

# *The Standard Bearer*

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# The Confession That Jesus Is Lord

Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost.

I Corinthians 12:3

In this verse of Holy Scripture we have the fundamental rule of the gospel. By this rule one who is of Christ is distinguished from him who is not of Christ, and the one born of the Spirit from him who is not born of the Spirit. This rule is never set aside. It holds true today and also will be true in the final judgment. By this rule incision is made among men as they come into contact with the gospel. One cannot escape the sharpness of the Word of God, which is sharper than any two-edged sword.

Of this fundamental principle of the truth the believer must have spiritual understanding. Because we are by nature in darkness (v. 2, "Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led."), we must understand that the one, essential gift of saying that Jesus is Lord is the fruit of the operation of

the Spirit. The gift of the Spirit is first and absolutely indispensable. Without Him there is no knowledge and confession that Jesus is Lord. And without that spiritual knowledge and confession there are no other gifts of wisdom, knowledge, and faith.

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit (v. 4). There are differences of administration, but the same Lord (v. 5). By that one Spirit we must know the one Lord in order that through Him we may know the one God, which worketh all in all (v. 6).

The form of this confession is presented negatively to emphasize that there is no exception. There are only two possibilities comprehending all of life from the spiritual point of view. You either call Jesus accursed or you say He is Lord. The two are mutually exclusive; it is either-or. Therefore, you either speak without the Spirit of God, or you speak by the Holy Spirit. This is presented in a striking way, in the form of two names (not apparent in the KJV). The first is "Accursed Jesus," meaning that Jesus is the One doomed to perdition, implying that He is not even to be acknowledged. The second is "Lord Jesus," meaning that Jesus is our Sovereign, our Guardian, whom we acknowledge as such. You either speak by the Holy Spirit and say, "Lord Jesus," or you speak not by the Holy Spirit and say, "Accursed Jesus."

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The implications of the name Lord Jesus are that He is Jehovah-Salvation, come to save His people from their sins. He is the everlasting and unchangeable God of His covenant, come to tabernacle with His own. He is the only begotten Son of God, who humbled Himself for those whom the Father had given Him from before the foundation of the world. He bore for all His own the curse of the law and paid their debt.

Further implied is that He is the Lord from heaven, revealed as Lord in that, though He descended into hell, His soul was not left in hell. He struggled against death and He overcame. He entered captivity and took it captive, and died in order to kill death. As such, He was exalted, raised to glory and seated at the Father's right hand. There He received the name that is above every name in order that with the power and authority given Him of His Father He might gather His elect church by His Spirit and Word, subdue all His and His people's enemies under His feet, and finally come the second time to usher in the everlasting order of His glorious kingdom in the new heavens and earth. All this we mean when we confess that Jesus is Lord.

The opposite is "Jesus Accursed" or "Anathema." By this name, you say that this same Jesus, whom God has exalted to be Lord, is to you accursed. You deny Him, lie about Him, and call Him one who is doomed to hell, thereby acknowledging that the devil is your lord. You are, then, of the many that say "Lord, Lord," while your boast is not in Him, but in your own works. This is the speech of natural man, for no man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed. The former is the speech of the child of God, for no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Spirit.

The character of this confession is very specific, while the church world today is not specific. They are so broad-minded and doctrinally indifferent that they think anyone can make this confession. They tell us to forget our differences, break out of our narrow confines, and unite on the basis of this broad confession that Jesus is Lord. They encourage us to help Jesus realize His Lordship by ridding the world of all evil so that all will join us in this confession. But the Lord Jesus of the text is God's Lord Jesus—not the one of man's imaginations, but Jehovah-Salvation. He is not the Lord of man's making, but the Lord whom God has exalted. Who He is and what He

is the Scriptures make plain abundantly and in minute detail.

This confession is also all-comprehensive, for when you confess that Jesus is Lord you really need say nothing else; you have said it all by implication. You confess your sin, darkness, total depravity, and utter hopelessness in self. You also confess God's almighty and free grace, rooted in sovereign election, and revealed in the gift of His only begotten Son incarnate. And with that you confess His cross of atonement, His resurrection, His ascension, His outpouring of the Spirit, His return in judgment, and His resurrection of the body and life everlasting.

Moreover, this confession is personal. The text uses the form of direct quotation: you say, a man says—"Lord Jesus." Thus you confess Him to be *your* Lord. That He is Lord over your soul and body, over all the relationships in your life, and over all your possessions. He is Lord over the devil and your enemies. When they attack, you confide in Him. He is your Lord in time and in eternity, in adversity and prosperity, in life and in death. He owns you, loves you, cares for you, protects you, dwells in you, and prepares a place for you. Therefore, you *say* this. Your very confession acknowledges that it is the fruit of the exercise of His Lordship that causes you to know Him as Lord. You speak very clearly in your conversation and walk, not with empty words while your heart is far from Him, but from the heart by a true faith.

Such a confession is impossible for the natural man. He is blind to his darkness, poverty, nakedness, corruption, and guilt. Thus, he is blind to salvation in Christ. He refuses to be clothed in garments that are washed in the blood of the Redeemer-Lord. The spirit of this world is his lord and is enthroned in his heart. Never will he, nor can he say, that Jesus is Lord. Always he will call Jesus accursed.


The confession is only possible by the Holy Spirit, for taught by the Spirit you *can no more* call Jesus accursed, but *can only* call Him Lord. The Spirit is God, the third person of the holy Trinity. He works powerfully and irresistibly to deliver us out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's Son. As Spirit of God, He is given to Jesus. As Spirit of Jesus, He dwells in us. Through that Spirit the Lord Jesus dwells with us and exercises His Lordship.

This Spirit teaches us to say that Jesus is Lord through

regeneration, not reform; through irresistible calling, not moral persuasion; through conversion, not mere correction. Through Him Satan is dethroned and Christ is enthroned. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, witnesses in our spirit, through our spirit, with our spirit, so that we witness only by Him that Jesus is Lord.

In such a confession we have comfort, for we know that our very confession is the work of the Spirit of God dwelling in us. We know that our Father in heaven, through the Spirit of His Son, reveals this blessed knowledge only to those whom He loves. Thus we rise from

the confession that Jesus is Lord to the realization and assurance that the Father chose us and adopted us as His children before the world was, in Christ Jesus His Son. Then we know that His Spirit is our Comforter to cheer us while our Lord is away, to assure us that in the midst of trials and afflictions our Lord will protect us and lead us to glory.

Then we boldly fight the good fight of faith, keeping our confession pure from the speech of those that call Jesus accursed. We look forward to perfection, where forever we acknowledge Him as Lord of lords and King of kings. 

EDITORIAL

PROF. RUSSELL DYKSTRA

## I Will Come Again: A Promise Being Fulfilled

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

John 14:1-3

**T**he night of His betrayal, and thus the night before He was crucified, Jesus spoke to His disciples' troubled hearts—filled with fears and sorrows at His announced, imminent departure.

Fear not. "Let not your heart be troubled."

Have faith in me. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me."

Know that heaven is real. "In my

Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you."

Know that heaven is real for *you*. "I go to prepare a place for you." "I will come again and take you unto myself."

What an amazing promise from our Lord who would presently enter into heaven and assume His throne of glory—"I will come again!"

Reformed theologians distinguish various "comings" of the Lord, the first two being the most commonly known. First, He came in His incarnation. The Son of God, very God, came into our world in human flesh and dwelt among us. Second, He will come in the *parousia*—the visible, bodily return of Jesus on the clouds of glory with "all the holy angels" and "ten thousands of his saints" (Matt. 25:31; Jude 14).

Third, Jesus is in the process of coming since the day He ascended into heaven. During His trial, under oath, Jesus informed the Sanhedrin of this—"Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:64). The "hereafter" is literally *from this time*, or *from now on*. Jesus comes in His execution of God's counsel, sending forth and controlling the running of the four horses and their riders (Rev. 6). He is coming through the wars, the earthquakes, the floods, the epidemics, the uniting of the false church and of the nations. Jesus is coming! And when Jesus comes in His glory (*parousia*), the promise of John 14 will be fully realized. The saints on the earth will be caught up... "in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the



air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thess. 4:17). He comes to take His own to heaven..."that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3).

There is another coming of Jesus, namely, His coming for His people in and through death. This is a marvelous and comforting truth. We need this comfort, for death is the punishment for disobedience—"in the day that thou eatest...thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). But Christ Jesus assumed our flesh and blood exactly that He might bear every aspect of God's punishing wrath against sin. On the cross, Jesus finished that wrath against the sins of His people, delivering them from it. And as part of that atoning work, Jesus died...but then rose again, victorious over death, hell, and the grave. This saving work transformed death for the believer. By faith we understand that "our death is not a satisfaction for our sins, but only an abolishing of sin, and a passage into eternal life" (Heidelberg Catechism, LD 16, Q&A 42). Amazing comfort at death!

Now add to that blessed knowledge this promise of Jesus recorded in John 14—"I will come again, and receive you unto myself."

