

The Standard Bearer

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Treasures of Wickedness

“Treasures of wickedness profit nothing; but righteousness delivereth from death.”

Proverbs 10:2

We live in a materialistic society that seeks the things that are below rather than the things that are above. Material wealth has become the god of our society. As society looks to this god for safety and happiness, it praises and worships this god. It even sacrifices marriage, the home and family to enjoy the blessings of this god.

Nor is the church unaffected by this idolatry. The church's calling is to be in the world but not of the world. Sadly, however, the saints of God, being not yet perfect, easily follow after the world's idolatry. Constantly the saints of God must be warned against the danger and folly of the world's money-god.

And so we meditate for a little bit on the great wisdom of God.

“Treasures of wickedness profit nothing; but righteousness delivereth from death.”



Treasures of wickedness!

Treasures are the material goods and possessions that we lay up for ourselves to be used and enjoyed in the future. They include the money we have in the bank, the food on our shelves, the clothing in our closets, the home in which we live, the businesses we own and run. Ultimately, “treasures” refer to all of our earthly possessions.

Treasures of wickedness are treasures gained in the sphere of wickedness.

The term describes essentially two situations.

On the one hand, it describes the situation in which treasures are sought and obtained out of evil *motives*. Some seek and accumulate earthly treasures to provide safety and security. How vulnerable the poor are! Earthly treasure insulates one from the many troubles that befall the poor. Others seek earthly treasures out of a love for the life of pleasure they can bring. Earthly treasures are also sought for the prestige they bring. No one esteems the poor. But the rich have the praise of

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men. And yes, earthly treasures also provide power and influence over others.

To seek and accumulate earthly treasure out of these motives is to make an idol god of them.

That makes them treasures of wickedness.

On the other hand, treasures of wickedness are also treasures acquired by wicked *means*. And so wealth acquired by shady or dishonest business practices becomes treasures of wickedness. Monies held back dishonestly from the government during tax time are treasures of wickedness. Wages and benefits gained from one's employer through union threats and intimidation are treasures of wickedness. We could go on with example after example. This appears to be the emphasis of this proverb. The word "wickedness" emphasizes that which causes hurt and injury to others.

However, treasures gained through wicked means are without exception treasures sought out of wicked motives.

Much of the treasures amassed today and throughout history have been treasures of wickedness.



Treasures of wickedness stand in contrast to righteousness.

Righteousness has the basic idea of obedience to God's law.

Righteousness as viewed in Scripture has both a legal side and a spiritual side.

Viewed legally, righteousness is the verdict of God that we are righteous before Him. We appear in God's courtroom every day to be judged by the Judge of heaven and earth. He who sees and knows all will give one of two verdicts. Should He see so much as one sin, His verdict will be guilty. If, however, He sees perfect righteousness and obedience, His verdict is righteous.

Viewed spiritually, righteousness refers to godly living. In this case, righteousness describes a life of obedience to God's law.

By nature we do not possess this righteousness. In Adam we are fallen, depraved sinners who can only walk in disobedience to God. And that is God's verdict upon us as well. He finds us guilty and worthy of all damnation.

God, however, provides a perfect righteousness for His elect people in Jesus Christ.

In Jesus Christ God declares His people righteous before Him. He is able to do this because Jesus made the perfect sacrifice for their sin. All His life long but especially at the cross Jesus endured the full punishment of sin that satisfied the justice of God. And through it all Jesus walked in perfect obedience for all those whom the Father had given Him. All those who belong to Jesus are righteous in the judgment of God.

And on the basis of that favorable verdict God also transforms His people so that they are also able to live righteously. No, they are not able to attain perfection in this life. That must wait until heaven. But on the basis of Jesus' perfect sacrifice, the elect of God, who are declared righteous before God, are also blessed with the ability to begin to live according to all of God's commandments.

This righteousness becomes ours by faith alone. This righteousness is God's free gift of grace to all His elect people. As with all the gifts of God's grace, righteousness too is received and enjoyed by faith. This is a faith that brings us to the cross in godly sorrow for sin seeking the covering of Christ for our sins. This is a faith that also seeks the power of the cross to live a righteous life in thankfulness. By faith the believer lives in a forgiven state with God and is able to begin to live according to all God's commandments.

This righteousness is contrasted in our proverb with treasures of wickedness. By this contrast our proverb emphasizes that these are mutually exclusive, so that you cannot have righteousness and the treasures of wickedness.

This does not mean that righteousness and treasures are mutually exclusive. You can have righteousness and treasures. The righteous are not sluggards but, rather, are very industrious. Their righteousness leads them to labor to provide not only for their own needs, but also that they may have something to give to the poor and the cause of God's kingdom. And God often blesses their labors so that they have treasure. This treasure often is small compared to the treasures of the world. Their righteous labor and business practices do not make them competitive with those who strive for treasures of wickedness. But the righteous often have more than their daily bread. They also have earthly treasure.

