty, creature against Creator, dust of the balance against the Infinite and Eternal. It would have been lesser folly for baby Moses in his tiny ark to declare war against Pharaoh and all the Egyptian hosts than for Adam to declare war against God. Pharaoh was not the God of Moses' existence.

Deadly war! God killed Adam. God always kills His enemies. His holiness and justice demands it. The moment Adam ate, he died. How? Certainly, Adam began to weaken and perish in the flesh, so that at the age of nine hundred and thirty years he would return to the dust whence he came. But his death was worse than that of four-footed beasts. Not only was Adam to know he was bound for the eternal death of hell, unless a Mediator would come (One did—gracious gospel and merciful God!), and not only was Adam banished from the garden and God's presence, but also, at the moment he turned against God in warfare by breaking God's commandment, Adam died spiritually in his entire nature. Sinning, he became guilty. Guilty, he must be punished. Punishment must be death, as threatened. Adam died spiritually when God's judgment came upon him in the corruption of his entire nature. Adam was dead in trespasses and sins. His heart became deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, teeming with hatred for God and the neighbor. He died.

Misery-inducing war! If one word could describe Adam's original life in Eden, it was pleasure (Eden means pleasure.). Pleasure is living consciously in peace with God, knowing the gentle favor of His countenance as your will conforms to His. Our Heidelberg Catechism teaches that if there is one word to describe Adam after his fall it is misery. Misery is living in the consciousness of God's wrath as your will is opposed to His. Miserable is that man who wars against the Almighty. War is so awful. For example, while in hiding in Amsterdam during the German invasion of World War II, the teenager Anne Frank wrote in her now-famous diary, "I could spend hours telling you about the suffering the war has brought, but I'd only make myself more miserable. All we can do is wait, as calmly as possible, for it to end.


Jews and Christians alike are waiting, the whole world is waiting, and many are waiting for death.” But what is the wrath of the dreadful Hitler compared to the wrath of the holy God? Knowing the Almighty God surrounds you, the guilty sinner, and is against you in His terrible judgments, is misery that truly no man or woman can tell. What misery Adam brought to himself and the garden by his eating!

God-ordained war! As we have already pointed out in previous articles, God sovereignly ordained this Fall (war). The chief reason was the occasion to magnify His own name through the revelation of His unspeakable mercy in Jesus Christ. To the dead sinner banished from the garden, God brought the hope of Jesus Christ His incarnate Son who would be sent into the world. Through His awful crucifixion under the terrible judgments of God, Jesus would atone for Adam’s sin of wicked, foolish war against God. Jesus would reconcile enemy Adam to God, so that God would not kill Adam eternally. The Spirit would resurrect Adam in the depths of his existence, giving him a new heart of love for God, and a will that loves to say, “I shall,” to God’s “Thou shalt.” Through Jesus, God would lift Adam out of all of his misery and death and ultimately to a higher life in heaven, where

Adam could enjoy a pleasurable paradise exceeding all the glory of Eden.

It is important that we know and believe the truth of the Fall. Only if we understand Adam’s eating to be the significant and dreadful event of war that it was, can we understand the redemptive work of Jesus Christ to be the significant and marvelous work of reconciliation that it is. If Adam’s eating was a minor slip-up, then the cross is a minor fix-up. If Adam’s fall was war of staggering proportions, then the cross is reconciliation of unfathomable mercy, heavenly wisdom, and the source of immeasurable benefits. For where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

But what about you and me? Why does knowing what a man did some six thousand years ago in a garden matter for us today? So what if Adam made war with God? So what if Jesus saved Adam?

We have deliberately withheld making specific application of the doctrine of the Fall as war to our own personal lives, so that the focus could be on Adam and his heart. Next time the focus will be on us and our heart as we turn to what we in catechism call “original sin.” Adam is so important for us because we were in him. His war is our war. Everything we said of Adam must be applied to us. Everything. Thankfully, his deliverance also! 

BRING THE BOOKS...

MR. CHARLES TERPSTRA, review editor

Songs of a Suffering King, J. V. Fesko. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014. Paperback, 123 pp. [Reviewed by Rev. Martyn McGeown.]

For one who loves to preach, read, and sing the Psalms, this is a delightful little book. However, this book is not only—or even mainly—for scholars and preachers. In fact, it is written for the ordinary believer who loves to read and sing the Psalms.

The greatest value of this book is the clear teaching that the Psalms—all of them—are Christocentric, that is, all of them center on Christ. Fesko explains his approach in the introduction:

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


Each chapter explores the psalm in its original historical context. In other words, what was occurring in the life of David to occasion the psalm? After establishing the original historical context, we can consider the connections to Christ. In what way does the Psalm speak of Christ? Last, after establishing the connections to Christ, we then consider the connections to the church, those who are united to Christ (9).