Not one person on this side of the grave knows exactly what happens at death. Part of the believer remains here and is buried. Part of the believer is "immediately taken up to Christ" (Heidelberg Catechism, LD 22, Q&A 57). How that happens is part of the mystery of death that is not revealed to us. However, one thing Jesus did tell us is that the believer is not left alone at the mo-

ment of death, for Jesus comes to take him to Himself.

"I will come again." This is Jesus' word to each and every believer. By this He promises: This world is not your eternal habitation. Your eternal dwelling place is in Father's house in heaven where I have gone to prepare a place for you to live. It is My good pleasure to deliver you from this world of sin and death in order that we may dwell together in blessed covenant fellowship forever. I will come again for you "that where I am, there ye may be also."

Sad to say—it is even a shame to express it—believers do not often live in the consciousness of this gracious promise. We are so earthly minded that we can scarcely devote an hour at a time to spiritual things. The weekly sermons on the Lord's Day set before us the promises of our crucified and risen Lord, but even that is not enough. We soon return to our work and play, and heaven is far away from our thoughts.

"I will come again, and receive you unto myself."

There are times when Jesus forcibly reminds us of His promise. He comes. He takes to Himself. An eight-year-old boy. A newborn child. A beloved grandmother or grandfather, full of years. A former teacher. A thirty-year-old husband and father.

There are times when our Lord speaks very loudly and forcefully. In the Protestant Reformed Churches in western Michigan Jesus has spoken again and again in recent months as He came. He came repeatedly. Surely during this year

already the Lord came repeatedly to His church all around the world, and He continues this very day taking His people to Himself.

Every coming of Jesus—through death—is another reminder: "I will come again."

The Lord speaks. How long will we consciously remember His promise? How long will it be before work and play, and earthly possessions and pleasures control almost all our thoughts and activities again?

### For, He Is Coming

Lest we should slumber surrounded by earthly pleasures and possessions, Jesus also gave us signs of His coming. He is coming, as noted, in and through all the events of history.

The chief and controlling sign is the gathering of the elect out of the nations. The Lord sends forth His Word, and that preaching is the power of God unto salvation. Jesus is "not slack concerning his promise...; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). The gathering of the elect governs all—this is His central work and His goal. Christ will come (in the *parousia*) when the last elect is gathered, and not before. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt 24:14).

But He sends other signs that alert the church of His coming. There is the measure of iniquity that must be filled. For God will be justified in His righteous con-

demnation of sinners and in His eternally destroying wrath against sin. Accordingly, sin will develop in all its vile corruption, in its ugliness, in its total God-defying rebellion.

In the United States of America, sin's development has been accelerating at an astounding rate. And on June 26, 2015 the United States officially gave its approval to the vile sin of homosexuality. The Supreme Court took the role of antichrist, and, as though it were God, rejected a fundamental creation ordinance of the Almighty. The court declared a new ordinance—"men with men working that which is unseemly" (Rom. 1:27)—this is now right and good and will be officially sanctioned in government-conducted "marriage" ceremonies. And the false church, the precursor of the whore that will serve the final kingdom of Antichrist, adds her shrill approval.

Much more can be and must be said about this decision of the U.S. Supreme Court. For now, we only call all believers to recognize the sign of the Lord's return.

His promise is being fulfilled. Anyone who allows this glaring evidence, this trumpet's insistent call, to slip from his daily conscious awareness, is a fool. He slumbers with those who are "drunken in the night" and are "in darkness" (I Thess. 5:3-7).

Rather let all believers everywhere, those "who are of the day, be sober" (I Thess. 5:8).

People of God, the Lord is keeping His promise. He is coming. He comes through His servant death to take us unto Himself. He is coming in all the events of history. The promised evil days of persecution—worldwide persecution for all who


stand for God's cause—these days are near (Matt. 24:9-13; Rev. 13:7, 15-17; et al.).

Jesus' promise is being fulfilled. He speaks loudly. He must, because of our dullness and because of our intoxication with the world. Throughout this dispensation, His command continues to sound forth as it did to the New Testament church: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing" (II Cor. 6:17).

"Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

"Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.

"And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch" (Mark 13:33, 36, 37).

And pray for His coming—do we dare? Only by the power of faith. Lord Jesus, come quickly. 

BELIEVING AND CONFESSING

PROF. RONALD CAMMENGA

## Of the Holy Scripture Being the True Word of God

### (Second Helvetic Confession, Chapter I, B)

Fundamental to everything that the Reformed Christian believes and confesses is the truth of sacred Scripture: "...in this Holy Scripture, the universal Church of Christ has the most complete exposition of all that pertains to a saving faith, and also to the framing of a life acceptable to God..." (SHC, 1.1). What we believe and confess is derived from Scripture, is taught in Scripture, and can be defended on the basis of Scripture. It is what we believe about Scripture more than anything else that sets us apart. It distinguishes us from those who are not

Christians and who have no regard for the authority of Scripture. It sets us apart from those who have apostatized from the faith, who invariably regard Scripture as less than the divinely inspired book that it is and, therefore, undervalue its authority. For good reason, then, the very first article of the Second Helvetic Confession of Faith concerns the doctrine of Holy Scripture. In the opening paragraphs of Chapter 1, the SHC affirms the divine inspiration and authority of Scripture, as well as the sufficiency of Scripture. In addition, the creed relates Scripture and preaching, expressing the Reformed conviction that "the preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God." That is where we begin our conclusion to the first chapter of the SHC.

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*Previous article in this series: May 1, 2015, p. 346.*

## Inward Illumination Does Not Eliminate External Preaching

For he that illuminates inwardly by giving men the Holy Spirit, the same one, by way of commandment, said unto his disciples, “Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15). And so in Philippi, Paul preached the Word outwardly to Lydia, a seller of purple goods; but the Lord inwardly opened the woman’s heart (Acts 16:14). And the same Paul, after a beautiful development of his thought, in Rom. 10:17 at length comes to the conclusion, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing from the Word of God by the preaching of Christ.”

At the same time we recognize that God can illuminate whom and when he will, even without the external ministry, for that is in his power; but we speak of the usual way of instructing men, delivered unto us from God, both by commandment and examples.

At the time of the Reformation there were those who belonged to the “radical Reformation,” that is, the Anabaptists, who dismissed the need for hearing the preaching from the mouth of an ordained minister by appealing to the “inward illumination” of the Holy Spirit. The believer’s “inward illumination” made it unnecessary that he listen to sermons, at least on a regular basis. This “inward illumination” might even compete with and contradict what he heard in the preaching.

Let it be clearly understood: the Reformers did not deny the Spirit’s work of inward illumination. On the contrary, the Reformers taught the absolute necessity of illumination. There are several great works of the Spirit connected to the Holy Scriptures. There was the work of the Spirit to move and direct men in the writing of Holy Scripture so that what they wrote was the very Word of God (inspiration). There was the work of the Spirit to cause the church to recognize the books that belonged to canonical Scripture and to distinguish them from those that did not. There is the work of the Spirit to preserve Scripture as the Word of God both in the copying and in the translation of Scripture. Closely connected to this work of the Spirit is the Spirit’s work to preserve Scripture in every age, so that down to the very end of history the people of God have the Holy Scriptures “which are able to make thee wise unto salvation” (II Tim. 3:15). One very important work of the Holy Spirit connected to inspiration is the Spirit’s work of inward illumination.

This is the work of the Spirit to cause the believer to understand and to believe what he reads on the pages of Holy Scripture.

As fervently as the Reformers taught this important work of the Holy Spirit, so fervently did they also insist, first, that the inward illumination of the Holy Spirit is not the Spirit’s work of delivering new and additional words from God alongside of His Word in Scripture. The illumination of the Holy Spirit is always His work of causing us to understand Scripture, always leading us into the truth as the truth is contained in Holy Scripture. And, secondly, the illuminating work of the Spirit does not eliminate, but rather establishes the means that the Spirit uses for accomplishing this illumination, which means is the preaching of the gospel.

The SHC illustrates this clearly “both by commandment and examples.” Christ Himself commands the preaching of the gospel. Bullinger appeals to the Lord’s express command in the Great Commission. The church is to make disciples out of all the nations by “preach[ing] the Gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15). In addition, he appeals to the apostle Paul’s “beautiful development of thought” in Romans 10, which ends in verse 17, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing from the Word of God by the preaching of Christ.”

Bullinger also appeals to examples in Scripture that demonstrate the necessity of faithful preaching of the gospel as God’s means to save sinners. The book of Acts is filled with such examples. Of all the examples he could have cited, he refers to the example of the salvation of Lydia and her family by means of the preaching of the apostle Paul. In Acts 16:14 we read of Lydia “whose heart the Lord opened.” But what must not be overlooked is that the Lord sovereignly opened Lydia’s heart through her “attend[ing] unto the things which were spoken of Paul.” Clearly, this history demonstrates the truth that the Spirit uses the preaching of the gospel as the means to open that which is closed, soften that which is hard, enlighten those who are ignorant, and work faith where before there was only unbelief.