What are mutually exclusive are righteousness and the treasures of *wickedness*. Treasures of wickedness are

treasures gained in wickedness—out of evil motives and in wicked ways. Those that have walked in the righteousness of the cross do not obtain such treasures.



Treasures of wickedness are worth nothing. They profit nothing.

This certainly is not the perspective of the wicked world. The world in its wickedness considers earthly treasure to be of greatest value. This is because earthly treasure affords them all that they consider worthwhile in life—security, pleasure, esteem, and power. For that reason the world pursues earthly treasures in their wickedness.

But the wisdom of God is that these treasures are worthless.

Treasures of wickedness are worthless, first of all, because they do not truly satisfy; they do not fill man with true peace, contentment, or happiness. Such was the experience of Solomon. He had it all. None had more earthly treasure than Solomon. In addition, he had the safety, happiness, prestige, and power that earthly treasures can afford. And he gave himself over to these things for a lengthy portion of his life. When God finally brought him to his senses, He led Solomon to write of his experiences in the book of Ecclesiastes. And the inspired Solomon concluded that it was all vanity. Vanity of vanities! That is all that it was. And vanity means emptiness. The treasures of wickedness at best leave one empty. That is not worth much.

But more importantly, the treasures of wickedness do not deliver from death. The death mentioned in this proverb is the death of *hell*. The treasures of wickedness do not deliver the wicked from the death of hell. They may deliver the wicked in this life from many things. But these are useless in the day of wrath. In fact, treasures of wickedness will testify against the wicked in the day of judgment, so that they are a tremendous liability. No! Treasures of wickedness profit nothing.

Much different is the righteousness of Jesus Christ. That is of greatest value and worth.

It is of great value during the course of life in that it provides true joy and happiness. Many view the life of righteous living as dull and devoid of any really joy. The righteous life of obedience to God's law contains too many "don'ts" in God's law to suit many. "Don't do this and don't do that." What fun is there in that? Yet the life of righteousness is the blessed life. God's commandments are good. They are designed to bring man into close fellowship and friendship with God. When followed in the power of Jesus Christ, the commandments of God also bring peace to marriage, the family, the church, and society. This is the source of all true joy.

And then, too, righteousness delivers from death. In the day of judgment only those who are clothed with the righteousness of Christ will escape death. Not only will they escape death; but in the righteousness of Christ they will also be exalted into heavenly life and glory.

What great value there is in righteousness!




From this wisdom of Christ our calling in life is very plain.

Certainly we must not pursue the treasures of wickedness. We are sometimes inclined to do so under the influence of our sinful flesh. Each of us should examine his motives and methods of obtaining treasure. Let us never forget that the pursuit of the treasures of wickedness is contrary to what and who we are in Jesus Christ. And that pursuit is unprofitable for us.

Let us rather seek the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ.

We find this righteousness by clinging to the cross in the power of the Word and prayer.

And in that righteousness we will be blessed both now and forever more! 

*Let us never forget
that the pursuit of the
treasures of wickedness
is contrary to what
and who we are in Jesus Christ.*

What It Means To Be Reformed (5)

CALVINISM'S SOLAS

More than the Five Points

Calvinism is more than the “TU-LIP” of the Five Points.

Identification with Calvin’s thought is at *least* an embrace of the Five Points. Real Calvinism is not “Four Point Calvinism” in which one denies, for example, limited atonement.

Real Calvinism is also a *genuine* embrace of the Five Points. That needs to be said with an exclamation point, because a flurry of books have been published recently to explain Calvinism, but accomplish only to explain *away* Calvinism. Those who outrightly reject Calvinism are honest. But these new books are deceptive. An example of this is a recent book entitled *The Joy of Calvinism*.¹ The short book includes four main chapters about God’s love, but begins with a lengthy

“Detour” (the author invites you to “feel free to skip it entirely”) that effectively guts Calvinism’s doctrines of grace. It “challenges most people’s conception of Calvinism in a pretty fundamental way.” The Ph.D. author cavalierly says that “Calvinism does not deny that we have free will,” provocatively claims that “Calvinism does not say we are totally depraved,” and foolishly blurts out

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COVENANTAL
*CALVINISTIC
Solas*
CHURCH
CONFESSIONAL
CHRISTIAN LIFE

that, according to Calvinism, God loves the reprobate and the Canons of Dordt teach this, without as much as a word from the Canons themselves to show this.² Beware counterfeit Calvinism.

Real Calvinism embraces unashamedly the Five Points. However, it is more than the Five Points. The “more” includes many subjects that will come out in future editorials, God willing. But the “more” here

is still with regard to the doctrines of grace, the biblical teaching of salvation. It is the five *solas* of the Reformation.

