

The Standard Bearer

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He Shall Give His Angels Charge Over Thee

“For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.”

Psalm 91:11

This psalm describes God’s care of His children. The shadow of the Almighty covers them (1). He is their Refuge and Fortress (2). Surely He shall deliver (3). His truth is their shield and buckler (4).

The psalm shows us that God’s care is extended toward us even when we are unaware of it. It is that great and that detailed. Our text teaches us that God’s care of us includes His use of the holy angels.

Satan used (misused) this text when tempting Jesus (Matt. 4:6). The devil (the liar) set Jesus on a pinnacle of the temple and challenged Him, “If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.”

Satan’s serious and deliberate error was that he applied God’s care to the physical realm instead of the spiritual.

If God intended angels to keep His children from dashing their foot against physical stones, then no child of God would ever stub his toe. Rather, the meaning is that God preserves His children spiritually.

The Wonderful Fact

Angels are God-created spirits (Heb. 1:7). Many did not fall into sin with Satan. These are “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb. 1:14). They are at God’s command. God gives angels a “charge,” that is, a command or a divine appointment. This command is very specific and personal: “thee,” that is, each one of God’s children. The angels are instruments that God uses to execute His beneficence for the sake of His children.

Remembering that in the old dispensation the physical and earthly were typical pictures of the spiritual and heavenly, consider the care God gave through His angel to the nation of Israel (Ex. 14:19; 23:20). Jacob received the promise of angelic care in His dream (Gen. 28:12, 15). Elisha had God open his servant’s eyes to see the angels that surrounded them (II Kings 6:16, 17). An angel of God was given to Daniel’s three friends in the fiery furnace (Dan. 3:24ff.). And God used angels for

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the sake of the imprisoned apostles (Acts 5:19; 12:7).

Whether each child of God has his own guardian angel is unclear. Some would take Matthew 18:10 to teach this as a fact. We would speak of this subject as does John Calvin, namely, that Scripture is unclear about how God cares for us through the angels; but we must be emphatically clear that God uses every means to care for His beloved children.

The care God gives to His children is *spiritual*, contrary to the devil's lie to Jesus. The word "keep" emphasizes careful attention given to the preservation of salvation in each elect child of God (cf. Ps. 121:4, 5, 7, 8). The idea is that we are kept from falling from salvation. Within us is the life of Jesus, something so precious that it is guarded/protected from being destroyed by an evil power. Just as we are given new birth, so the life of the new man in Christ is kept spiritually alive, kept from the sin unto death, and from falling into the snares of the devil (Ps. 17:8; 19:13; 25:20; 41:2; 140:4; 141:9). It is the angels' loving purpose to preserve us holy. This is the point of the angels in heaven rejoicing; their joy was because of a repenting sinner—a highly spiritual matter.

Of this divine spiritual preservation we find support in the following passages: Philippians 1:6; John 5:24; 10:27-29; II Timothy 1:12; Jude 24. Further, the Canons of Dordt describe this spiritual keeping in the Fifth Head, Articles 6 and 7. We are kept so that our election is not altered, our justification is not changed, and nothing can separate us from the love of God!

That angels bear us up in their hands (12) indicates their strength, but especially their tender care as a nurse-maid of a very little child. The picture is of God's people being helpless, spiritual infants, who have to be dealt with as such—especially over-against their adversary, the devil. The Most High Majesty condescends to spread His cherishing and protecting wings over His helpless children (4).

The Great Honor

Consider the high privilege that is yours: the Almighty God Himself is concerned for you. The "charge" (a command or divine appointment) that God gives angels is very specific and personal: take care of My children. What an honor that the holy God, the sovereign Creator, is concerned for you!

Consider the honor that this keeping is done by "his angels." They are "his angels" because they stand before Him and wait upon Him. Such honored servants of God Himself are your guard. This implies that you have more friends than you know, for when unknown forces assault you, these defenders thrust them back. When you fight in spiritual warfare, even and especially when you seem alone, then angels are at your side. Consider Elisha's personal protection at Dothan against the Syrians (II Kings 6:17). It has been said that God would sooner leave heaven empty of angels than allow any one of His children suffer defeat from the right way.

Each one of God's children is personally protected. That is the significance of the word "thee." God takes a personal interest in each one of His children. As a child of God, feel sure that this promise applies to you. As much as "thou shalt not steal" applies to you, so you are one to whom God has given His angels the charge to keep.

God's use of angels to protect His children is perpetual: "in ALL thy ways." In every situation in which His children find themselves, asleep and awake, when alone or in company, at work or play, they are protected. We always need keeping and we always have it, for the angels are charged to keep us in "all" our ways.

This great privilege is ours by Jesus Christ, for He is the ladder on whose rungs the angels go up and down (John 1:51). If Christ is yours, then the holy angels are yours and all the principalities and powers in heavenly places will delight to care for you. You are never alone, for the Lord of all the holy angels is with you. God's angels, which you cannot see nor hear, but which are most real and true, preserve you in God's saving love.

The High Calling

Angels who continually behold God's face condescend to do such humble a deed as to watch over us sinners. And the Son of God Himself made Himself of no reputation to save His people. So we learn that never are we more like the angels and Jesus than when we serve the least of God's children—even if all we do is give a cup of cold water.

How safe and happy ought we to be when we know that God's angels take care of us! We need never to be afraid, especially regarding our salvation. Because you have made the Lord, who is your Refuge and Fortress,

even the Most High, your dwelling place, you shall never be overwhelmed (9). Therefore, resort to Him and to Him alone in every trouble. Confide in no other refuge. Do not trust in anyone or anything else, especially yourself. “In him will I trust” (2).

In light of all the protection He promises, we have every reason to be thankful. How ungrateful we are if we are not satisfied with such full promises! If we are terrified at the power of our enemies and the multitude of dangers, He shows us His invincible power. If we tremble to think of His majesty, He assures us that His care is like that of a hen that tenderly covers her chicks under her wings (4). And He even informs us of the angels that are guardians of our safety to demonstrate His compassion for our weaknesses. Thank Him without ceasing! No devil can separate you from His love and no ruling of the

United States Supreme Court can destroy God’s work of salvation in you. Bless the Lord, O my soul!

How holy ought we to be with such holy beings watching over us. How would we talk and act if we knew that an angel of God was listening and watching at our side? How many things are done, which would not be done if we remembered that we had the eye of someone we love watching us?

May we know that Jehovah graciously keeps us in His holy way. And if we know that we are so kept, then may we be assured that we shall be preserved from all evil as we continue on our pilgrim’s path. We may be assured that we shall see His face with joy and abide with Him forever. Be confident of and courageous in His care, for you are more than a conqueror! Be thankful! Be holy!



EDITORIAL

PROF. RUSSELL DYKSTRA

Visiting (YOUR) Mission Fields (concl.)