This insistence on the necessity of the preaching of the gospel as the means by which the Holy Spirit illuminates inwardly the elect children of God does not rule out certain exceptions: “At the same time we recognize that God can illuminate whom and when he will, even without the

external ministry, for that is in his power.” One notable exception would be babes who die in infancy or in their mother’s womb, who never hear the preaching of the gospel. But the exceptions establish the rule. The rule is that ordinarily the Holy Spirit illuminates elect believers by means of the preaching of the gospel. Every serious-minded believer must put himself under the preaching of the gospel.

## Heresies

We therefore detest all the heresies of Artemon, the Manichaeans, the Valentinians, of Cerdon, and the Marcionites, who denied that the Scriptures proceeded from the Holy Spirit; or did not accept some parts of them, or interpolated and corrupted them.

Included with the first chapter of the SHC is a paragraph entitled “Heresies.” Similar paragraphs are found throughout the confession. Besides “Heresies,” there are paragraphs devoted to “The Sects,” or “Errors,” or to heretics and heretical groups by name, such as “The Epicureans” or “Lactantius.” The Reformed faith is not satisfied only in setting forth the truth positively, but in addition understands the necessity of pointing out and repudiating error. The gospel is antithetical—always antithetical. This was true of the Old Testament prophets. In the New Testament, this was true of Jesus and of the apostles.

This paragraph of the SHC mentions two individuals, Artemon and Cerdon, and three groups, Manichaeans, Valentinians, and Marcionites. Behind the groups are the founders of the groups, whose distinct teachings were held in high regard by the members of the groups. Several represent forms of Gnosticism, one of the earliest heresies opposed by the New Testament church. Hints of the rejection of this error can be found, it is often thought, in the writings of the apostle John. Other of these heretics and heresies are anti-trinitarian, denying the deity of Jesus Christ and teaching that Jesus was a mere man. Several are eclectic, borrowing teachings from pagan philosophy or from heathen religions and mixing them with Christianity. And most are dualistic, positing two equally ultimate realities, one good and one evil.

But what all these religious groups and leaders have in common is that they deny the fundamental article of

the Christian faith—belief in Holy Scripture. Many of the groups and leaders detract from Scripture, rejecting the canonicity of a number of the books of the Bible. In some cases, they rejected the whole Old Testament, as was the case with Cerdon and the Marcionites. Others rejected significant parts of the New Testament. Artemon rejected those Scriptures that taught clearly the deity of Jesus Christ. Others added to canonical Scripture, usually the writings of the group’s founder, as the writings and revelations of Mani or Valentinus’ *Gospel of Truth*.

Either error, whether taking away from or adding to the canon of Scripture, is a fundamental denial of *sola Scriptura*—Scripture alone. Both fall under the condemnation of the apostle in Revelation 22:18, 19: “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

What arrogance, that puny man should presume to excise certain books of sacred Scripture—the Word of God! What arrogance, that puny man should presume to exalt his writings to the level of the Word of God! That same arrogance is on exhibition in our own day. It is evident in the cults and sects, who add to Holy Scripture either the writings of the founder of the cult or additional sacred writings like the *Book of Mormon* or the *Quran*.

The distinctive mark of the believer and of the true church of Jesus Christ in the world is the confession that Scripture alone is the authority for faith and for life. Nothing may be taken away from Scripture and nothing may be added to Scripture. Because Scripture is the Word of God, nothing *need* be added to Scripture and nothing *may* be placed alongside Scripture. Scripture is sufficient for the individual believer and for the church as a whole. In the words of the opening paragraph of this first article of the SHC: “And in this Holy Scripture, the universal Church of Christ has the most complete exposition of all that pertains to a saving faith, and also to the framing of a life acceptable to God....”




## Apocrypha

And yet we do not conceal the fact that certain books of the Old Testament were by the ancient authors called Apocryphal, and by others Ecclesiastical; inasmuch as some would have them read in the churches, but not advanced as an authority from which the faith is to be established. As Augustine also, in his *De Civitate Dei*, book 18, ch. 38, remarks that “in the books of the Kings, the names and books of certain prophets are cited”; but he adds that “they are not in the canon”; and that “those books which we have suffice unto godliness.”

It is not surprising that the question of the status of the Apocrypha is raised in a Reformation creed. This was a burning issue between the Reformers and the Roman Catholic Church. It was not an issue that divided the Reformers, however. They were unanimous in rejecting the canonicity of the Apocrypha. To them all it was obvious that these books were not on a par with Holy Scripture. Rome, as is well known, needed the Apocrypha to establish a number of her false doctrines and wrong practices. Other Reformed confessions, like the Belgic Confession of Faith and the Westminster Confession of Faith, explicitly reject the canonicity of the Apocryphal books. Article 6 of the Belgic Confession, “The Difference Between the Canonical and Apocryphal Books,” insists that “they are far from having such power and efficacy, as that we may from their testimony confirm any point of faith, or of the Christian religion; much less detract from the authority of the other sacred

books.” The Westminster Confession of Faith states that the Apocryphal books “have no authority in the Church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings” (WCF, 1.3). It was the Reformers’ settled conviction that no point of doctrine nor any practice of the Christian life was to be established solely on the basis of the Apocrypha. Significantly, Bullinger appeals at this point to Augustine (AD 354-430). In so many respects the Reformation was a return to Augustine. This foundation of the teaching of Augustine made clear that the Reformation was no novel movement, but that the Reformation represented historic Christianity—what Christianity was from its earliest days. This was also the case with regard to the Reformers’ doctrine of Scripture.

At the same time, the Reformers saw value in the Apocryphal books, especially in certain Apocryphal books. For that reason, the Belgic Confession says that “the Church may read and take instruction from [them] so far as they agree with the canonical books....” Because of this limited use in the church, these books were sometimes referred to as ecclesiastical books. They were ecclesiastical books in distinction from the authoritative canonical books. In rejecting the inspiration of the Apocryphal books, the Reformers and the SHC honored the sixty-six canonical books that comprise sacred Scripture. In these books “God himself spoke to the fathers, prophets, apostles, and still speaks to us....” (SHC, 1.1). 

### TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

REV. JAMES LANING

## God’s Covenant with Noah (2)

# A Promise of God to His People

**I**n Genesis 8:21 we read that God said this in His heart: “I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil

from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.” Many say that God in this word is promising to give some grace to all human beings, so that there will be at least some good in unbelieving man and, thus, human society will be preserved. Some go a step further and say that when God said “I will not again curse the ground,” He meant, “I will delay the final judg-

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ment because I desire that all human beings be saved.”

It is true that to refute these teachings we simply need to refer to the manifold passages that teach that God desires to save only some people, and that there is no good in the natural man. But it is one thing to say what a passage does not teach, and another thing to say what it does. We begin to consider the latter in this article.

### The sweet savour of Christ

What was quoted above was only part of Genesis 8:21. When we look at that entire verse as well as the verse before it, we see that the two verses together direct our attention to the sacrifice that Noah offered:

And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done (Gen. 8:20-21).

It is after God smells the sweet smell of Noah's sacrifice that He makes this statement about not cursing the ground.

What God smells is the sweet savour of Christ. Noah's sacrifice pointed to the sacrifice of Christ, the Seed of the woman, who would suffer and die to pay for the sins of His people. Noah, in offering this sacrifice, confessed that he believed God's promise and looked to Him for forgiveness. By faith he offered his sacrifice, confessing his own sinfulness and requesting that God would show mercy to him and his seed and forgive them for Christ's sake. God says He will show mercy to His people in Christ, and in that connection makes this statement about no longer cursing the ground.

The sacrifice of Christ that would one day be offered would deliver God's people and the entire creation from the curse. Going through the accursed death, Christ would deliver from the curse not only His people but also the earth itself. That helps to explain why God speaks of *the ground* no longer being cursed. God cursed the ground because of man's sin. Now, after smelling Christ's atoning sacrifice, God says the ground will be cursed no more.

### God's everlasting covenant

As we read on in the passage, we see that God explains more what He means by no longer cursing the ground. Going into chapter 9, we find another statement about what God would not again do to the earth: "...neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth" (Gen. 9:11). From the context we see that not again cursing the ground is explained to mean not again destroying the earth with a flood.

Yet there is more. We read that God is making a covenant promise regarding the earth: "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth" (Gen. 9:13).

Smelling Christ's sacrifice, God is also promising that one day the land of God's covenant people will be fully delivered from the curse. The land itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Rom. 8:21).

God's covenant spoken of here is indeed everlasting: "...That I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth" (Gen. 9:16). It is an everlasting covenant, one that refers to blessings we begin to enjoy now but that will not be fully enjoyed until the age to come.

Some deny that this covenant is everlasting. They say the word "everlasting" here means merely "for a very long time." But the word used in Genesis 9:16 is the normal word for "everlasting." It is precisely the same word used later to refer to the everlasting covenant that God made with Abraham (Gen. 17:7). It does not make sense to say that the covenant with Abraham is everlasting while the covenant with Noah is temporary, when God uses the same word (rightly translated "everlasting") to describe both.

### Isaiah's reference to "the waters of Noah"

When considering the explanation of a verse, it is important not only to look at the verse in its immediate context, but also to search the Scriptures to find other places where the same subject is discussed. One such place is found in the prophecies of Isaiah.