Fesko offers a short commentary on the first eight psalms, because the first eight psalms are a unit, with the first psalm functioning as an introduction to the whole Psalter. In several of these psalms, David is suffering, because Absalom or Saul is pursuing him. Thus the Psalms lead us to the suffering king, the Lord Jesus, for “David’s cries become those of Christ” (8). *Jesus* is the righteous man of Psalm 1, the Anointed of Psalm 2, the suffering King of the “lament psalms,” and the Son of Man of Psalm 8. Fesko offers an

interesting perspective on the place of “lament psalms” in the church, and especially in her public worship:

Often we hear of praise music and the praise team, but we never hear of a lament team. In other words, too many churches try to make worship fun, exciting and joyful, which from one vantage point is understandable. But many people in the church suffer, lack joy, and feel as though they are out of place, because of how they feel. But if churches regularly included personal laments from the Psalms in their worship, whether in preaching or congregational singing, it would signal to those who suffer that they too have a place in the church (122).

This little book is full of helpful, Christocentric exposition, clear illustrations, and pointed applications. Rather than quote further, I invite the reader to discover the book for himself. Fesko also includes further questions for discussion groups and musical arrangements so that the reader or study group can *sing* the psalms.

My only complaint is this—the little book leaves the reader longing for more. If Fesko can so beautifully explain and apply the first eight psalms, I certainly look forward to subsequent books, if they are planned, and I hope they are! 

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

MR. PERRY VAN EGDOM

Denominational Activities

Classis West was scheduled to meet Wednesday, September 30 in Edgerton, MN with the examination of Pastor-elect Ryan Barnhill taking place. An officebearers' conference centering on “The Local Church and Missions” was planned there on September 29.

Classis East convened Wednesday, September 9 at Byron Center, MI PRC. The meeting was brief, consisting mostly of routine items.

School Activities

Heritage Christian School provided a full-service restaurant at the Hudsonville, MI fairgrounds from August 24-29. Expanded and improved menu options included breakfast, lunch, supper, dessert, and snacks in the white building just inside the north pedestrian gates of the fairgrounds on all six days of the fair. That sounds like a reason in itself to attend the fair!

Eastside Christian School

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

planned their Picnic on the Patio for September 3 at First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI. The school Foundation provided a buffet meal of hamburgers, hot dogs, salads, and desserts.

The Ladies' Circle of Faith Christian School in Randolph, WI has been busy! Friday, September 4, was the date of the back-to-school singspiration, coupled with a dessert auction. The next day they hosted a brat fry/bake sale at the local Piggly Wiggly store. They also planned to host a Jog-A-Thon the evening of September 11. It is good to see evidence of the energy that is poured into our Christian schools!

The Covenant Christian High School fall festival is scheduled for Saturday, October 10. Among other happenings, freshly canned jams, jellies, and preserves will be sold at that time. A reliable source tells us the Rock River Wild Plum jam may indeed make the trip from northwest Iowa. Oh, what a plum year it was!

Young People's Activities

The Young People's Society of First PRC of Holland, MI invited

those from the area to an end-of-summer picnic fund raiser on Saturday, September 5. A delicious dinner included BBQ grilled chicken, corn on the cob, salads, and dessert. There were activities for everyone including horse-drawn hay rides.

The Young People's Society of Heritage PRC, Sioux Falls, SD invited members of the Siouxland churches to a shooting challenge held at Clay Bird Shotgun Sports just west of Sioux Falls. Men and boys (and one young lady) took turns poking holes in the sky in a friendly competition. Some did very well on a difficult course. A hot dog lunch followed, with snacks and drinks being supplied throughout the morning. Forty-eight registered shooters helped the Heritage young people earn funding for next summer's convention.

Minister Activities

Pending his successful examination by Classis West in Edgerton, MN on September 30, Pastor-elect Ryan Barnhill is looking forward to his ordination as minister of the

Word and sacraments in Peace PRC, Lansing, IL on October 9, with Prof. Barry Gritters leading the service.

On August 30 a letter was read in the morning service at the PRC of Doon, IA. This letter from Rev. C. Haak acknowledged the call that the calling church for a second missionary to the Philippines had extended to him on August 17. Rev. Haak asked for prayers on his behalf that the Lord of the harvest might clearly reveal His sovereign will as he considered this call. On September 13, it was announced in Doon PRC that Rev. Haak had declined the call.

Congregational Activities


With joy and thanksgiving to God, the congregation of Providence PRC invited those from the

area to an open house of their new building, on Saturday September 12 from 10 A.M.-2 P.M. The church is located at 1569 44th St. in Hudsonville MI. Thanks be to God for His provision of a beautiful building in which His praises may be raised!

Our denomination has launched a mobile app, available on all platforms (Apple, Android, Windows, Amazon) for phones and tablets. The app includes daily devotional content, sermons, lectures, articles, and much more. Follow the latest events and blogs to stay informed about our local church and mission updates. To download the app, go to your app store and search for "protestant reformed;" you should see the maroon shield icon. New daily content began cycling on September 1. May God use this technology for the spread of the gospel of Christ.