Missions is the work of the church of Jesus Christ. We confess that “the Son of God from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to Himself by His Spirit and Word, out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 54). Because He accomplished the salvation of His church in His cross, and because all power was given Him in heaven and earth, the exalted Lord commissioned His church with this direct command: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to

Previous article in this series: September 1, 2015, p. 461.

observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt. 28:19-20).

In obedience to Christ’s command, *the church* calls a man and sends him out. This benefit for the work was driven home for me in my last visit to a mission field. A member of the group noted that it was a good and comforting thing to learn that Missionary Bruinsma is not on his own. He is under the authority of the consistory of Southwest PRC and the Domestic Mission Committee of the PRC. He is not a law unto himself. The mission field is governed by the church. Members of the Protestant Reformed Churches might take it for granted, but this is not the way things are run in many mission endeavors. It

is, however, the best way because it is the biblical way.

The missionary is tremendously encouraged by the reality that the work is not his, but the churches’. Acts 13 brings this out. After the Holy Spirit made plain to the church in Antioch that He called Barnabas and Paul to be missionaries, the church responded as follows: “And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away” (Acts 13:3). And then what? Did the church of Antioch forget about their missionaries? Absolutely not! They not only continued to pray for Barnabas and Paul, but they looked forward to the reports Paul brought back at the end of every missionary journey. There is the biblical pattern for today. God supplies the mission-

aries' needs through the prayers of the churches that send them.

Since mission work is the work of the churches as a whole, performed though her officebearers, clearly it is good that the members of the churches take a vital interest in the work and, if possible, visit the field. The benefits are many, both for the visitors and the mission work. Some of the benefits were set forth in the last editorial. It concluded, however, with a caution. Visiting a mission field must be done with wisdom, for it is quite possible for visitors unwittingly to harm the work. To that we turn in this editorial.

Superiority Complex

Members of the churches who decide to visit a mission work may have to fight a certain feeling of superiority over the members of the mission. In any dealings these members may have with others, this can be an issue. This is especially true for Reformed people who are born and raised in the sphere of the covenant. They have had the privilege of believing parents who taught them the Bible from infancy, and gave Reformed guidance for twenty years. They have had the benefit of years of catechism, preaching, and instruction in the Christian day schools. They have knowledge of the Reformed faith and assurance in it. They have confidence in the Reformed truth because they have tested it, and applied it to their lives. The Reformed truth (and by that I mean the truth as God has given it to the Protestant Reformed Churches) has permeated their thinking, speech, and life.

Such people come to a mission field and come into contact with people who are in various stages of spiritual growth and development. But few have that rich background in the Reformed faith. It could be easy to feel quite superior.

For most people, however, that usually does not last very long. First of all, God gives grace to fight this sin of pride. Second, it is deflated by the genuine love that the members of the mission demonstrate. One can see that these believers are in their first love for the Reformed faith. It is new, exciting, and beautiful to them. Visitors realize that though they love the Reformed faith, it is not something that stirs their souls as deeply or as often as it ought. Humility replaces the pride.

However, pride is a devil in one's soul that will only be laid to rest when we are. Visitors need to be wary of a superior attitude that makes them think they have the right or ability to pronounce approval or disapproval on what they see and hear at the mission. Visitors might well be asked questions by people attending the mission—doctrinal, or more often application-to-life questions. One feels quite honored to be asked such a question. He feels the burden that he ought to know the answer and give good advice. So, an answer is given. I have been in this situation many times in both foreign and domestic fields. In my early years in the ministry, I dove right in and gave answers. Gradually, I came to understand that this was not wise. It occurred to me that some members of a mission will ask every visiting minister the same

questions concerning some application of the Reformed faith to their situation. And, not surprisingly, the new converts receive different answers. And they hear answers sometimes that are different from the missionary's recommendation, when the missionary knows the situation far better than any visitor. That has the potential of being damaging to the work.

Thus, when visitors come to the mission, they ought to pray fervently for wisdom. And wisdom must guard the tongue throughout the entire visit. Many questions may arise in a visitor's mind—about why things are done as they are. Do hold your tongue, and ask these questions of the missionary. Because he lives there, and works with the people, he can give a certain perspective that a visitor needs, as well as answer the questions. Visitors, without realizing it, can cause division and conflict that remain after he departs, and the missionary now must deal with the stray comment, the criticism, "the answer" left by the well-meaning visitor.

Difficulties of Evaluating

Closely related to the above is the difficulty of properly evaluating the activities on the field—both in the lives of the mission members and in the work of missions itself. Consider for a moment a visit to a sister congregation in the denomination. Even there, one looks about and notices any differences from his own church. How people dress; whether the elders and deacons go into the consistory room soon after coming to church, or talk to people; piano or

organ accompaniment; the place in the liturgy where Scripture is read; recitation of the Apostles' Creed (or not); doxology, and such like. With each difference that we notice, we make an evaluation—do we prefer *their* way, or *our* way. And after the service, we begin to learn about the lives of the members of the congregation. And yet, within the PRC, very few differences of any substance will exist. There are not differences of principle, but of practice and application.

Now go to a mission field. One begins immediately to notice differences. For most of us, we are not so comfortable with changes. And we have a difficult time determining whether a difference is one of principle, or, of preference. Start with a notable difference. Most Protestant Reformed congregations have a ten-minute prelude to each worship service (and a postlude) played by the organ (or piano). Most missions (and indeed, most other churches) do not. I prefer a meditative prelude because I believe it can help my heart and soul prepare for worship. But is this Reformed to have a prelude, and is it unReformed to omit it?

To answer that question will take us off the topic some, but allow me to answer that. All surely count John Calvin in the scope of Reformed. Indeed, his liturgy followed the regulative principle and it determines what is Reformed. John Calvin had no place for a prelude, because in his congregations in Geneva the organs were dismantled and removed, with his full approval. The churches in the Netherlands

followed suit, refusing to use the beautiful pipe organs in the church buildings they had inherited from the Roman Catholics. But while the consistories could determine no musical accompaniment in the worship, they could not have the organs removed, because the magistrates owned the buildings. Whence then the prelude (and postlude)? It came because of pressure from the people. Week after week they looked at those magnificent pipe organs in their churches, silently pleading to be played. The pressure for organ music made one consistory after another agree (or perhaps it was foisted upon them) to allow the organ to be played *before* the worship services and *afterwards*. This practice was carried on in the Protestant Reformed Churches and in virtually all Dutch Reformed churches—and almost nowhere else.

So, is it *Reformed* to have a prelude? Is it a matter of principle? Obviously not. Visitors to a mission field will need to be aware of this important difference. And be charitable in making the judgment.

The same charity is needed when faced with different lifestyles, including Sunday observance, dress, entertainment, and more. The members of the mission are learning and growing—*that* is the important thing. Not whether they observe the Lord's Day exactly as the Dutch Reformed in Grand Rapids or Hull. Wisdom and charity will make visitors able to enjoy the visit and establish bonds of Christian friendship with fellow Reformed believers.