Isaiah prophesied about how the Babylonians were going to be brought like a flood against God's people, and that after God had chastened His people in this way, He would no longer be wroth with them and would bring

them back again to their own land. It is in that context that we find the following reference to God's promise not to send another flood:

In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee (Is. 54:8-9).

In this passage God is speaking about delivering His people from Babylon. For a moment God hid His face from His people and gave them over to the Babylonians, who kept them captive for seventy years. But after this was over God would "not be wroth" with His people any more, but rather with everlasting kindness would show them mercy.

Both the one flood of waters and the one flood of Babylonians pointed forward to the one judgment upon Christ. The waters covered the earth once, and then God said He would no longer curse the ground. There was one Babylonian captivity, and then God said He would be wroth with His people no more. Yet neither of these events satisfied the demands of God's justice. They did, however, both point forward to the one judgment that came upon our Lord, by which we are forever delivered from God's wrath and freed from the curse.

God did, of course, show mercy to His people also in the days of the Old Testament, before the sacrifice of Christ. But in various ways He showed them that the basis upon which they received the blessings was the one perfect sacrifice that would one day be offered. The day would come, God was saying, when Christ would experience the baptism to which the flood pointed. Under the waves of God's wrath our Lord would willingly go. Yet He would emerge victorious and make us partakers of the blessings that He would purchase as our Head.

### **"for the imagination of man's heart..."**

That brings us to a consideration of the reference that God makes in Genesis 8:21 to man being depraved from his youth. The Scriptures make two similar statements about man's depravity, one before the flood and the other after it. Let us take a look at those two statements together:

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth... (Gen. 6:5-7a).

And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done (Gen. 8:21).

First God sees man's wicked deeds and depraved nature and says He will destroy man. Then after the flood He says that man's nature is still evil, yet He will not again curse the ground. What explains the difference?

The difference has to do with Christ and His sacrifice. The first statement is what God says about man as he is outside of Christ. His nature is evil and his thoughts are only evil continually. The second statement is what God says about the mercy He will show to His people who are in Christ and yet still have a sinful nature. God looks at His people, knows that they still have a sinful nature, and for Christ's sake has mercy on them.


The flood did not change the nature of man. His nature is still evil and God would not be unjust if He sent a flood repeatedly. Yet for the sake of His people in Christ, God says He will not do this. He will show His people mercy and will not again destroy the earth with a flood.

### **Mercy shown to God's people**

Though it is commonly denied, the mercy spoken of here is promised only to those who are in Christ. This is evident from the following:

1. The promised mercy is based on Christ's sacrifice (to which Noah's sacrifice pointed), and Christ died only for His people.
2. The promise is to Noah and his family, who were the church at this time. Since the flood was a picture of baptism, those who went through the flood picture those who have been baptized (i.e. the church).
3. The prophecy of Isaiah that we have looked at says that no more flood means that there will be no more outpouring of God's wrath, and it can be said only of God's people that they have been delivered from the wrath of God.

4. God says He will look at the bow in the cloud and remember the *everlasting* covenant between God and every living creature (Gen. 9:16). The only people who are in God's everlasting covenant are those who have been chosen to be so in Christ.

"But," someone might say, "God's act of not sending another flood is a blessing to all human beings." That, however, is not the case. Only to God's people is it a blessing. But we will consider that subject, Lord willingly, next time. 

## REFORMED WORLDVIEW

## REV. STEVEN KEY

### The Reformed Worldview: Truth and Its Consequences (9)

# The History of the Concept Worldview

While the book burning of Acts 19:19 gives one example of how the gospel changed the perspective and worldview of the newly saved saints in Ephesus, there is a second example found in that same chapter.

These examples show that the exclusive nature of Christianity can be observed in the lives of God's people. It is observed especially in their rejection of the idolatry prevalent in their culture.

Having seen that Ephesus was a known center for the worship of Diana, and that the worship of Diana had great economic as well as cultural influence in that city, we find in verses 23 and following of Acts 19 that the effects of the gospel in the lives of those whom God had called out of darkness were readily seen in Ephesus. Those effects were cultural. They were felt among the unbelieving in that city.

Those effects were observed not in some great efforts by the church to redeem society or to press some sort of positive cultural influence upon the city. Rather, those effects were observed simply in the way the gospel itself and the power of God's grace in saving His people brought a change in their lives. The perspective of God's people—the way they thought, the way they lived, the

way they spent their money—was powerfully affected by their new Christian faith. It was affected in such a way that the life of Christ in them, evidenced by true repentance, could not be hidden from their neighbors.

Especially notable in Ephesus was that these new Christians put away all expressions of their past idolatrous practices. That included everything associated with their former worship of Diana, as well as their superstitions and practice of magic.

This sudden break from all their former idolatrous worship practices, this refusal to spend money on those things that previously had marked a significant part of their expenditures, had a detrimental effect economically in the city of Ephesus. This new Christian worldview brought about a decline in business in Ephesus. It was not a widespread economic decline brought about by these new believers, but a decline in business activity associated with the idolatry of Diana, the goddess of the Ephesians.

That is explained in Acts 19:24-27.

For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are

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made with hands: So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.

Demetrius and various craftsmen and workmen, all involved in different ways supplying the market with images and other instruments of their idolatrous worship, were not barely eking out an existence in their trade. They had become wealthy, literally, were living in euphoria. They could not ask for more!

But now the effects of Christianity were destroying their wealth.

That was the result of the gospel and its power unto salvation in those who believed. The gospel works repentance, a change of the mind as well as of the actions.

We have to realize that the gospel is just as powerful in our day as it was in the days of the apostle. When the Holy Spirit works by that Word in our hearts, when He seals to us that gospel of our salvation, the result in our own lives will be one of heartfelt sorrow for our sins and humble repentance toward God. When the Holy Spirit works in us as He did in Ephesus, then we no longer cling to our idols. We no longer say, "But just a few of those books, Lord; just a few remnants of my idols. I'll give up most; but if I hold on to a *few*, then they're not really idols, are they?"

Sin is powerful. Idols promise us much, even when they deliver nothing.

The man who has to struggle against the sin of drunkenness, who is inclined to drinking to excess, or the man who clings to his addiction to pornography, might like to tell himself, "Just a little, Lord." But in doing so, he clings to his idol.

The joy of salvation, the power of new life in Christ, is the only power that can break that bondage.

If an intelligent young woman, having been persuaded by her smooth-talking college professors of opinions contrary to the Word of God, or having been brought up in a non-Christian home and taught to tolerate all people and behaviors, comes under the power of the gospel, she does not continue to cleave to unbiblical opinions and teachings. She renounces them as foolishness and brings her mind into subjection to the will of God.

If a young man has been ensnared in the idolatry of

pleasure-seeking, and in self-love has been rebellious to his parents, it does not matter how powerfully those sins have held him and how long he has been addicted to them, the power of the gospel will break that bondage and bring a change that no man can explain.

It is the power of God that alone breaks the hard heart and softens the stubborn will. When the gospel does its work, which is to say, when the Holy Spirit does His work by that Word, then the effect in our hearts is this: No matter what it may cost us, we will rest content with nothing in our lives that grieves the Holy Spirit.

It is that new life that marks a child of God as different, even a pilgrim and stranger in the world.

It is the power of the gospel in the lives of the children of God that presses upon unbelievers in ways that we often do not even realize, sometimes making them extremely uncomfortable, sometimes making them angry, but sometimes also compelling them to ask of us the reason for the hope that lives within us.

So the Christian worldview is not one that sets out to change the world. The Christian worldview is an expression of the Christian life, lived by a child of God to the glory of his or her Redeemer. It is an expression of the life of Christ in us, and therefore a life set apart.

The apostle Paul would later shed light upon these events recorded in Acts 19 and the effects of gospel preaching, when he testified of what was seen among the saints in Thessalonica. They also were converts to the Christian faith.

We are told in the first chapter of I Thessalonians that the apostle observed in the church at Thessalonica something that thrilled his soul. He observed among those who had been saved a clear evidence of the power of the gospel in their lives.

He does not unfold in any detail how those effects were seen. In fact, Paul speaks in very little depth how the Christian life is to come to expression. But what he observed, with heartfelt thanks to God, was their "work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1:3).

Concerning those effects Paul points to the One who alone deserves our praise, when he says in verse 5, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance."

So powerfully did the Spirit work in them by that gos-

pel, that Paul said, “ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.”

He returns to this thought in the next chapter, when he says in I Thessalonians 2:13, “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”

The Word is the power of God unto salvation.

The Holy Spirit, by that Word, works in us the radical change necessary to live in fellowship with God. The Holy Spirit, by that gospel, brings us to true conversion,

moving us to godly repentance, including the complete putting away of our idolatries.

He does that, as He did in Ephesus, by opening our eyes to the exceeding sinfulness of our sins, by pointing us to the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation, and by filling our hearts with the desire to live in wholehearted devotion to the God of our salvation.

But while the two examples just considered were rather isolated incidents, the new worldview ushered in by the gospel had a profound and far-reaching affect in marriage and family life.