The five solas

Sola, in Latin, means “only” or “alone.” The adjective *sola* is attached to the four nouns: Christ, faith, grace, and God’s glory. In Latin: *Solus Christus, sola fide, sola gratia*, and *solus Deo Gloria*. By using these phrases, the Reformed faith teaches that salvation is the work of Christ alone, through faith alone, by grace alone, to the glory of God alone. The fifth *sola*—*sola Scriptura*—teaches that the authority for what we believe and how we live is Scripture alone.³ Over against Roman Catholicism and Arminianism—which also confess Christ, grace, faith, and glory to God—Calvinism teaches that salvation comes from Christ *alone*, by grace *alone*, through faith *alone*, to the glory of God *alone*.

The Five Points of Calvinism themselves have this “alone” or “sola” characteristic, as the adjectives in four of the points show: Election is *unconditional*; the atonement is *limited*; depravity is *total*; grace is *irresistible*. Each adjective makes

¹ Greg Forster, *The Joy of Calvinism: Knowing God’s Personal, Unconditional, Irresistible, Unbreakable Love* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012). The book is endorsed by some professors from conservative Presbyterian seminaries, whose positive endorsements make one wonder whether they are themselves denying the fundamentals of the Reformed faith or whether they even read the book.

² Forster, 30, 35, 39. Forster frames the latter point cleverly, “Does God love *the lost*?” but does make clear that the “lost” are those whom God “has not chosen to save,” that is, the reprobate.

³ This fifth *sola* will be treated later when we consider the source of *authority* in the Reformed Church: *sola scriptura*.

a point similar to what the *solas* make. The Canons of Dordt are emphatic about this. But it is worth explaining these *solas* in a separate editorial to emphasize this fundamental dimension of being Reformed. Reformed churches were and are faithful to the Bible's *exclusive* claims. To be Reformed is to be distinctive, antithetical, exclusive.

More than Calvin, too

To say that the five *solas* are "Reformed" rather than that they are "Calvinist" (they are the five *solas* of the *Reformation*, not the five *solas* of *Calvin*) gives opportunity to remind ourselves that, although the Reformed faith owes a great debt to Calvin, our debt is not, to invent a phrase, "*sola* to Calvin." The human instruments whom God used to hand down to us the Christian tradition we call "Reformed" were many more than Calvin.

Reformed Christians rightly lionize Calvin. We thank God for this man and his defense and propagation of the true Christian religion. Our debt to his tireless and faithful efforts is no little one. But 'lionizing' Calvin must not allow us to forget other worthies in the 'pride.' Reformed believers ought to grant lion-status to Calvin's contemporaries—Zwingli and a Lasco, Vermigli and Bucer, Bullinger and Knox. In the same 'pride' ought to be placed Calvin's followers, who clarified and developed the Reformed faith—Beza, Ursinus and Oliveanus, Voetius and Gomarus, and many more. Calvin himself would have given recognition to

a different cloud of witnesses, on whose shoulders he stood, and on account of whose blood the faith of the fathers was living still in his day—Augustine, Gottschalk, Wycliff, Huss, Luther and more.

But attaching a man's *name* to a movement is not the way of wisdom. Truly, we ought not embrace the label Calvinist any more than the PRCs want to be known as "Hoeksemists," the Canadian Reformed "Schilderists," or the OPCs "Machenists." Calvin himself did not want his name so used. It was not, in his day, except by his Lutheran opponents. Calvin recoiled at the designation "Calvinism," and not because of modesty, but because the Christian faith is not of a man, and the truth they embraced was not new.

Yet, the label has stuck. So we use it without shame, even if with some slight regret. But far better for us is the label "Reformed" (by which, remember, we simply mean the *Christian* faith). And Reformed is the designation that is attached to the five *solas*. Briefly explained, they are:

Solus Christus

The only *sola* in the nominative (nominative makes the phrase the *subject* of some sentence), *solus Christus* makes Christ the sole subject of our salvation.⁴ Christ saves.

⁴ Because there is no definitive, or authoritative, statement of the five *solas* (as there is for the Five Points of Calvinism in the Canons of Dordt) and I have found no original sources for these statements, we may guess here as to the reason for the nominative. If any reader can point out a good study of the origin and history of

Christ *alone* saves. Jesus Christ is the only Mediator and Intercessor for His people.

Roman Catholic doctrine held forth many mediators. The poor believers were directed to find their salvation from the saints. My childhood Roman Catholic neighbors had St. Christopher hanging from their rear-view mirror to intercede for them in their travels to grandmother's house. The Reformed fathers taught what eighth grade catechism students know: we do not seek our "salvation and welfare of (from) saints." And "we ought not to seek, neither can find salvation in any other" than Christ. For "one of these two things must be true, that either Jesus is not a complete Savior; or that they, who by a true faith receive this Savior, must find all things in Him necessary to their salvation" (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 11). The Belgic Confession says: "We believe...[that it is not] necessary to seek or invent any other means of being reconciled to God, than this *only* sacrifice, once offered, by which believers are made perfect forever."⁵ "For any to assert, that Christ is not sufficient, but that something more is required besides Him, would be too gross a blasphemy" (Art. 22).