Keep in mind that one visits a mission that is comprised of the

same kinds of people as in the home congregation—sinners one and all. Both church and mission have strengths and weaknesses. If one approaches a mission with a critical attitude, it is best simply to stay home. Visitors must guard against a critical attitude toward the minister (and his family), the calling church and consistory, and the core group. Do keep in mind that a visit is only that—a time too brief to equip anyone to make serious evaluations accurately.

Foreign Missions: Special Concerns

The greatest concern for visiting a *foreign* mission is almost always the wealth of the visitor. When a group of Americans comes to a foreign field, the people there see the money that the Americans spend. They are aware that it took a considerable amount of cash even to travel to them. Yet they live in a world where a few dollars are hard to come by. Visitors must be at pains not to exacerbate this difference in economic circumstances.

Visitors, especially the youth, must keep in mind that there is a danger in reporting on a mission visit and giving an evaluation (positive or negative). I refer to the comments and pictures on Facebook, blogs, or email. These reports and comments get back to the mission.

Third, visitors to a foreign field must have an awareness of cultural differences between them and the people of the mission. Do some reading on the country generally, and some mission books on this very important matter of cultural

differences. Visitors are strongly urged to contact the missionary and his wife and ask them questions in order not to offend the people unnecessarily.

An Expert

The final danger is that you are now considered, or consider yourself, an expert on the field you visited. This happens quite easily and naturally. If no one else from your church, or society, or your group has gone to the mission, the others will look to you for an authoritative answer or evaluation on any question that arises concerning the field. This must consciously and verbally be rejected. No one is an expert on

a field after a visit. One must *live* on the field for a long time to know the core group, the area, the kind of people in the area, the difficulties, and so much more, before one is “an expert.”

And lest you think that I, by the fact that I am writing this, consider myself an expert, let me disabuse you of that notion. I know now more than I did after my first visit to a foreign field some twenty-five years ago, but I am no expert. Proof of that is that I discussed these matters with the mission professor in our seminary and with missionaries. Their contribution was invaluable. If you see some value in what I have written, it almost certainly came from them. If you see something

with little value, ascribe it to me.

But the theme and the desire came out of my heart. And that desire is to encourage members to visit mission fields. That is not possible for all, obviously. But we all can be informed through reading. We can all support it with gifts, a note of encouragement, and, most importantly, prayers. But if you can, visit, too.

And one last bit of advice—the missionary is busy doing the work God called him to do, and is not running a travel service or a hotel. Do all the arrangements you can on your own. For the rest, they will help as they are able. But visit your mission field. ☞

ALL AROUND US

REV. MARTYN MC GEOWN

■ The Irish Vote for “Same Sex Marriage”

I reside in Ireland. Therefore, it is natural that I should report on the recent “Marriage Equality Referendum” here. On May 22, 2015, Ireland became the first nation in the world to redefine (defile, profane) marriage by a popular vote in a referendum. Every other nation, including the USA (on which I will not comment), gave “marriage” rights to homosexuals and lesbians either by a majority vote of the legislature or by judicial fiat. In Ireland, the citizens chose to redefine (defile, profane) marriage in their own Constitution. Let that sink in—Ireland’s people *chose* to do this!

They chose to do this after a campaign of misinformation, propaganda, empty promises and intimidation, but they chose it, and God will hold the nation accountable for it.

Every home in Ireland was sent a copy of an “Independent Guide” from the Irish Referendum Commission. I quote from that document: “The Irish Constitution says, ‘The State...guarantees to protect the Family.... The State pledges

itself to guard with special care the institution of marriage on which the Family is founded, and to protect it against attack....” Then, the same document opines, “The Constitution does not define marriage.... The courts have decided that marriage is between a man and a woman....” Historical revisionism at its worst! Does anyone really believe that the framers of the Irish Constitution (1937) did not know what “marriage” was when they wrote the Constitution? How can the state pledge itself to “guard” and “protect” marriage, if the state does not know what marriage *is*?

Now the state, following the will of the people (or, perhaps, the people, following the propaganda of the state) believe they know what marriage is—the new wording of Article 41 of the Irish Constitution is “Marriage may be contracted in accordance with law by two persons *without distinction as to their sex*.” Opponents of the change argued passionately that this will affect other rights as well—since Article 41 is entitled “The Family,” any change to marriage affects the family itself and has all kinds of implications for the rights of children, adoption rights, surrogacy rights, and more.

But how did a traditionally Roman Catholic country become the first country in the world to make such a change by popular vote? (The Referendum passed by a majority

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[62% vs. 38%], which translates as 1,201,606 voting “yes” and 734,000 voting “no”).

First, the youth vote was extremely high—give the young people, who are usually apathetic when it comes to voting, a cause to believe in and they will vote in huge numbers. Many even returned from overseas just to vote in this “historic” referendum.

Second, the “Yes” campaign was galvanised and organised. It had the support of all the major political parties, many of the official arms of the state, the trade unions, and influential celebrities. It also had the support of foreign money, especially from American LGBT groups.

Third, the “No” campaign was small, badly organised and routinely vilified by all and sundry. There were reports of “No” posters being torn down and vandalised, for example. In the University of Limerick (UL) a debate was organised between the “Yes” and “No” side, so that both sides could be heard on campus. The Students’ Union of UL held an emergency meeting to boycott the debate—they did not want the “No” side to have a hearing at all. I attended the debate. The “No” speaker, Senator Rónán Mullen, was excellent, but the reaction to the debate and Q&A session afterwards revealed that many Irish young people respond to emotion, not logical argumentation. “Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded” (Tit. 2:6) is certainly lost on them. Do our Christian young men show sobriety of thinking so that they are different from the world?

Fourth, the message coming loud and clear from the media was “If you vote ‘No,’ you are a bigoted, hateful, discriminating homophobe.” Therefore, the shallow argument, “We want our gay friends to be happy” resonated with the Irish voter. After all, who wants people to be unhappy?

Fifth, so secularised are even the religious Irish that I dare say few, if any, would know that marriage is a picture of the relationship between Christ and His church; therefore, religious and moral arguments are lost on them. That is why the “No” side’s arguments were almost exclusively that a child needs a father and a mother and that homosexuality cannot provide that. The argument is true—and it, like the “Yes” side’s arguments, appeal to emotion—but marriage is fundamentally more than that, just as it is also more than two people (why stop at two?) loving one another. Marriage is a sacred, lifelong, one flesh union between a man and a woman because it reflects a greater, spiritual relationship—a relationship that God has defined (Ezek. 16:8; Matt. 19:4-6; Eph. 5:32). But the average Irish citizen—even the average Irish churchgoer—*does not know that*.

Sixth, and finally, the Roman Catholic church, once the moral voice of the nation, once feared by the masses, has lost her moral authority—and rightly so. Her scandalous history of sexual abuse of children by the clergy with the egregious cover-ups has made her irrelevant. Who will listen to *celibate* men who failed to protect children? What do *they* know about love and marriage?