... to be continued. 

GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

REV. WILBUR BRUINSMA

Protestant Reformed Missions

## Small Beginnings: Mission Methods Established (1925-1931) (3)

**D**uring the early formative years of the Protestant Reformed Churches, certain methods of domestic mission work became well established. It is important that we take note of these methods and offer an evaluation of them.

We begin, however, not with a *method* of missions, but with the historically established *scope* of our domestic mission work. At the very start the three ministers and the elders of the Protestant Christian Reformed Churches did not labor to expand the witness of these churches on the basis of a fixed set of mission principles they had studied and embraced. They merely responded to an immediate need confronting them. A number of invitations had been sent them by concerned men of the Christian Reformed Churches who were sympathetic with the Reformed truth over against the error of common grace. They wanted to learn firsthand about the er-

ror of common grace, the present controversy, and what was needed to organize into a congregation in the new denomination. The need to respond to these invitations was self-evident. There were only three congregations. More were needed for continued existence as a denomination. Therefore, the decision of the second meeting of the combined consistories on March 6, 1925 reads:

Article 5. ...That this combined consistory meeting sends out Rev. H. Hoeksema to the West, occasioned by the many requests for this, to inform those interested of our action and also to allow them to examine our Act of Agreement, and if it should prove that the interest is of such a nature that those interested should desire to organize, then to serve them with advice, and in one word, authorize Rev. H. Hoeksema to carry out the matters mentioned above.<sup>1</sup>

With this decision the scope of domestic missions was quite naturally, yet unwittingly, shaped in the Protestant

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<sup>1</sup> Article 5 of the minutes of the Combined Consistories. March 6, 1925.

Reformed missions. Our work as churches lay in the area of church reformation in the Christian Reformed Church. That this became a method of home mission work is clearly proved by subsequent history.

In August of 1930 the Mission Committee recommended to Classis,<sup>2</sup> “the more we consider our work from every point of view, the more we feel that our mission work carries with it a peculiar character. We should limit ourselves to members of the church from which we departed.”<sup>3</sup> The scope was made a bit broader by the Classis of December 2, 1931, “It is decided to express agreement with the limitation of the field of labor, which lies spread out especially over the area of the Protestant Reformed, Christian Reformed, and the Dutch Reformed Churches.”<sup>4</sup> Even as late as 1965 the “New Policy” for mission work adopted by that Synod insisted that in the main the labors of the Protestant Reformed Churches must focus on the second and third generations of the Christian Reformed Church.<sup>5</sup> Still today some in our churches are convinced that predominantly our labors as a denomination in domestic missions lies solely in the area of church reformation among Dutch Reformed believers.

I am going to save my evaluation of the scope of missions in our churches to a later article. I have written on this subject in the past, but save my remarks this time until we consider the later history of missions in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

The first *method* of missions established in the early history of our churches was laboring with interested groups of people who came to us with a request to labor toward organizing them into a local church. The intention of this decision, I believe, was not to saddle all future mission work in the denomination, but again, arose out of necessity, since this was the direction the Lord was leading us at that particular time. The Christian Reformed Church was in a state of unrest for a number of years after the controversy of 1924. There were groups of people

still drawn to the truth of sovereign, particular grace as opposed to common grace. These immediately sent requests to Rev. Hoeksema to come and speak to them about the differences in the hope that enough people could be gathered in one area to establish a church.

The method of missions that developed out of this is what has become known in our churches as the Macedonian call (cf. Acts 16:4). There must be a particular request from a group of people to come over and help them toward organizing them as a church. Although this particular concept of doing home mission work was never sanctioned at any point in our history as the official way to begin a labor, it proved invaluable and necessary in the early growth of our denomination. It was effective then. It was the best workable method. The work in this early period of missions, therefore, cannot be criticized. The churches and men involved did what they had to do. As time went on, however, this method of mission work became so enmeshed in the thinking of those involved in the work of domestic missions that any other way of beginning a labor in a certain place was inconceivable. Even today many consistories and members cannot fathom any other way of beginning a domestic mission labor other than with a “Macedonian call.” In their minds there has to be a group of believers or number of contacts in an area already knowledgable to a degree of the Reformed faith who are interested in our churches laboring with them. And more, these contacts ought to send us a particular request (call) before we would ever consider sending a missionary to labor among them.

I have already critiqued this type of thinking regarding home mission work in other articles,<sup>6</sup> but it ought to be emphasized, the Macedonian call is not sanctioned by Scripture as the only method of beginning a work in a mission field. The apostle Paul did not use Macedonian calls in his mission work. The Macedonian call happened only one time during all the mission journeys of Paul. Besides, the call beckoned him to labor in a *region* and not one particular city. Finally, the man of Macedonia who extended the call to Paul was not an actual man but a man in a vision. This is not to say that the church in her domestic mission work should ignore a “Macedonian call” if she receives one. She should seize on that opportunity.

<sup>2</sup> Classis was the broadest ecclesiastical assembly in the PRC until 1940.

<sup>3</sup> Supplement 4 of the August 27, 1930 meeting of the Classis of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

<sup>4</sup> Article 56 of the December 2, 1931 minutes of the meeting of the Classis of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

<sup>5</sup> Supplement XIV, 1965 Acts of Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, 113-115.

<sup>6</sup> “Church Extension, Church Reformation, and Domestic Missions (3).” *Standard Bearer*, vol. 90, 278.

But she also needs to look beyond the notion that this is the only method to be used in beginning a mission work in an area.

A second valuable method of mission work established during these early years (1925-1931) was the use of various means to stimulate interest in an area. Again, with no particular method in mind lectures were immediately used to stimulate interest in gathering and educating a group of saints. The requests from interested groups came with an invitation to teach them regarding the truth of sovereign grace. Lectures and/or instructional classes are still effective means that ought to be utilized in mission work.

But toward the close of these early years, requests by interested groups were not as frequent. The doctrine of common grace was already asserting itself into the doctrines and life of the members of the Christian Reformed Church. There was not as much interest in the debate anymore. In 1930 and 1931 the few men assigned to the Mission Committee began searching out some way to renew interest in the Dutch Reformed churches regarding the error of common grace. After all, if people were not requesting our churches for lectures to stimulate interest, what else could we use to accomplish the same end?

The answer was the use of pamphlets—another effective means of gaining exposure to the distinctives of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Ten thousand copies of *The Triple Breach* were printed and distributed among the Dutch churches in the Netherlands as well as among the members of the Christian Reformed churches. In the next period of missions in the Protestant Reformed Churches we will find a proliferation of pamphlets published for the means of mission work. Pamphlets yet today are an important means to kindle an interest in the gospel and draw out requests for mission work.

With the decision to publish and distribute our first pamphlet, *The Triple Breach*, we find the emergence of a third important method of mission work used in the Protestant Reformed Churches: the use of Church Extension (Evangelism) Committees established in local churches as a means to spread the gospel in the area of established churches. Although it was not formally adopted, this was indeed the recommendation of the temporary Mission Committee to the August 27, 1930 Classis:

3. That classis advise the committee that in every congregation a committee be appointed, which will give out books, in case classis decides to have books printed, in their areas to that person who shows an interest. The committee is of the opinion that there lies our point of contact.<sup>7</sup>

It was not as if during this period of time we can find actual evidence of the establishment of Church Extension Committees. Perhaps this evidence can be found in the minutes of some of our congregations. But the principle that led to the existence of such committees was indeed founded by the decision of the December 2, 1931 Classis:

That each consistory take upon itself to labor with this brochure (*The Triple Breach*) in their own area. The purpose is not lavishly to hand out this brochure, but that ministers, and consistories, and also members of the congregation seek to make personal contact and if there is interest to request them kindly to read this booklet on the three points, and to urge them to test it in the light of Scripture and the confessions.<sup>8</sup>

This request by Classis required that local churches begin an outreach of their own. With time, this local outreach by ministers, consistories, and members developed into Church Extension Committees.

While mentioning the work of local churches in mission work, it ought to be noted that a practice often used in the spread of the gospel by the Protestant Reformed Churches is the lending of pastors to aid in mission work. Until the Mission Committee became a firm entity in 1931 the work of missions relied totally on local churches and their pastors. In fact, this was actually the case until the calling of our first missionary in 1936. The local congregations allowed their ministers a leave of absence from the labors of their own congregations each year to work in potential mission fields. At the outset, the Combined Consistories even decided not to ordain Candidate Ralph Danhof in order that he might fill pulpits vacated by ministers doing local mission work.

<sup>7</sup> Supplement 4 of the August 27, 1930 minutes of the Classis of the Protestant Reformed Churches.


<sup>8</sup> Report of the Mission Committee, Supplement 3, December 2, 1931 minutes of the Classis of the Protestant Reformed Churches.



Because Rev. Hoeksema was the man in demand, First Protestant Reformed Church released him ten weeks every year to pursue the work of missions.

The work of evangelism committees in our individual congregations is still a worthwhile and productive practice today. After all, it is the local church that is called to do mission work. Each congregation ought to be busy in this task. And that there is a willingness on the part of consistories to allow their ministers time to work in this area is a good thing. We are thankful for the many active

and retired pastors (and professors) who have given and give of their time for missions and church contact.