The Reformed creeds teach biblical truth: "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5). "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among

these five *solas* we will gladly publicize that.

⁵ Article 21; and see the powerful statements in Articles 22 and 23.

men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Sola fide

This phrase means “by faith alone.”⁶ That is, we are saved, or justified, through faith and nothing more than faith. Righteousness is imputed to sinners through the instrument of faith, nothing added. Roman Catholicism, and modern heresies arising even from churches with the name “Reformed,” teach that righteousness comes through faith *and*... (something else). The Reformation responded, “by faith *alone*, and not through my works or through the law.” Faith is the “alone instrument” uniting a man with Christ, who is our righteousness. Only faith embraces Jesus, in whom is all our salvation. No will of man, no work of man, no goodness of man, explains our righteous standing before God.

“We justly say with Paul, that we are justified by faith alone, or by faith without works” (Belgic Confession, Art. 22). Then the creed sharpens the point: “To speak more clearly, we do not mean that faith itself justifies us, for it is only an instrument with which we embrace Christ our righteousness.” According to Martin Luther, this is the article by which the church stands or falls. Calvin said it is “the main hinge on which religion turns.” The fathers of Westminster followed suit by confessing that “Faith...is the alone instrument of justification.”

To tie the first two *solas* together,

⁶ At times *sola fide* was written *per solam fidem*, which means essentially the same: “through faith alone.”

the Reformed faith teaches that Christ alone saves, through faith alone.

Sola gratia

Important as is the confession, “faith alone,” it serves a truth of higher rank. That truth is *sola gratia*, or, by grace alone. Grace is the *unmerited favor* of God. All the salvation that Christ provides

*No one else saves
but Christ!
Nothing but grace and faith
explain our salvation
in Christ!
For none but God
may receive the glory!
This is exclusive,
for false teachings
must be excluded....
There may be no doubt
as to Who is worthy
of praise. All of it.
This is Reformed.*

through faith, must come by this unmerited favor alone.

Now see *how* faith is the servant of grace. Since faith is God’s gift,⁷

⁷ Ephesians 2:8 and Philippians 1:29; and Canons II:7 teaches that we “are indebted for this benefit solely to the grace of God.”

faith is not a work of man. And since all of salvation comes through this gift of faith, we can say, “All of salvation is of grace! Salvation is not to be explained by anything in me. I am a debtor! What I am and shall receive is undeserved. It is all of grace and of grace alone.”

Connecting faith and grace in this way is the teaching of Romans 4:16. Read the context, from verse 1, to see Paul’s grand teaching of justification (salvation) by faith, and his powerful argument against the heresy of justification (salvation) by works. Paul concludes by connecting faith and grace: “therefore it (the promise to Abraham) is of faith, that it might be by grace.” Why did the promise come to Abraham “of faith,” and not of works? In order that the promise might come to Abraham “by grace.”

This, too, the Reformed confessions teach. Everything of salvation is *sola gratia*, that is, “mere grace.” “...We are delivered from our misery, merely of grace” (HC, LD 32). “Righteousness and salvation, are...merely of grace” (HC, LD 7). “God...only of mere grace, grants and imputes to me, the perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ” (HC, LD 23). Election, the deepest source of my salvation, is out of “mere grace” (Canons I:7).

Soli Deo Gloria

So that we may always say, “To God alone be the glory!”

To put these four *solas* together is not difficult: Christ alone saves through faith alone for the sake of grace alone, in order that all glory may be given to God alone! If any of salvation—even the tiniest bit—


comes from outside of Christ, or if Christ comes to man through any other instrument than His free gift of faith, or on account of any merit in man, then the glory of that tiniest bit of salvation goes to man and not to God. Against that “gross blasphemy” Reformed believers fight with all their might.

Canons I:7 teaches gracious salvation, beginning in salvation’s source—sovereign election: “for the demonstration of His mercy, and for the praise of His glorious grace....” The fathers in this ecumenical synod were looking at Scripture’s call to give all glory, in all things, to God and to God alone. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who

hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings...in Christ...according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace” (Eph. 1:3-6). And the book of Romans does nothing if it does not teach that *everything* revolves around God’s glory. The heart of the reprobate’s sin is a *refusal* to give glory to God (1:23). Sin is a coming “short of the glory of God” (3:23). Paul teaches that if Abraham’s justification were by works, he would be able to glory in himself (4:2); but Abraham “was strong in faith, giving *glory to God*” (4:20). Paul’s conclusion of the doctrinal section of the epistle, where all the doctrines of sovereign grace are taught is, “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to

whom be glory for ever. Amen.” (11:36). And Paul’s own Spirit-inspired exclamation point of the epistle, his very last words before the final “Amen,” are: “To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever” (16:27).