The next step is to draw up legislation to reflect the “will of the people.” We have been assured that freedom of religion will not be affected, and that churches will not be forced to participate in same-sex unions—the change is only to civil marriage. In much of Europe, a couple are married by the state, followed by a solemnization ceremony in the church. But we were also told in 2010, when homosexuals and lesbians demanded “civil partnerships,” that they would not seek “gay marriage.” That was a lie. Time will tell how long it will take before the “marriage equality” advocates will be pushing for ecclesiastical recognition and approval.

Now *only Northern Ireland* continues to withstand the growing calls for redefining (defiling, profaning) marriage; but that is only because the majority of the Northern Ireland legislature refuses to extend the right of “same-sex marriage” to that small part of the United Kingdom (England, Scotland and Wales permit “same-sex marriage”). *Four times* the Northern Ireland assembly has voted “No.” There are vocal calls to allow a referendum in Northern Ireland also, and legal challenges are pending—why should John and Steve be recognised as “married” in England, Scotland or Wales, but not in Northern Ireland? That “logic” may well prove irresistible to the courts, and, if it does, we can expect more Ashers Bakery cases in Northern Ireland. Incidentally, Ashers Bakery, on which I reported last time, was found guilty of discrimination and an appeal is pending.

Iniquity abounds. The love of many grows cold. He that shall endure to the end shall be saved (Matt. 24:12, 13).

■ Irish Abortion Battle Heats Up

Having succeeded in changing Article 41 on the family with regard to the (legal) definition of marriage, Irish secularists have their eyes on a new target—the Eighth Amendment, which, in the Irish Constitution reads, “The State acknowledges *the right to life of the unborn* and, with due regard to the *equal right to life of the mother*, guarantees in its laws to respect, and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that

right.” Such a wording, adopted by referendum in 1983, which gives equal right to life to the unborn, is, as far as I am aware, unique in national constitutions, and would give Planned Parenthood apoplexy!

Abortion is still illegal in Ireland. However, abortion campaigners are chipping away at the law, hoping one day to repeal the Eighth Amendment. In 2013, the Irish parliament passed “The Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act,” which gives provision for abortion if the life of the mother is threatened by the pregnancy, including the controversial clause, “if the life of the mother is threatened *by the risk of suicide*.” Pressure to allow abortion in the case of fatal foetal abnormalities was resisted. All we need now are a couple of cases to test the law.

Recently, The UN Human Rights Committee strongly criticized Ireland’s “flawed” abortion laws, prompting Amnesty International to call for a change in the law. Amnesty complains that “Irish abortion laws violate human rights and are in serious breach of the country’s international obligations.”

Irish women desiring abortions travel to England/Wales, where abortion is available for any cause up to 24 weeks. How iniquitous of the UN and Amnesty to suggest that women have the “human right” to murder their own children, while ignoring the very real human right of the children, which right (for now) is protected under the Irish Constitution!

The UN and Amnesty, with their pro-death allies, will have a fierce, uphill battle, however. Ireland has a very vocal pro-life movement. It will be much, much harder to convince the Irish people that women should be permitted to murder the unborn. However, given the rapidly liberalizing trends in Irish society, we certainly cannot rule out the possibility of more concessions to the “pro death” cause.

Truly the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel (Prov. 10:12)!

■ Islamophobia Revisited

Readers of this rubric will recall the case last year, reported in the September 1, 2014 (vol. 90, p. 467) edition of the *SB*, of a preacher in Northern Ireland having a brush with the law over his islamophobic sermon—a sermon in which he strongly criticized Islam.

Pastor James McConnell of the Whitewell Metropoli-

tan Tabernacle preached on Sunday, May 18, 2014, that “Islam is heathen. Islam is satanic. Islam is a doctrine spawned in hell.” At the time, McConnell was interviewed by the police, but charges were not filed. Victory for free speech? Not so fast!

Following an official complaint by Dr. Raied Al-Wazzan of the Belfast Islamic Centre, who will be the chief witness for the prosecution, McConnell has indeed been charged under the 2003 Communications Act with “sending, or causing to be sent, by means of a public electronic communications network, a message or other matter that was grossly offensive.” Dr. Al-Wazzan found McConnell’s sermon “grossly offensive.” Therefore, McConnell will stand trial. If found guilty, McConnell faces up to six months in prison.

At the time, I expressed concerns about McConnell’s sermon. However, I stand behind his freedom of speech. If “grossly offensive” (whatever that means) speech is not protected, what is the point of freedom of speech?

Moreover, in a strange twist, Dr. Al-Wazzan is the same man who infamously remarked about ISIS, “Since the Islamic State took over, it [Mosul in Iraq] has become the most peaceful city in the world.... Yes, there are other things going wrong there...they are murdering people, I agree, but you can go from east to west of the city without fear.”¹ Dr. Al-Wazzan later apologized for his remarks, but I am sure the Christians of Mosul—if there are any left—would not agree that they can walk across the city without fear. But, never fear, because if men like Dr. Al-Wazzan and his liberal sympathizers get their way, the streets will be safe from those dangerous evangelical septuagenarian preachers, and we will have to be much more careful about what we broadcast on the Internet!

■ Think Before You Share

Many Christians are on Facebook, and it is very easy to share news. But is what you are sharing *really* news, or is it misleading or even misinformation? That is Ed Stetzer’s warning in *Christianity Today* with his article, “An Embarrassing Week for Christians Sharing Fake News.”²

¹ <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/muslim-who-praised-is-drove-case-against-satanic-islam-sermon-belfast-pastor-mcconnell-31365308.html> (accessed July 18, 2015).


² <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/july/embarrassing-week-for-christians-sharing-fake-news.html> (accessed July 18, 2015).

“It is YOUR job—yes YOURS—to check the facts. Yes, these websites should do that as well, but most are more concerned with gaining your page view than growing your credibility.”

And if you have been duped into sharing misinformation, Stetzer’s advice is clear: “Post a retraction.” “It’s not that hard,” he assures us. “It will sting a little bit because

you’ll have to admit you were wrong, but it’s good for you. I promise.”

And what did I do when I read Stetzer’s article? I posted it on Facebook, of course!

A good reminder for us all—reread LD 43 of the Heidelberg Catechism. 

SPECIAL ARTICLE

PROF. RONALD CAMMENGA

The Minister and His Marriage (2)

Marriage of the Clergy

The Reformers encouraged the clergy to marry and repudiated Rome’s unbiblical requirement of clerical celibacy. Both Luther and Calvin repeatedly blasted Rome and her pope for making this commandment of men a command of God. Calvin did so in a sermon preached on Monday, October 2, 1559 in Geneva. The sermon text was Genesis 2:22-24. The title of the sermon was, “The Inviolable Union of Adam and Eve, God’s Will for All Time.” In the course of the sermon, Calvin said that we must not

approv[e] what they call celibacy, that is, abstaining from marriage, as do priests, monks, and nuns. Now there is a great difference between celibacy and true chastity, for we see that there are dissolute people living in all impurity and filthiness, who pride themselves in being more excellent than others and belonging to an angelic condition because they have set themselves apart and hold marriage in abomination.¹

Luther was as vehement in his opposition to celibacy as a requirement imposed on the clergy, which requirement had no basis in sacred Scripture. In “An Open

¹ John Calvin, *Sermons on Genesis Chapters 1-11*, trans. Rob Roy McGregor (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), 198.