I want to comment in the next article on a recommendation *not* approved by the September, 1929 Classis of our churches: “that our leaders put forth every effort to instruct our members thoroughly in the basic doctrines and the Confessions, in order that our members who come in contact with brothers and sisters of other churches may try to win them in the spirit of love for the cause of the Lord.” On this we must wait. 

WHEN THOU SITTEST IN THINE HOUSE

MRS. MARGARET LANING

## Guarding Our Children against Pornography

**T**he Lord commanded His people how to prepare the Passover lamb. Instead of butchering the animal into pieces and leaving it unrecognizable, it was essential the lamb be kept whole. The head, limbs, and entrails were left intact. It may not be boiled, but it had to be roasted on a spit or wooden stick for the entire family to see. The very lamb they cared for—their lamb—was completely in view. It was a meal not to be forgotten.

What a picture of our Savior! Jesus, our Passover lamb (I Cor. 5:7), was left whole. In fulfillment of Scripture, not a bone of His was broken as He hung suspended on the wooden stick. Whole and complete for all to see and never forget.

Christ was crucified so that we may be whole. In our new man we are unbroken, complete, and spiritually safe in Him. This is the definition of peace. In Hebrew it is shalom. It is the word in Aaron’s priestly prayer and the word proclaimed by our ministers today: “The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace” (Num. 6:26). When we experience reconciliation with

God, we have tranquility of conscience. John Calvin puts it this way, peace is the “fruit of the righteousness of faith.”

If our children walk in the sin of watching pornography, they will not have this peace. As believing parents, we desire our children to be wholesome children in the truest sense of the word. When their confession and walk is one with God’s law, they will experience peace and a good conscience before Him. Yet, how we need to watch and pray. We are sinful and are living in a fallen world. The Canons of Dordt describe what giving in to sin will do to a believer. Those who walk in a grievous sin will “... interrupt the exercise of faith, very grievously wound their consciences, and sometimes lose the sense of God’s favor, for a time, until on their returning into the right way of serious repentance...” (V, Art. 5).

Never before in the history of the world has so much obscenity become as easily accessible and widespread as it is today. Some call it “the silent family killer,” known to shatter relationships, inhibit school work and jobs, adversely affect marriages, and most of all, communion with the Lord. One who walks down this road will start to experience a breaking apart—abnormal desires, warped perceptions of right from wrong, low motivation, concentration problems, shame, depression, and a lonely secret life. With our children online as much as they are today,

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*Mrs. Laning is a wife and mother in Hull Protestant Reformed Church of Hull, Iowa.*

pornography is aimed especially at them. The earlier they are hooked, the more the industry profits.

Some Christian parents may think their children would never look at such filth because they know better. Yet, we give them Internet-connected devices that make this sin very tempting. Our children have a natural curiosity and a sinful nature that cannot be underestimated. A recent survey indicated that roughly two out of three men and a lower, yet significant, percentage of women are viewing pornography. The statistics show an alarming trend. When filling out this survey, approximately two-thirds of the men who answered “yes” to the Question, “Are you a Christian?,” also answered “yes” to the question, “Are you viewing pornography?”<sup>1</sup> With such a large percentage of adults walking in this sin, it is not surprising to see many children getting enslaved to it at a young age.

Sadly, 43% of pornography users began looking when they were between the ages of 11 and 13.<sup>2</sup> With the accessibility of pornography through mobile devices, that number will likely continue to increase. By 2017, a quarter of a billion people are expected to be accessing pornography from their phones or tablets. This is an increase of more than 30% from 2013.<sup>3</sup>

The statistics are heartbreaking. May we look to the Lord for wisdom in protecting our children from the wiles of the devil. Pray for God’s peace from the Prince of Peace, because “...the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7). The word “keep” here means guard. God’s peace shall guard like a garrison—an amazing truth! This peace in our heart gives us safety from spiritual foes. We are left unharmed and whole as we are strengthened to fight that good fight of faith. May our first line of defense start in our covenant homes.

Here are some things to consider in our battle against online pornography:

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<sup>1</sup> Barna Group commissioned by Proven Men Ministries. “Pornography Survey and Statistics,” last modified 2014, accessed April 16, 2015. <http://www.provenmen.org>.

<sup>2</sup> Szittner, Katie, “Study Exposes Secret World of Porn Addiction,” last modified May 10, 2012, accessed April 16, 2015. <http://sydney.edu.au/news>.

<sup>3</sup> Juniper Research, “250 million to Access Adult Content on their Mobile or Tablet by 2017, Juniper Report Finds,” last Modified September 25, 2013. <http://www.cbronline.com/news>.

1. Keep devices that have Internet access out of bedrooms and places where your child or teen is unsupervised. This includes game consoles (many children use them for Internet access rather than for what the device is designed for), laptops, desktops, smartphones, TV with Internet connection, tablets, Internet-connected MP3 Players, connected handheld gaming devices, and E-readers with Internet access. Says Dr. Strasburger, lead author of a recent American Academy of Pediatrics policy, “I guarantee you that if you have a 14-year-old boy and he has an Internet connection in his bedroom, he is looking at pornography.”<sup>4</sup>

2. Have age-appropriate discussions. We do not want our children receiving their sex education from the media. We want to teach them from the Bible about the beautiful gift God gives exclusively within marriage. Parents will decide when that time is best for their child; but when they do, they will want to teach them about sexual purity and holy living. Some good defenses against pornography are having a family with whom the members show love and respect toward one another and spend time reading the Word, praying together, and talking with each other. This, of course, coupled with consistent parental monitoring of Internet use.

One of the reasons a high percentage of children get hooked on pornography is that pornography went looking for them first. Perhaps they were online watching a cartoon, playing a game, or getting a picture for a school project. Teens between the ages of 13-17 say that 70% of them accidentally stumbled across pornography online.<sup>5</sup> We need to talk with our children about how our threefold enemy would have us get our minds off the things of God. In the way of turning from sin and delighting in the Lord we receive this grace that God promises: “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace (shalom), whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (Is. 26:3).

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<sup>4</sup> Strasburger, Victor, Dr., Interview by Associated Press, 2013. <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/pediatricians-urge-parents-to-limit-kids-screen-time>.

<sup>5</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation, “Generation RX.com: How young people use the internet for health information,” last modified Dec. 2001, accessed April 7, 2015. <https://kaiserfamilyfoundation.files>.

3. Understand technology enough to protect your children. Although no filter system is 100% effective, there are many good ones to consider. An important place to start is on the router. Routers perform something like a traffic-directing function of the Internet streaming into your home. There are companies who offer network-wide filtering services. Through a filter on the router, every device in the home can have a layer of protection.<sup>6</sup> As for devices that leave the home, there are additional applications and settings that can be used. Numerous companies offer a wide variety of helpful single device options.<sup>7</sup> A few of our Christian schools are now requiring that our children and teens use tablets and laptops. If the school has its own controls in place and our families have different controls, sometimes this can result in poor performance on the device. Some companies offer an exempting feature for this purpose.<sup>8</sup>

4. Teach Internet safety to your children. For example, tell them not to post potentially dangerous contact information such as a cell phone number, physical location, or a home address online. Some children are checking into locations via social networks or other location-based sites. They need to understand that this makes them susceptible to online predators.

If your child has access to apps on a phone, tablet, or laptop, know which apps they have to determine which ones are appropriate and which are not. Our children are vulnerable to pornography when they are on most social media sites, join chat rooms, and play on gaming sites, some of which have chat rooms as well. Beware especially of the games that have an administrator who can extort photos and information from kids in exchange for points or bitcoins. Currently, Grand Theft Auto, World of Warcraft, and Call of Duty are just some of which to beware. There are aspects to Grand Theft Auto that all parents should know—certainly a game to ban. It is bad enough that the player takes on the role of a criminal,

but the player is also given the opportunity to have virtual sex with prostitutes. After spending game money on the sex act of their choice, they can kill her to get back their money.

There are many messaging apps, some of which are being used to trap children into prostitution. Some of the worst ones at this time are Omegle (its slogan is “Talk to strangers!”), We Chat, ooVoo, and Kik. So dangerous is Kik, that police have issued warnings of it as a popular site for predators. Both Kik and ooVoo are often used for sexting (the act of sending sexually explicit messages, primarily between mobile phones).

If a teen is determined to watch things they know they should not, no filter will prevent them. Such a child might find ways to get around filters or go to a friend’s house who does not have them. But I am talking about helping our children who, in the new man, do desire to be free from the bondage of this sin. If we find our son or daughter looking at pornography, we need to help them out of it.

As the Passover lamb was completely in view for the entire family to look at, we are to lead our sons and daughters to look to Christ rather than the filth of this world. In Him alone we are healed and made whole. This sin, too, is forgiven, in the way of repentance. If our child falls into it, he or she most certainly will feel shame. But Jesus not only bore our guilt, He also bore our shame.