No one else saves but Christ! Nothing but grace and faith explain our salvation in Christ! For none but God may receive the glory!

This is *exclusive*, for false teachings must be *excluded*. This is *antithetical*, for truth must be defended over against the lie. This is *distinctive*, for biblical truth must be known and confessed clearly, sharply, distinctly. There may be no doubt as to Who is worthy of praise. All of it. This is Reformed. 

ALL AROUND US

REV. CLAYTON SPRONK

■ Out of the Frying Pan...

Five congregations in Illinois have completed the process of leaving the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and joining the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). I mentioned in an earlier report about the exit of these congregations from the RCA that I hoped they would explain the grounds for their action sometime in the future. Ben Kappers, lead pastor of the First PCA of Lansing, IL (formerly First RCA), explained why he and his congregation left the RCA in an article published on February 12, 2015 (before the March 1 publication of my previous report but after the date I turned in the report).

About leaving the RCA Pastor Kappers wrote,

As hard as it may be, it is time to leave. It’s necessary. It’s a matter of conscience. The Reformed Church in America has fundamentally changed in the past few years. The conscience clauses, which allowed comple-

mentarians to function in the RCA without fear of discrimination or formal charges, have been removed. The Belhar Confession, which contains theological statements we cannot affirm, was adopted as a fourth confession of the church. The RCA continues to neglect to discipline those who openly rebel against God’s design for human sexuality. While on paper the RCA’s position on sexuality is biblical, it seems to be inching ever closer to a “third way” approach to the issue where each congregation is permitted to determine for itself whether to conduct LGBT weddings. Many of the professors at our seminaries promote an “open and affirming” position; one of those professors has written a very popular book advocating for “full inclusion.”

But what ultimately requires us to leave the RCA is a lack of commitment to the inerrancy and authority of the Scriptures. While our confessions state, “*Everything God reveals in his Word is true*,” the doctrine of inerrancy is not only conspicuously absent from all official documents and affirmations, but openly rejected within the seminaries. Without a common, Spirit-wrought, foundational belief in the absolute perfection and authority of God’s Word there can be no true reform. This is

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why our consciences compel us to transfer. With sadness we have determined that it is time to stop pouring energy and resources into denominational strategies and reform efforts. We need to refocus on the proclamation of the gospel here in Lansing and around the world. The time has come to ensure that the First Church we hand off to our children stands firmly on the solid rock of Jesus Christ and his inerrant Word.¹

The five congregations certainly had good reasons for leaving the RCA. But it is not accurate to paint the picture as if the denomination “fundamentally changed” only in the “past few years.” And the attitude that allows one to say it is possible to stay in a denomination even though the denomination officially approves of women’s ordination because there is a “conscience clause” that allows members to object to this position is simply wrong. Nevertheless, Pastor Kappers and his congregation had good reasons for leaving the RCA. The publication of these reasons is a call—a call to every member of the RCA who desires to remain faithful to the Word of God as it is confessed by the Reformed faith to come out of the RCA. A call and, therefore, a warning! God’s judgment has fallen on the RCA, as is evident from the serious sins that have taken root and are spreading throughout the denomination. It is time to flee the RCA. Now!

But what about joining the PCA?

■ ...And into the Fire?

In my previous report I criticized the decision of these former RCA congregations to join the PCA, writing, “the PCA has officially approved of the heresy of the Federal Vision, which denies the very heart of the gospel—justification by faith alone! And some years ago the PCA changed its requirements for subscription to its confessional standards, which has resulted in the PCA allowing people to hold numerous positions (even publicly) that are contrary to historic Reformed and Presbyterian doctrines.” On the day (Feb. 5) that I submitted that report, former PCA pastor Tony Phelps published an article explaining that these are substantially the reasons why he decided to leave the PCA.

¹ Pastor Kappers’ article appeared on theaquilareport.com/im-becoming-a-presbyterian-so-is-my-church. The petition of the 1st Lansing congregation to withdraw from the RCA can be found at <http://benkappers.blogspot.com/2014/12/petition.html>.