Prof. Cammenga is professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary. This is the second installment of the address that was given on the occasion of the graduation of Candidate Mr. Ryan Barnhill from the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary on June 11, 2015.

Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation” he wrote:

Furthermore, I advise that henceforth neither at his consecration to the priesthood nor at any time shall anyone under any circumstances promise the bishop to live in celibacy, but shall declare to the bishop that he has no authority to demand such a vow, and that to demand it is the devil’s own tyranny.... But as regards the wretched multitude who now sit in shame and heaviness of conscience because their wives are called “priests’ harlots” and their children “priests’ children” I will not withhold my faithful counsel nor deprive them of the comfort which is their due.... Not every priest can do without a woman, not only on account of the weakness of the flesh, but much more because of the necessities of the household. If he, then, may have a woman, and the pope grants him that, and yet may not have her in marriage,—what is that but leaving a man and a woman alone and forbidding them to fall? It is as though one were to put fire and straw together and command that it shall neither smoke nor burn. The pope has as little power to command this, as he has to forbid eating, drinking, the natural movement of the bowels, or growing fat.²

Both Luther and Calvin lived exemplary lives in marriage. Each loved the wife that God gave him. The cordial, even fun-loving relationship that Luther and

² Martin Luther, “An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation,” in *Works of Martin Luther (The Philadelphia Edition)*, Volume II (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, repr. 1982), 121-22.

Katie had comes out in Luther's *Table Talk*. He teased her—mercilessly at times—teasing that belied his love for her. Calvin's marriage did not last ten years. He was grief-stricken when Idelette died, and nearly despaired. In a letter written to Farel, dated April 11, 1549, Calvin wrote: "Intelligence of my wife's death has perhaps reached you before now. I do what I can to keep myself from being overwhelmed with grief. My friends also leave nothing undone that may administer relief to my mental suffering."³

Both Luther and Calvin considered their wives to be of tremendous help in carrying out their callings, not only by assisting them in their work as pastors, but by freeing them up to do their work. After Idelette's death, in a letter to Pierre Viret, Calvin said of her that "[d]uring her life she was the faithful helper of my ministry. From her I never experienced the slightest hindrance [in the work]."⁴ Many of us who are in the twilight of our careers look back with profound gratitude to God on account of what our wives have been to us and done for us in our ministries. How important is the minister's wife to his work in the gospel ministry! For my part, if I were to promote the creation of a fourth office in the church—I speak as a fool—it would not be doctor of theology or evangelist or deaconess; it would be "minister's wife." So critical a role do I judge the minister's wife to play in assisting her husband in carrying out his calling. Her contribution to the effectiveness of her husband's ministry cannot be overstated. Generally, a congregation that loves the minister's wife will also love and be longsuffering toward her minister. But a minister's wife who does not conduct herself in a wise and honorable way, and is not content to stay in the background, who is outspoken and opinionated, or worse, is a busybody and a gossip, who watches the soap operas and the gameshows on television all afternoon, or who is constantly on the computer involved in "social networking," or who is continually out shopping or socializing, who does not keep her house in order and her children cared for properly—such a wife hurts not just herself, but hurts her husband—hurts immeasurably his effectiveness in the congregation.

³ John Calvin, *Letters of John Calvin*, compiled by Jules Bonnet (1858 ed.; repr., New York: Burt Franklin, 1972), 2:218.

⁴ John Calvin, *Letters*, 2:216.

Which Comes First? The Minister's Wife, or the Church?

Sometimes the question is asked, "Does the church come first? Or, does the minister's marriage and wife come first?"

The answer to that question is, "Yes!" Yes, in a very real sense, both are first. And it is not correct to pit the one over against the other. The minister must pray for the wisdom to make proper judgments so that neither his marriage nor the church suffers on his account.

From a certain point of view, of course, the church must be first in the minister's life. Jesus says in Luke 18:29, 30, "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifest more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting." If this is true of the Christian man generally, it certainly must be true of the minister of the gospel. Certainly, no faithful minister who has made plans with his family for some Friday evening and receives an emergency call about a parishioner who has been involved in a serious car accident, or is informed of the sudden death of one of the members of his congregation, or is contacted about some other genuine emergency, will hesitate to drop whatever he is doing, explain the situation to an understanding wife, and devote himself to this pastoral situation for as long as is necessary.

On the other hand, it is also true that a man's marriage is of utmost importance and the example of his marriage in the church cannot be stressed too greatly. The minister who allows his work in the church regularly to interfere with time spent with his wife and children, who is always in his study, at some meeting, or leading a class or a society in the church, sins against his wife. He is not being a husband to the wife God has given him. It is with the minister as it is with a Christian husband and father, that the best thing that a father can do for his children is to love their mother. So also the best thing that a pastor can do for the church is to love his wife.

The Minister's Calling with regard to His Wife

As regards the minister's calling toward his wife, the apostle makes plain when he says in I Timothy 3:2 that he

is to be “the husband of one wife.” He is to be a husband to his wife. What does that include?

From the outset it is worth noting that the Reformed have never understood this qualification of elders, whether ruling or teaching elders, to mean that the minister *must be* a married man. Rather, they have understood the apostle to teach that if he is married, he must be the husband of one wife. There have been a good number of faithful ministers of the gospel who have been unmarried. The apostle Paul was single and wished that “all men were even as I myself,” although he recognized that “every man hath his proper gift of God” (I Cor. 7:7). Augustine was single. J. Gresham Machen, a founding father of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, was single. Our churches have had a number of students who graduated from seminary and began their ministries as single men. A number of our current students are unmarried. So far as I know, they are looking for wives, as indeed they should be. Most ministers need the help and support of a godly, committed wife. But this is not an absolute requirement for the ministry. The requirement of the text is to be understood in such a way that, if a man is married, he must then be the husband of one wife.

You, graduate, are a married man. In His goodness, God has given you a dear wife and helpmeet. And together God has given you two children. You will begin your ministry, the Lord willing, as the husband of one wife. Your calling, now, is to be a husband with all that that implies to the one wife that God has given you. Be the kind of husband that Scripture calls you to be: a genuine, godly, Christ-like husband.


Negatively, do not be a tyrant, a domineering master, a cruel lord, who dictates orders to his wife and expects her to kowtow to his every demand. There are, as you know, husbands like that in the church. There are ministers who treat their wives that way. Shame on them! And they often justify that attitude and behavior, of course, just as the members do when they are guilty of such mistreatment of their wives. “I am her head, after all,” they will say when defending themselves from criticism of the way in which they treat their wives. “She is supposed to be subject to me. The Bible says that Sarah called Abraham her lord.”