In the way of fighting our sin, we experience deliverance from the shame. This is honorable. Our sons desire to be honorable, manly men do they not? Our Baptism Form tells us what a true man is. We should point out to them what it says. We, our sons, as well as our daughters, are exhorted to “...manfully fight against and overcome sin...”

When the roasting of the lamb was finished, it was taken down from the stick for the family to partake. Jesus’ work on the cross is finished and we are given the right to partake of Him—by faith with the hand and mouth of our soul. Through His sacrifice we are made whole. “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Thess. 5:23). ☞

<sup>6</sup> OpenDNS is a company that currently offers free basic network protection.

<sup>7</sup> Covenant Eyes, Net Nanny, Net Sanity, and Mobicip, to name a few.

<sup>8</sup> Mobicip offers an exempting feature.

## Corporal Punishment: Still Legal for Discipline (3)

In the last two installments in this series, we first looked at punishment of children and noted that corporal punishment such as spanking is still generally legal. We then looked at the juvenile court system and noted that, due to the different evidentiary standards in juvenile court and the reliance on reports of social workers and others, parents whose views differ from those prosecuting a case of alleged abuse may have a difficult time defending their actions. In this installment, we will look at the effect that changing views in the world around us has on legal proceedings related to our children.

In our last installment, we looked at some observations that Iowa Court of Appeals Justice Sackett had concerning the changing attitudes of the state towards discipline of children, and how the state more and more substitutes its own judgment for that of the parents. This trend is a cause for concern for believing parents. We can see the world rapidly departing from even a pretext of holding to traditional Christian values. Scripture tells us that this will be the case, and that the world will eventually begin to persecute the church as never before. As we noted in the last installment, if a social worker assigned to a case has different views on discipline and on determining right from wrong, that social worker can make it difficult for a parent to maintain or regain custody of their child.

This author had an experience a number of years ago with a case that illustrates the hostility that some in the juvenile court system can have to Christian values.<sup>1</sup> While my normal area of practice is in the relatively

conservative northwest corner of Iowa, I had a case some time ago where I was approached by a couple who came from a considerable distance away. They indicated that they were searching for a Christian lawyer and had been given my name. They had a daughter who had drug related problems in juvenile court, and they were attempting to gain custody of their grandson.

They explained their story as follows. When their daughter was sixteen, she began using marijuana and was sneaking out to see a boyfriend. The parents tried everything they could think of to discipline their daughter, and finally contacted the state looking for help to assist them. A social worker was assigned to the case, who basically told them that they were too hard on their daughter. She indicated that everyone, even city leaders, smokes marijuana, and that they needed to lighten up. Ultimately, the state did nothing to help change the daughter's behavior. The daughter became pregnant and married the boyfriend she had been seeing.

The daughter's drug usage continued and worsened. She had three children, including one from an affair she had while still married to her husband. Due to her drug problems, she again came into contact with the juvenile court, but this time was in danger of losing her children. Her husband also had issues that the state was concerned about. My clients intervened in the court action as grandparents, and sought placement of the children with them.

The state did place the children with the grandparents temporarily. The law requires that the state work to return children to their parents' care if possible, and the state worked towards returning the children to their father, the daughter's husband. My clients had concerns about the father's lifestyle, but realized that since the state seeks to reunite children with their parents, they could do little in that regard. It became apparent that the children could not return to their mother any time soon, so the question arose as to what would happen to the third child who was not a child of the husband. My clients offered to continue to care for the child, but the

<sup>1</sup> I thank my clients who have given permission to use their story, and actually encouraged me to do so, to warn others about the difficulties facing Christian parents. However, in order to maintain their privacy, I will use as little identifying information as possible when describing the case.

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

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



state sought to place the child up for adoption. They also pressured the daughter's husband to take the child, even though he felt resentment towards the child and did not want to take him.

The law provides that if a child cannot return to a parent, the state should seek to place him with the nearest relative. Although my clients were the next relatives and had no issues that would prevent placing the child with them, the state agencies and attorneys looked for every other alternative they could imagine. When I finally cornered a social worker and asked point blank why they were not considering my clients, she said it was because they were "too Christian." She went on to explain that my clients did not want the child to attend public schools, and that they had said they would homeschool him before they sent him to a public school. She explained that my clients did not want the child to attend public school because they did not believe in evolution or things like that, and that they had a lot of other "crazy ideas" like those. She explained that they felt that the reason my clients' daughter had drug problems was because they were too strict and had such "far out" religious ideas.

When we pressed the issue, the state ordered a psychosocial evaluation for the grandparents. The psychologist that the state selected was also hostile to my clients. For instance, my clients had once moved to a better neighborhood because a man had been murdered in their neighborhood. The psychologist went so far as to imply that my clients must have had something to do with the death. Everything my clients said was twisted to make them appear radical and extreme in their beliefs. The only explanation ever given for the hostility to my clients was the fact that they were "too Christian."

After a long battle, the judge placed the child with my clients, who have raised him ever since. The striking aspect of the case is that the state was so resistant to placing the child with my clients, not because of a fear of neglect or physical harm to the child, but because my clients believed in doctrines that were traditional. They held those beliefs as absolutes, and refused to back down on their adherence to those beliefs. In a world that more and more rejects traditional Christian values as outdated, and teaches a moral relativism under which no set of beliefs or values is seen to be exclusively correct, those who believe in moral absolutes are seen as "intolerant,"

and are singled out. While the case in question involved grandparents, parents could face the same difficulty in a case where those employed by the state are hostile to the parents' values.

We see the world around us growing more and more hostile to the absolute truths of Scripture, and increasingly accepting all forms of sin. At the same time, we can expect that the world's tolerance for the true church's condemnation of sin will also erode. Just as biblical views on punishment were widely accepted a generation ago, but are now viewed with suspicion, our views will increasingly seem out of touch with mainstream thought. Our condemnation of sin will be seen as intolerant in a world filled with moral relativism that allows every man to do what is right in his own eyes.

We can expect that, in addition to the discipline of our children, our instruction of them will also come under attack. The world preaches that everyone must be accepting of everyone else's "choices," with "choices" usually being little more than a euphemism for sin. Our teaching that Scripture provides moral absolutes is viewed as antisocial and intolerant. In the future, the world may consider this as grounds for finding that parents are corrupting children and preventing them from being productive members of society.

Consider the following excerpt from the state's guide to identifying child abuse. Under the section on mental abuse, the guide gives the example of "Corrupting the child by encouraging and reinforcing destructive, antisocial behavior until the child is so impaired in socioemotional development that interaction in normal social environments is not possible."<sup>2</sup> The day may come when a child who refuses to work on the Sabbath day and who opposes homosexuality and fornication has difficulty interacting with society in general. As the definition of what is "normal" changes, so does society's definition of "normal social environments." Condemning sin in others may be viewed as "destructive, antisocial behavior." As society becomes accepting of sin and even promotes sinful behavior, the tenets of traditional Christianity seem more and more unusual, and believers' condemnation of widely accepted immoral behavior will be seen as antisocial and disruptive in an otherwise "tolerant" society. Biblical dis-

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<sup>2</sup> *Child Abuse: A guide for Mandatory Reporters* (July 1, 2011).

cipline of children will be seen as harsh and domineering in a society that teaches children that there is no sin, only “choices.”

As discussed in the second installment in this series, it is easier in many respects to prosecute a case in juvenile court than in criminal court. The key question in juvenile court is “What is in the best interest of the child?” Evidence in the form of reports from social workers is admissible, and the burden of proof is lower. In this context, we can expect that, just as biblical discipline such as corporal punishment is scrutinized, the doctrines we teach our children will soon be scrutinized. In a world that advocates tolerance and denies moral absolutes, our doctrines will increasingly be seen as unacceptable teachings for children. Teaching children that they cannot be friends with those who walk in sin will be seen as teaching antisocial behavior, which would not be in the child’s best interest, that is, in the world’s view. Parents could be accused of making it impossible for their children to function in society, at least to the world’s standards. Our schools may also come under attack as they stand in the place of the parents in reinforcing these teachings. Our teaching and discipline of our children could be used by the state to try to remove them from our care.

As society changes around us, there is nothing we can do

to prevent our traditional Christian values from becoming more and more out of step with mainstream society. While our constitutional rights will protect our religious freedoms for a time, eventually our views will become so at odds with society in general that authorities will feel justified in intervening to prevent “harm” to our children. Despite all this, the child of God still has comfort in knowing that all things are in His almighty hand, and that “in all things that may hereafter befall us, we place our firm trust in our faithful God and Father, that nothing shall separate us from His love; since all creatures are so in His hand, that without His will they cannot so much as move” (Heidelberg Catechism, LD 10, Q&A 28).