In explaining how the PCA has departed from her official creeds, Phelps begins by pointing out that the PCA allows congregations to worship in ways that are contrary to the regulative principle of worship as spelled out in the Westminster Standards. About worship in the PCA Phelps writes,

Worship in some PCA churches may look broadly evangelical, even quasi-charismatic, but not distinctively and necessarily Reformed. In the name of being “missional,” some churches craft their worship in an effort to be “relevant” and reach a particular demographic niche. Practically, for them, the RPW has been reinterpreted as the “relevant principle of worship.” Other churches may adopt more “traditional” liturgy. Not because it is biblical, but also for pragmatic considerations, to reach or cater to another particular demographic. Some influenced by the Federal Vision movement may go in the higher church direction—using vestments and a more ceremonial liturgy—embracing an idiosyncratic worship that is not Reformed (nor Lutheran nor Anglican for that matter). Still other PCA churches seek to be intentionally Reformed (i.e., biblically regulated) in their worship.²

Phelps explains that the toleration of anti-biblical/anti-confessional worship “bothered” him, but he did not leave the denomination because he “took comfort” that the PCA was committed to missions and “[held] to the Reformed faith (for the most part).” But developments in the PCA have led to him to write, “This comfort has been lost for me,” and to conclude that “the PCA as a whole is no longer meaningfully confessional.”

Phelps has concluded that the PCA does not hold to the Reformed faith because he believes that the PCA “as a whole” has exonerated Peter Leithart and Jeffrey Meyers. Phelps applauded the study committee report brought to the General Assembly of the PCA in 2007. The study committee, he writes, “did a fine job of pointing out where various FV teachings cannot be reconciled to Westminster.” But study committees and their reports “are not binding.” This became apparent in the trials of Leithart and Meyers who “were tried and exonerated by their respective presbyteries.” Furthermore, “Leithart’s exoneration was complained against—and yet the Stand-

² Tony Phelps, “Grateful and Grieved: My Goodbye to the PCA,” February 5, 2015, theaquilareport.com/grateful-and-grieved-my-goodbye-to-the-pca.

ing Judicial Commission of the PCA's General Assembly upheld that exoneration on procedural grounds."

Phelps recognizes that the FV is a serious error. He writes, "the Gospel itself is directly undermined by the FV. Leithart's formulation would be more at home in Rome than Westminster."

Phelps conclusion is that "as a whole" the PCA tolerates "the anti-Reformed, Gospel-corrupting doctrines of the FV." Likely some would object that the PCA General Assembly has not explicitly approved the FV. And some would likely object by pointing out that the Standing Judicial Commission of the General Assembly that approved Leithart's exoneration argued that its decision was not to be construed as approving his theology. Phelps appeals to the PCA's "Book of Church Order" in support of his conclusion that the PCA as a whole has exonerated Leithart and Meyers. "According to PCA polity," he writes, "the actions of one court of the PCA are the actions of the whole church." So he writes, "Make no mistake, the PCA exonerated Meyers and Leithart – not 'that' presbytery, or 'that' SJC."

There may be some debate about whether the PCA has decided "as a whole" to "accommodate" the FV. But to the shame of the PCA no one can argue with Phelps that "Leithart and Meyers remain ministers in good standing in the PCA" despite the fact that they openly teach the FV. So far the ecclesiastical assemblies in the PCA have given Leithart and Meyers the freedom to remain in the denomination and continue to teach their FV views. As of right now the PCA is a place of safe haven for the FV.

It is possible that the PCA's General Assembly will one day condemn the views of Leithart and Meyers. But Phelps sees the decisions to exonerate Leithart and Meyers as part of a general negative trend. He writes, "Confessional men have lost every important battle over the years. They lost on Westminster's language regarding creation 'in the space of six days.' They lost on confessional subscription. And...they lost on the FV." Phelps believes that the "tune" of confessional men in the PCA has changed. "Ten plus years ago, they were fighting for the heritage and identity of the PCA as a confessional church." But now the tune he hears is, "Well, as long as I am not hassled for my confessional commitments in the PCA, I see no reason to leave. At least I can be a testimony to confessional Presbyterianism. Besides, if the

'conservatives' leave, the PCA will slide into rank apostasy." In response, Phelps rhetorically asks, "Isn't that an admission that the PCA as a whole is not substantially confessional?"

At about the same time five congregations left the unfaithful RCA denomination for the PCA, Phelps left the PCA because of her unfaithfulness.

■ And the URC?

Phelps left the PCA for the United Reformed Church in North America (URCNA). Phelps writes, "In the URCNA, officers subscribe to the 'Three Forms of Unity' because they agree with the Word of God. Reformed faith and practice are not divorced, but the former necessarily shapes the latter. Not only is the FV repudiated on paper, but I have confidence that the URCNA will not provide a safe haven for the anti-Reformed, Gospel-corrupting doctrines of the FV."


It is striking that Phelps does not mention anything about the views of creation that are tolerated in the URCNA. In light of his criticism of the PCA's toleration of anti-confessional views on creation, it seems safe to infer that he takes the position that the Reformed creeds teach that creation took place in the space of six literal (24 hour) days. In the URCNA he will find people who publicly oppose that Reformed teaching. It would be interesting to know if Phelps is "comfortable" with the different views of creation that the URCNA tolerates.