At times, even when the minister does not treat his wife in an overbearing manner, he is nevertheless de-

meaning of her, scolding her like a school girl in front of their children and even in front of others, belittling and embarrassing her. This is abuse that is condemned by Scripture. No Christian man, and certainly no minister of the gospel, ought ever to treat his wife in this way. She is not his servant. She is his wife, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, one flesh with him. The minister who treats his wife in this way sins grievously against her.

But, positively, the minister is called to be a husband to his wife, a husband to his one wife. That means, first of all, that he is to regard his wife as the one wife that God has given to him. She is the one wife whom God has specially prepared as his perfect complement, the one wife whom God has prepared to be his helpmeet. This morning in your *Practica* exam, you said that your wife is “your treasure.” That is the proper perspective to take; never forget that; always have that regard for her, that she is your treasure. She is the treasure that God has graciously given to you.

Second, being a husband to your one wife means that you must be *faithful* to her. That certainly is at the top of the list of what it means to be a husband to her, that you are faithful to her. Faithfulness is demanded of the minister in every aspect of his life. Faithfulness is especially demanded of the minister in his marriage. We are all weak, we ministers, too. You must never put yourself in a position in which you may be tempted to compromise your faithfulness to your wife. You must never put yourself in a position in which you could be unfaithful to the one wife that God has given you. Being a husband to her includes that you are faithful to her.

A word of caution is in order here in connection with your labors with the women of the church. You must always be above reproach. That is what it means to be “blameless.” Paul says that “a bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife...” (I Tim. 3:2a). You must never give occasion for any to bring an accusation against you. When the women of the church come to see you, leave your study door open, and make sure that your wife is with you in the house. Or, when meeting with the women of the church, insist that an elder be present. The minister ought not to meet with the women alone. A word of caution is in order: “let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (I Cor. 10:12). 

Upon This Rock (20)

Robbing Christ of His Honor (12)

How does the *Levitical system* figure into the proclamation of the gospel to the Gentile world? That, we said, was the practical problem that waited still for solution. And it was to the apostle *Peter* that that mystery was revealed.

For Peter it was the question of how to respond to the request of one Gentile and his acquaintances. But the implications were far broader. For the *church*, it was the question of how to be obedient to Christ's command to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth. Paul was already waiting, as it were, in the wings. For the ascended Lord had already said concerning him that he was a "chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15). Cornelius was but "the vanguard of the great army of Gentiles that soon entered the church" (Lenski). An incredible turn of events this would be for the church—one that could never even have gotten off the ground had there not been a removal first of the kind of scruples of conscience that would lead one of the *apostles* to say, "Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation" (10:28).

Those were the words of Peter to the gathering of Gentiles in the home of Cornelius. Truth is, there was no specific prohibition to that effect in the Mosaic law, but, as Jamieson puts it, "intimate social fellowship [between Jew and unpromised Gentiles] was not practiced, as being adverse to the spirit of the law."

Which explains Peter's repeated objections, and very likely *distress*, at the outset. *Three times*, the vision of the sheet let down from heaven containing all manner of beasts and creeping things and fowls of the air. And *three times*, much to Peter's dismay (to say nothing of abhorrence), the command "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." Peter's instinctive reaction, therefore, was "Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten any

thing that is common or unclean." In fact, *twice* repeated—in spite of the admonition "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common" (Acts 10:11-16).

Peter knew well that the ceremonial distinction between clean and unclean animals had application to the world of *people*, but he needed still to be nudged through the 'door' that was being opened before him. Before he had time to process the vision, three men from Cornelius arrived at his gate. And the Spirit assured him that he could accompany them, "doubting nothing, for I have sent them" (10:19-20).

So Peter went. But not by himself. He arranged to have with him six brethren (11:12), to serve as witnesses for what he correctly perceived would be a truly momentous development—to say nothing about its being also potentially divisive.

On his arrival, Peter found a room full of people—Gentiles, all!—waiting for him. These Gentiles, Peter knew, were well aware of the exclusiveness that characterized the Jewish religion, for the Jews made no secret of their refusal to have fellowship with Gentiles. Peter, therefore, set this matter to rest right at the beginning. He says, in effect, that those were *his* scruples too—until the day before yesterday, when God showed to him that he must "not call any man common or unclean" (10:28). Yes, any *man*. Strictly speaking, the vision was about the mingling of clean and unclean *animals*, not *men*. But Peter had gotten the point.

The climax of the Spirit's instruction of Peter on this occasion remained still to come, but Peter had obviously already made significant progress. We read that he "opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive [that is, I have it demonstrated before my very eyes] that God is no respecter of persons [that is, is not partial to the Jews merely because they are Jews]: but *in every nation*, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (10:34-35). *That*, I say, is progress. It may be "the veriest truism to us," writes F.F. Bruce, "but it was a revolutionary revelation to Peter." Think of it: Gentiles—

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Previous article in this series: June 2015, p. 396.

uncircumcised Gentiles—on an equal footing with the Jews! What, then, of *this*, from Genesis 17: “This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.... He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant” (vv. 10-14)? Doesn’t sound at all ‘time-bound,’ does it?

But it was. Indeed a “revolutionary revelation”—even for the apostles. Writes Lenski: “Even *they* needed much time to recognize that all the ceremonial laws were only temporary, intended only for the old covenant, in force only until the Messiah should come, and not the divine will for all time.” That was precisely the lesson to be learned from Peter’s vision. From heaven itself came word that the ceremonial laws were abrogated: “What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common” (10:15).

Truth be told, God never was a “respector of persons.” The Jews should have known that. It was clear already from their first Passover. The angel of death ‘passed over’ their houses in the land of Egypt, not because the occupants were ‘children of Abraham,’ but because of the blood on their doorposts. Looking past the ‘heart’ of that type, they came to believe that the Gentiles, unless they became Jews through proselytism, would forever be outside the kingdom. In other words: God is a “respector of persons.”

“Begin not,” said John the Baptist to the multitude of Jews who flocked to hear him in the wilderness, “to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham” (Luke 3:8). In other words: “God is *not* a respector of persons.”

This is the “mystery” of which Paul wrote to the Ephesians: “that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel”—a mystery not understood in ages past, but made known now by the Spirit (Eph. 3:3-6). To Peter first of all. “Of a truth I perceive [now!] that God is no respector of persons.”

Then, to the Gentiles gathered before him, Peter preached *Christ*. “To him give all the prophets witness,

that through his name *whosoever believeth in him* shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:34-43).

“Whosoever believeth in him.” Out of the conviction of his *soul*, Peter said that. But then there was that vexing question: Is that really *all* of it? For the Gentile world, is it really faith *alone*? What about...*circumcision*? Must Peter’s preaching here lead to the *proselytizing* of Cornelius and his acquaintances? Or to...*baptism*?