Young Adult Activities

Once again the Reformed Witness Committee of the area churches is sponsoring a weekly Bible study at Dordt College in Sioux Center, IA. The Young Reformers began Monday, September 14 in Dordt's classroom building, room 1316. The group is currently studying the book of Romans, but also discusses various special topics as they arise in the classroom or workplace. Area young adults are encouraged to bring friends to the meetings. The group can be found online at: <https://www.facebook.com/youngreformersatdordt>.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council of the Kalamazoo PRC extends its Christian sympathy to the Kalamazoo congregation in the passing away of our dear sister in Christ,

ELAINE TRIEZENBERG.

In our loss, may we be comforted in God's Word: "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy" (Psalm 61:2, 3).

Rev. Michael DeVries, President
Dan Kiel, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express their sincere sympathy to Marv and Melva Mastbergen in the death of their brother-in-law,

MR. PHIL LOTTERMAN.

It is our prayer that they may receive comfort from the Holy Spirit in Psalm 63:7, "Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice."

Rev. Carl Haak, President
Jerry Kuiper, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express their sincere sympathy to the Doug and Deb Altena and their children in the death of their mother and grandmother, **MRS. JOANNE ALTENA.**

We pray that they may receive comfort and assurance from the word of God in Psalm 121:1, 2, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth."

Rev. Carl Haak, President
Jerry Kuiper, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC extend their sincere sympathy to Gerald and Theresa Dykstra and their children in the passing to glory of their mother and grandmother,

MRS. MARILYN DYKSTRA.

We pray that they may receive comfort from the Psalm 116:8, 9: "For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living."

Rev. Carl Haak, President
Jerry Kuiper, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Men's and Ladies' Society of Southwest PRC expresses its Christian sympathy to Mrs. Joanne Lotterman on the passing to glory of her husband and long-time society member,

MR. PHIL LOTTERMAN.

May God's Word bring her comfort throughout the days ahead. "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Henry Kamps, President
Nancy Schipper, Secretary

Wedding Anniversary

■ With joy and gratitude to God we celebrate, D.V., the 35th anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

DICK and JANE VENEMA,

on October 10, 2015. We are thankful to God for their godly instruction. Our prayer is for God's continual blessing on them and their marriage. "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16).

❖ Todd and Bethany DeBoode

Noah, Kailyn, Micah

❖ Justin and Melissa Verburg

Cadence, Emmett, Zoey, Mira

Hudsonville, Michigan

Wedding Anniversary

■ With gratefulness to our heavenly Father for His many blessings to our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents:

JOSEPH and MARGARET FOLKERTS',

celebration of sixty-five years of marriage on October 4, 2015. God has been faithful in their marriage, faithful with the covenant and godly instruction they both provided us as their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, by their walk in life and by their many examples of unconditional love. May our Lord continue to bless them and their marriage and we continue heeding their godly examples. "Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness in unsearchable. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts" (Psalm 145:3, 4).

❖ Fred and Rose Iwema

Patrick and Margaret Alsum

Allyson, Joseph, Jason

Jared and Mary VanOverloop

Tyler, Logan, Ethan

Sarah Iwema

❖ Richard and Judith Reyenga

Stephen and Suzanne Reyenga

Colten

Joel and Laura Noorman

Madeline, Paige, Blake, Easton

Matthew and Rebecca Reyenga

Katelyn, Alyssa

Nathan Reyenga

❖ Joseph Folkerts III

Schaumburg, Illinois.

Reformed Witness Hour **October 2015**

Date	Topic	Text
October 4	"A Letter to Those Preserved"	Jude 1, 2
October 11	"Contending for the Faith"	Jude 3, 4
October 18	"Contending for the Faith (cont.)"	Jude 3, 4
October 25	"Reserved unto Eternal Fire?"	Jude 5-7

Notice

■ The September 15 issue of the *Standard Bearer* was the last issue of Volume 91. If you want your loose issues bound, drop them off at the RFPF office before October 31.

October 9, 2015

7:30 P.M.

Public Lecture:

Theistic Evolution

Should the Church Make Peace or War?

Speaker: PROFESSOR RONALD CAMMENG

Grace Community Church
1500 New Holland St.
Hudsonville, MI 49426

The teaching of the theory of Theistic Evolution is one of the most discussed teachings troubling the church today. Theistic evolutionists teach that God created all things by a process of evolution.

- Does God's Word, as it is revealed in the Bible, allow for the teaching of Theistic Evolution?
 - Does the teaching of Theistic Evolution affect the doctrines of salvation?
 - What must be the biblical and confessional response of Christians to the teaching of the theistic evolutionists?
- These and other questions regarding this controversial issue will be examined in the lecture.

For more information and live-streaming visit:

CreationOrTheisticEvolution.com

Sponsored by: Southwest PRC