The URCNA is more committed to the Reformed confessions than the PCA, but there are two areas of departure that ought greatly concern Phelps and everyone else in the Reformed/Presbyterian church world. Over against the teaching of the Reformed confessions that God's grace is sovereign and particular, the URCNA tolerates common grace, which teaches that there is a certain love of God for everyone, a love of God that does not sovereignly save all who are its object. And over against the teaching of the confessions that salvation is an unconditional work of God, the URCNA teaches that salvation, in the context of the covenant, is conditional. The reason that it is vitally important for the Reformed/Presbyterian church world to recognize that common grace and a conditional covenant are anti-confessional is that these teachings open the way to the Federal Vision.

The URCNA is not a safe haven for any men like Leithart or Meyers at this time. John Barach, equal to Leithart and Meyers in FV standing, left the URCNA, it is reported, because he could tell that he would not be welcome in the denomination too much longer if he continued to teach the FV. We still question why he was pressured but never disciplined. Perhaps Phelps is confident that, if in the future another man teaches the FV, the URCNA will discipline him. But he ought to know from his experience in the PCA that condemning FV “on paper” does not guarantee that those who teach the FV will actually be held accountable.

But Phelps ought to think about more than whether or not the URCNA will tolerate FV teachings. It does not bode well for the URCNA that she tolerates the teaching that God’s love and grace are wider than election. That may not exactly be the same thing as saying, as the FV does, that in the covenant God gives saving benefits to the reprobate. But it is easy to see how opening up God’s grace to the reprobate in so-called common grace leads

to opening that grace up to the reprobate in the *saving* grace of the covenant. And the URCNA tolerates the conditional covenant view that is basis of the covenant view of the Federal Vision.

Although there is reason to criticize the decisions of former RCA congregations to join the PCA and to criticize Phelps for his decision to join the URC, there is also reason to celebrate what we seen happening in Reformed and Presbyterian churches. The Reformed confessions are being discussed. A need for commitment to those confessions is being affirmed. Even if the steps taken by Phelps and the RCA churches seem to be small steps, they do seem to be in the right direction. At least Phelps indicates that the FV is putting some steel into the backbones of Reformed and Presbyterian men who will not compromise with that doctrine. We could hope that the continued discussion of the confessions will lead more people to the discovery and conviction that the Reformed confessions teach the beautiful truths of particular grace and the unconditional covenant. 

THINGS WHICH MUST SHORTLY COME TO PASS

PROF. DAVID ENGELSMA

Chapter Five

Premillennialism (6):

Its Explanation of Revelation 20

Introduction

The preceding article in this series began setting forth the premillennial explanation of the passage of Scripture that is fundamental to all millennial doctrine, that is, all doctrine that predicts a “golden age” in future, earthly history, namely, Revelation 20.

In the preceding article was laid out all that must immediately precede the events of Revelation 20 on the premillennial understanding of the passage. These preliminary events include the rapture out of the world of the believing church, including those who have already

died—a first resurrection of the dead; the appearance of the Antichrist; Antichrist’s persecution of the Jews; the visible return of Jesus to destroy Antichrist and his hordes, in order to save Israel; and Jesus’ establishment of the now converted nation of Israel as the glorious, earthly kingdom of God on earth in the sliver of land along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea.

These events, proposed by premillennialism, pave the way for the premillennial explanation of Revelation 20.

The Glories of the Millennium

On the occasion of the realization of these preliminary events, the events prophesied in Revelation 20 are to take place, especially the millennium.

Satan will be bound for a literal period of one thousand

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years of human and earthly history, confined to some remote place away from the earth. As a result of this binding of Satan, sin will be severely curtailed throughout all the world. Peoples and nations will become susceptible to the gospel that the Jews will preach everywhere.

The millennium begins—a thousand years of earthly peace and prosperity for all mankind. And now begins a thousand years of the rule of the world by the converted nation of Israel—the all-glorious, all-powerful earthly kingdom of God, similar, but superior, to the Old Testament nation of Israel during the reigns of David and Solomon. Alva J. McClain speaks of the “restoration and world supremacy of the nation of Israel.”¹ Jesus Himself, in His resurrection body, will be enthroned in Jerusalem, ruling the world as the king of Israel.