Next to Peter at the moment were the six men who had accompanied him from Joppa. “Brethren,” they are called (11:12), that is, fellow *believers*. Interestingly, it is also said of them that they were “of the circumcision” (10:45), that is, of those who believed that circumcision was a *necessity* for membership in the church. The seven of them had already entered the house of, and were having fellowship with, non-proselytized Gentiles. And what they found there was unmistakable evidence of spiritual receptivity for the proclamation of the gospel. In other words, *faith*. Faith—in the *uncircumcised*. How, now, will Peter and his six companions respond to *that*? Will they administer baptism—the sign of the washing away of sins by the blood of Jesus, and a receiving of those baptized into the fellowship of the church?

“What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.” Already, no doubt, Peter was beginning to understand that the vision of the mixture of clean and unclean animals *implied* a removal of all distinction between Jew and Gentile. So easy it is for Christians who live 2,000 years after Pentecost to confess with our Belgic Confession, Article 25, that “the ceremonies and figures of the law ceased at the coming of Christ, and that all the shadows are accomplished, so that the use of them must be abolished amongst Christians; yet the truth and substance of them remain with us in Jesus Christ, in whom they have their completion.” Not so easy for Peter, who was just beginning to get a hold of that concept. Twenty centuries of the Old Testament saints’ living under the *necessity* of circumcision could not be swept aside by an implication.


God, therefore, spoke again. This time not in words but in deed. “While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word” (10:44). They spoke with tongues. And they magnified God (10:36). Just like the 120 Jews who were gathered in the upper room on the day of Pentecost.

Gentiles! *Uncircumcised* Gentiles! Peter's companions, we read, were astonished (10:45). Just a few minutes earlier, these six men "of the circumcision" would have been loath to consider these Gentiles *brethren*. But God had spoken. Not Peter, but God, had broken down the middle wall of partition and "made both [Jew and Gentile] *one*" (Eph. 2:14). Those who were before "far off are made nigh by the *blood of Christ*" (2:13). The evidence was before their very eyes. When, therefore, Peter asked, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" no one thought to object. Peter had it exactly

right when, on returning to Jerusalem and having to face serious objections to what he had done in Caesarea, he concluded his defense with these words: "What was *I*, that I could *withstand God*?" (11:17).

Centuries of prejudice. Dislodged in a moment. By the Master Teacher.

How? Not in the *abstract*, as a doctrinal truth, but *practically*, by the *event itself*.

Such, as we saw earlier, was the Spirit's method of instruction. And nothing, I think, better illustrates the wisdom of it than does His revealing to the church the mystery of the salvation of Gentiles. 

Fight we must, constantly, without rest. Every child of God is a soldier of Jesus Christ, called as were the Levites of old to *war the warfare of the Lord*. And every office bearer must know that as he takes office he *enters into that warfare*.

It is a warfare *for* God, *against* Satan. It is a participation in the war which God himself wages against Satan, and which God's holy angels wage against Satan's angel-hosts. The war of the world against the King of glory. The war of the spirit against the flesh. War within us and without. War which emanates from God and is directed against the might of Satan, the world, death, sin, deceit, and the lusts of the flesh.

Therefore it is a war of every one who is anointed with the Holy Spirit. He must fight with Christ, for Christ, and under the leadership of Christ.

...It is evident, then, that there can be no true zeal for the church without spiritual warfare against sin.

Zeal for the church, however pious it may appear to be, is abominable hypocrisy if it goes hand in hand with neglect of spiritual warfare against such enemies of God as lying, uncleanness, self-righteousness, cold-heartedness.

Some there are who pretend to be faithful watchmen upon Zion's walls but harbor such sins in their own hearts, or overlook them in their children and fellow-church members.

They are *unfaithful*.

For they allow the enemy free play within. They cry out against the danger of the wolf howling outside the walls, while a pack of wolves is busily devouring the sheep within!

This is not real devotion to the cause of Christ. Nor does it reveal true faith.

Dr. Abraham Kuyper in the chapter titled "The Church of Jesus Christ" (and the section headed by "Fighting the Good Fight"), found in *The Practice of Godliness*, (translated and edited by Marian M. Schoolland; Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1948), 57-58.

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

MR. PERRY VAN EGDOM

Mission Activities

Prof. Ronald Cammenga and his wife Rhonda arrived in the Philippines on August 12 and stayed for about two weeks. Prof. Cammenga preached in the PRC of Bulacan and the Berean PRC as well as presented three speeches on the "Life and The-

ology of John Calvin" during a one-day conference held in the Provident Christian Church of Marikina on August 21. A one-day conference was also held on the island of Negros Occidental on August 18.

After the second service in Doon, IA PRC on August 16, Jim and Brenda Regnerus showed the congregation of the calling church the photos of their recent trip to the Philippines. The delegation

reported a positive experience and an enjoyable trip. Seminarian Stephan Regnerus spoke a word of edification to his home congregation in Doon on August 9, and also testified of the benefit to him of his summer stay in the Philippines, along with a side trip to Singapore. Stephan had the privilege of conducting the worship services in Provident Christian Church of Marikina and the Berean PRC.

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

He also had the opportunity to visit Corregidor Island and even traveled to Gabaldon, the former mission church of the Berean PRC. Stephan stayed overnight with Brother Lando in his residence next to the Gabaldon church building while in the area. Although it was discussed, Stephan did not make serious work of the opportunity to ride a carabao, also known as the “Philippine Tractor.” Maybe next time.

Jack and Joyce Lenting along with Dewey and Elaine Vander Noord from Crete, IL PRC spent a few days with the Kleyns in early August.

Young Adult Activities

First PRC of Edmonton, AB, Canada hosted a Young Adult Retreat in early August. Twenty-four young adults from Edmonton, Grand Rapids, MI, Lacombe, AB, Holland, MI, Hull, IA, Randolph, WI, and Redlands, CA stayed at the Goldeye Retreat Center near Nordegg, Alberta from August 3 through 5. Two speeches on “God’s Personal Knowledge of Us” and “Our Personal Knowledge of God” were given by Rev. Thomas Miersma and Rev. John Marcus. Following the speeches the group met together to discuss some practical aspects of knowing God. The Young Adults enjoyed the beautiful scenery of the Canadian Rockies, including Lake Louise, Moraine Lake, and Crescent Falls. On the last day of the retreat the group took an eight-mile hike up to Allstones Lake and a nearby peak to enjoy a dazzling view of God’s

creation. A good time of fellowship was enjoyed by all. Sounds like a wonderful event!

Save the date! Calvary PRC in Hull, IA, with a committee comprised of members from our Midwest churches, plans to host a Young Adult Retreat August 15-18, 2016. More details will be available soon. We hope to see you in northwest Iowa then!

Minister Activities

At a special congregational meeting held August 17, the calling church for the Philippine mission field issued a call for a second missionary. The men of the Doon, IA PRC called Rev. Carl Haak, pastor at Georgetown PRC, Hudsonville, MI to this work. May God grant clear guidance to Rev. Haak as he considers this call and also the call to serve his present congregation at Georgetown.