We are concerned for the future, how we will provide our children with the instruction required by Scripture and our baptism vows in the face of the world’s opposition. We are called to be vigilant and unyielding in carrying out this calling. Yet, we have no reason to fear for our children even though we fear we may not be able to instruct them, or even worse, that they could be taken from us. Our children are covenant children, called by God, and are included in the promise of Christ in John 10:28, “And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” ☞

## NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

## MR. PERRY VAN EGDOM

### Minister Activities

Rev. Rodney Kleyn, pastor of the Covenant of Grace PRC located in Spokane, WA, announced on June 7 that God had led him to decline the call he was considering to be the second missionary to the Philippines. We rejoice with Rev. Kleyn that God has confirmed to him that his calling for now is to labor in the congregation at Spokane. Praise be to God for that clear revelation of His will! The Council of Doon PRC then announced a trio from which to call a

missionary, which consisted of Rev. A Brummel (Heritage PRC, Sioux Falls, SD), Rev. G. Eriks (Hudsonville, MI PRC), and Rev. C. Haak (Georgetown PRC, Hudsonville, MI). From this trio the Doon congregation extended a call to Rev. Allen Brummel on July 5. May God grant Rev. Brummel clearly to know His will concerning this call.

On June 14, 2015 the congregation at Peace PRC, Lansing, IL voted to extend a call to Rev. Brian Huizinga, Redlands, CA PRC to come over and help them as their next pastor. On June 28 God’s direction to Rev. Huizinga was manifest in his letter of decline. May God bless Rev.

Huizinga in his continued labors, and bring to Peace PRC the man of His choosing soon.

### Denominational Activities

The annual Synod of the PRCA met June 9-12 in Faith PRC, Jenison, MI. Seminarian Ryan Barnhill was examined, unanimously approved, and recommended as a candidate for the ministry of the Word and sacraments in the PRC. Candidate Barnhill was declared eligible to receive a call to one of the churches on July 11, 2015. We rejoice with the Barnhills, and in God’s goodness to the churches in

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

supplying another servant to labor in His vineyard! The Barnhills plan to be in Lansing, IL for the summer so that candidate Barnhill can fill the pulpit of Peace PRC.

Synod 2016 is scheduled to meet in Hull, IA, D.V.

### **Mission Activities**

The Classis of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines met June 12 in the PRC in Bulacan. This was the fourth meeting of the classis since the federation began in April 2014. Rev. John Flores led in opening devotions and the meeting was chaired by Rev. Vernon Ibe. The business of classis was mostly routine including reports of standing committees, church visitors, clerk, treasurer, etc. Classis adopted constitutions for Emeritus and Translation work and mandated its standing committee to initiate dialogue with the Contact Committee of the PRCA with a view to establishing a sister-church relationship. The next meeting of classis is scheduled for October 31 in the Berean PRC.

The annual Philippine delegation consisting of Jim Regnerus representing the Doon PRC council and Rev. Allen Brummel representing the FMC, along with their wives, departed Sioux Falls, SD on June 24. Their flights took them to Denver, Los Angeles, Tokyo, and finally Manila, totaling over 24 hours trip time.

By the grapevine we believe that one item included in their baggage was Oreo cookies. From experience one might speculate whether those cookies were reduced to crumbs, powder, or dust in the checked baggage? And an inquiring mind wants to know whether they were double bagged or if they infiltrated the other

items in the luggage? Perhaps carrying them on the plane saved them... and possibly an Oreo tastes the same regardless of consistency?

The Brummels stayed with the Kleyns and the Regnerus' in the Smit home while in Antipolo, though most of their time was spent together. On Monday, July 6, the delegation flew with the Kleyns to the island of Southern Negros Occidental to conduct a Bible study in Bacolod City and then drove the next day to the Sipalay area for the monthly pastor training class. The delegation was scheduled to return July 9.

The delegation joined in celebrating the 26<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary of missionary pastor Rev. Daniel Kleyn and his wife Sharon on June 30.

### **Young People's Activities**

A Western Young People's Retreat took place the first week of July at the Pend O'Reille Bible Camp in north-eastern Washington State. 34 young people from Lacombe, Lynden, Spokane, and Loveland congregations attended. Speakers Rev. Ronald Hanko and seminarian David Noorman gave timely addresses related to the theme "God's Guiding Hand," about God's will for our lives. Activities included discussion groups, an outing to Silverwood Theme Park in northern Idaho, time at the beach, and organized outdoor and indoor games. The event was such a splendid success that next year's retreat is already being planned! Glad to hear that our western young people could spend time together in such an enjoyable way centering on God's Word.

### **Congregational Activities**

Rev. Garry Eriks, pastor of Hudsonville PRC, and his family moved


out of their parsonage home for an anticipated four weeks so remodeling work could begin on June 22.

The congregation at Wingham, Ontario, Canada PRC celebrated Canada Day, July 1 with their annual ice cream social at the parsonage followed by fireworks in the park.

With thanksgiving to God Providence PRC, Hudsonville, MI announced on July 1 that they had purchased a church building on six acres at 1569 44<sup>th</sup> Street in Hudsonville. After almost eight years of meeting in Heritage Christian School gym and music room, the congregation planned to begin holding worship services in their newly purchased building, located a mile and a half south of Faith PRC, beginning July 5. We rejoice with our sister congregation and pray that this facility might serve the purposes of the congregation and allow for a visible witness to the area. May God be glorified in this building in the times to come!

### **School Activities**

Various church bulletins made mention of the goal to secure cooked jams, jellies, and salsas to be sold at the Covenant Christian High School fall festival. An excellent idea! We are convinced that some Rock River Wild Plum jam has to make it there somehow. Nicknamed "Iowa Summertime in a Jar," and not for sale anywhere in the world, the enchanting flavor of this variety has been known to dispel the winter doldrums single-handedly. Ah yes! August...the moon of ripening plums!

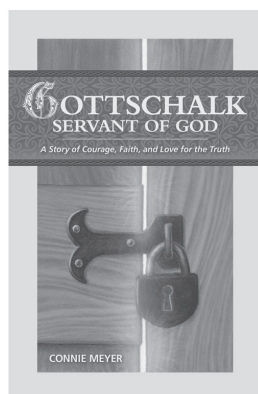
"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" Ecclesiastes 3:3. 

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Gottschalk: Servant of God

*A Story of Courage, Faith, and Love for the Truth*

by Connie L. Meyer



These were the Dark Ages—the days of knights and castles and kings and queens, of monasteries, Vikings, and monks. But one monk stood out from all the rest. One monk stood firm for the truth he believed, though no one stood with him at all. This is the story of Gottschalk of Orbais, a light of truth in the darkness of his age—a light of truth in ours.

- Coming September 2015 -

#### Classis West

■ Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Edgerton, MN, on Wednesday, September 30 2015, at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. All material for the Agenda is to be in the hands of the stated clerk 30 days before classis convenes, that is, by August 31, 2015. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Edgerton's consistory.

Rev. D. Kuiper, Stated Clerk

#### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of First PRC of Holland mourn the loss of a dear brother in Christ and express their sincere Christian sympathy to Jeanine, Caleb, Evan, Grant, Susan Boeve, and Marcia TenBroeke in the death of their beloved husband, father, son-in-law, and nephew,

**JARED LOOYENGA.**

May the word of God comfort you and God's people in Isaiah 41:10: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

Rev. Daniel Holstege, President  
Greg Bos, Assistant Clerk

#### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council of Southwest PRC expresses Christian sympathy to our fellow officebearer Mr. Les Kamps in the death of his father,

**MR. JOHN KAMPS.**

May all the promises of the Word of God bring comfort in this time of sorrow: "...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

Rev. den Hartog, President  
Tom VanderWoude, Clerk

#### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Board of Trustees, on behalf of the whole Protestant Reformed denomination, expresses sincere sympathy to a long-time member of the Board of Trustees, Mr. David Ondersma, on the occasion of the death of his wife,

**MRS. NANCY ONDERSMA.**

May He who identifies Himself as "the God of all comfort" (II Cor. 1:3) provide much comfort by enabling the grieving to live in the knowledge of the unchangeable relationship his heavenly Father has established and maintains with him—a relationship characterized by the greatest wisdom and by infinite love.

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee." (Isaiah 41:10,13).

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop, Stated Clerk

#### Wedding Anniversary

■ We, your children and grandchildren, rejoice with you,

**PHILIP and NANCY VAN BAREN.**

We give thanks to God for the 40 years of marriage He has given you on June 20, 2015! God has blessed our family through your godly example and guidance. "Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you" (I Samuel 12:24).

✿ Drew & Lori Duthler

Samuel, Andrew, Mallory

✿ Jeremy & Kathy Ward

Kole, Chloe, Keagan, Kent, Cady, Calvin (in glory), Jeremiah

✿ Gise & Jennifer Van Baren

Evan, Bristol, Penny

✿ Todd & Joy Zandstra

Chicago Heights, Illinois

#### Classis East

■ Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 9, 2015 at the Byron Center PRC. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 10, 2015.

Jon J. Huisken, Stated Clerk

### Reformed Witness Hour

August 2015

Date	Topic	Text
August 2	"Wives, Be Subject to Your Own Husband"	Ephesians 5:22-24
August 9	"A Beautiful Example of Fearless Submission"	I Peter 3:5, 6
August 16	"Homeward Bound"	II Corinthians 5:1
August 23	"God's Gift of the Family"	Psalms 68:6
August 30	"Christian Education Is Covenant Education"	Isaiah 38:19