Rev. Joshua Engelsma and his wife Courtney shared the exciting news of the birth of twin boys on August 19! Caleb John and Jacob Dewey and their mother are all well. We express thanksgiving to God for covenant sons added to the family and the church, and for preserving mother and babies throughout the pregnancy in His never failing care!

Young People’s Activities

The 2015 Young People’s Convention took place the week of August 9, hosted by Southeast PRC of Grand Rapids, MI and held at Michindoh Conference Center in Hillsdale, MI. Rev. Ken Koole, Rev. William Langerak, and Rev. Martin

McGeown were the featured speakers, centering on “The Man-Eating Lion Survival Guide” under the theme “Be Vigilant,” taken from I Peter 5:8. The reports by those who attended and participated are that it was a most profitable week with good behavior, great fellowship, and fun together, as well as a time for solid instruction and good discussions. A first-time conventioneer deemed the experience “awesome,” and another attendee said that the convention gets better each year, even with turtles in the girls’ cabins. Next year’s convention will be hosted by Grace and Wingham congregations.

Sister Church Activities

The Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church located in the country of Singapore looks forward to celebrating God’s goodness to them in their twenty-eighth anniversary on September 20.

Seminary Activities

Classes in our seminary began September 1. Five classes were offered to interested auditors. These classes were Dogmatics and New Testament History (Cammenga) and Ancient Church History, Hermeneutics, and History of Dogma (Dykstra). Nine junior students resumed their studies this semester along with three first-year students—Matt Kortus, Jacob Maatman, and Darren Vink.

Congregational Activities

A thoughtful and interesting announcement in one of our church bulletins read: “For those who

require a Gluten-free diet, there will be a few pieces of separately wrapped Gluten-free bread on each communion plate for you to take

during the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. If you do not require a Gluten-free diet, please leave the wrapped pieces for those who do."

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

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of the Loveland PRC express Christian sympathy to Tim and Mary Bertsch and their family in the death of her mother,

MRS. LORRAINE COLLMANN

Psalm 116:15: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

Rev. Steven Key, President
Victor Solanyk, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Loveland PRC express Christian sympathy to Max and Virginia Moore and their family in the death of his mother,

MRS. LETHA MAE MOORE

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1).

Rev. Steven Key, President
Victor Solanyk, Clerk

Wedding Anniversary

■ With thankfulness to God we rejoiced with our parents,

JONATHAN and FLORETTA ENGELSMA,

on the occasion of their 40th wedding anniversary on August 1, 2015. We are thankful for their godly example and for the years that God has given them together to raise their children in the fear of His name. Psalm 103:17: "But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children."

- Sydney and Kellie Aardema
- ❖ Dan and Kate VanUffelen
Jake, Emma, Dirk, Ruby, Hazel, Lucy
- ❖ Jared and Dena Dykstra
Joelle, Quinton, Libby, Lyla
- ❖ Mitchell and Melissa Schimmel
Levi, Madison
- ❖ Dan and Jori Kuiper
Micah, Miriam, Reuben, Gideon
- ❖ Marc and Andrea Velthouse
Maya, Hailey, Jade, Emerson
- ❖ Matthew Engelsma

Grand Rapids, Michigan

Wedding Anniversary

■ With joy and gratitude to our heavenly Father we celebrated the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

PETER and DOROTHY VANDER SCHAAF,

on August 14, 2015. What a privilege to have been given a home where love for our Lord and Savior is at the center of all that is done and the instruction given. We pray that God will continue to bless their marriage and all that they do. "As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of host.... Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death" (Psalm 48:8a, 13-14).

- ❖ Eric and Jessica VanDyke
Aaron, Reece, Luke, Aiden,
Claire, Garret
- ❖ Dee VanDer Schaaf
- ❖ Jon and Katie VanOverloop
Calvin, Anthony, Nikolas, Joel, Asher
- ❖ Dowie and Rebecca VanDerSchaaf
Danielle, Carly, Morgan,
Peter, Lincoln
- ❖ Brian and Audrey Decker
Leah, Caleb, Paige, Ella
- ❖ Jim and Susan VanBaren
Carson, Treyton, Teegan, Ezra
- ❖ Casey and Sara Baas
Eden, Theo
- ❖ Thomas VanDerSchaaf and
Katy Barber (fiancée)

Jenison, Michigan

Wedding Anniversary

■ With thankfulness to our heavenly Father, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the marriage of our parents,

PHILIP and BARBARA DYKSTRA, on August 6, 2015. We are grateful that, by God's unfailing grace, they have nurtured us by their godly example, prayerful guidance, and faithful covenant instruction. We rejoice that God has used them for good in our family and in the body of Christ. We pray that God will continue to keep them in His care and bless them in His love as they continue on in their marriage.

"Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations" (Deuteronomy 7:9).

- ❖ Calvin and Kristin Dykstra,
Lydia, Abigail, Brianna
- ❖ Rev. William and Karen Langerak
Jared and Lisa Langerak,
Charlotte, William
Justin and Jessica Langerak
Katrina and fiancé Alex Kaiser
Jason, Dorothy, Stephen
- ❖ Randall and Heather Dykstra
Caleb, Carter, Travis, Hannah,
Audra, Cole
- ❖ Mark and Vicki Cnossen
Jeremy, Ashley, Ethan
- ❖ Dan and Jean Bylsma
Brittany, Nickolas, Braydan, Natalie
- ❖ Terry and Tracy Dykstra
Collin, Amber, Andria, Grant
- ❖ Jordan and Rachel Dykstra
Luke, Callie, Ava, Liam

Hudsonville, Michigan

Wedding Anniversary

■ "Praise God from whom all blessings flow..."
On September 19, 2015, our parents and grandparents,

GLENN and BETTY KOTMAN,
will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. We rejoice with them and pray that He will continue to bless them in their marriage. "I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations" (Psalm 89:1).

- ❖ Matt and Jodee VanOverloop
Collin, Annika, Kenton, Ella
- ❖ Jeff Kotman
- ❖ Brian and Trisha Kotman
Brayden

Hudsonville, Michigan

Seminary Convocation

■ September 16, at 7:30 P.M., in Southwest PRC. Prof. Cammenga will be giving the address. An Open House at the Seminary will follow. (New drive off Scenic River Drive.)

Men, women, young people—you are all
cordially invited to attend the
Reformed Free Publishing Association's
ANNUAL MEETING

Rev. Richard Smit will speak on
*"The Role of Reformed
Literature in Reformed Missions"*

September 24, 2015, at 7:30 p.m.
Trinity Protestant Reformed Church

This meeting provides the opportunity for men to join the Association.

October 9, 2015

7:30 P.M.

Public Lecture:

Theistic Evolution

Should the Church Make Peace or War?

Speaker: PROFESSOR RONALD CAMMENGA

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