Premillennialists exhaust the superlatives of language in extolling the glories of this earthly, millennial kingdom. “Golden age” is the common premillennial description of the millennial kingdom. Why anyone living in this kingdom and enjoying its splendors and comforts would desire the eternal kingdom, which is to follow the millennium, much less desire it ardently, as the Bible calls believers to do, is a mystery. Alva J. McClain’s glowing description of the millennial kingdom is subdued among premillennialists. “All wars will be stopped, all diseases cured, all the injustices of government rooted out, and a full measure of years added

to human life...all such unrealized and worth-while dreams of humanity will at last come true on earth.” The millennial kingdom will be a “‘Golden Age’ upon earth in history.” McClain calls his theology of the future millennial kingdom “a truly optimistic view of human history.”²

The reign of Christ during the millennium, in fact, will be the glorious kingdom of earthly Israel, the Jewish

nation. Israel will dominate all the nations of the world. All the nations will subject themselves to Israel. Israel will prosper materially. The nations will share in Israel’s bounties. Israel will bring peace to the world.

Reformed, covenant theology criticizes dispensationalism’s exaltation of Jewish Israel, which renders the beloved church of Jesus Christ a mere cipher in the millennium. Of late, the “moderate” premillennialists have responded to this criticism by affirming that the church will somehow share in the millennial glory of Israel. Nevertheless, the millennial kingdom will be national Israel. The millennium will be the “golden age” for the Jews.

The attempt by premillennial theologians to counter the charge that premillennialism makes the church a nonentity during the millennium is a complete failure. Especially the contemporary, “moderate” premillennialists emphasize that the souls of those who were behead-

ed for the witness of Jesus and who reign with Christ during the millennium are the members of the church. The church, therefore, will reign with Christ over the millennial kingdom.

Does not this tribute to the church disarm the criticism that the millennial kingdom is a Jewish matter?

Not at all, and this, for several reasons.

First, the lip-service to the reigning of the church is drowned out in premillennial treatments of the millennial

kingdom by the overwhelming testimony to the peace, power, and prosperity of *Israel*.

Second, according to premillennialism’s own fundamental doctrine of the separation of Israel and the church, the church has no place, certainly no *ruling* place in the millennial kingdom. Israel is the kingdom; the church is not the kingdom. Premillennialism, therefore, is merely tossing a sop—an *illegitimate* sop—to covenant theology when it acknowledges that the church will reign with Christ during the millennium.

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¹ Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom* (Winona Lake, Indiana: BMH Books, 1959), 211.

² *Ibid.*, 530, 531. The emphasis is McClain’s.

Third, Revelation 20:4-6 rules out this sop. Those who will reign with Christ for a thousand years are those who were martyred by the beast, that is, the Antichrist. But, according to premillennial doctrine, the church was raptured before the persecution of Antichrist. Besides, according to premillennialism the object of Antichrist's persecution will be the Jews of national Israel.

Those who reign with Christ in the millennial kingdom must be the Jews, some of whom have been raised from the dead in their immortal bodies.

The reign of the glorified Jesus Christ and of risen, immortal saints, whether Jews or Gentile believers, is another impossible absurdity of premillennial theology. The risen, glorious, majestic, awesome Jesus Christ lives and reigns, in His body, on earth among sinful humanity, in the stream of the continuation of earthly history. The risen Jesus tolerates and cooperates with sinful humans, part of the flow of sin-tainted history, rubbing shoulders daily, not only with sinful saints, but also with reprobate, ungodly unbelievers. As ruler of the nations of the world, the populations of which are all still earthy, sinful descendants of Adam, the risen Jesus concerns Himself daily with such matters as police, medical treatments, business, agriculture, transportation, sewage, domestic tranquility, crime, entertainments, finance, and more—everything that is part and parcel of the natural life of earthy, sinful humans on the present earth.

During the millennium, glorified, heavenly, sinless saints rub elbows with sinners and participate somehow in the goings-on of earthly, sinful life in this fallen and sin-cursed world.

During the millennium, the normal course of human life goes on: births, sicknesses, griefs, deaths, and sins.

Literal Interpretation of Prophecy

But there will also be vast improvements of history and human life. This rosy aspect of the millennium is due, in part, to the premillennial insistence on explaining Old Testament prophecy in a strictly *literal* way. A literal understanding of Old Testament prophecy is one of the fundamentals of premillennialism. "Consistent literalism is at the heart of dispensational eschatology," especially "the literal fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies."³ And

³ Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago:

this literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecy is "the basic tenet of premillennial eschatology."⁴ How the premillennial theologians insist on the literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecy! How they rail against the amillennial interpretation of Old Testament prophecy as typical of the spiritual salvation and blessing of the church! How they boast of their literal interpretation as setting them apart as alone faithful to the Word of God! And how they squirm, deservedly uncomfortably, when this insistence on a literal interpretation of prophecy not only leads to absurdity but also drives them into egregious heresy!

If Isaiah 2:1-4 prophesies that the "mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains" in the last days and that "all nations shall flow unto it," we must expect a literal, rebuilt, material temple in the top of the mountains in Palestine and the traveling to this temple for right worship of all the nations on earth, during the millennium. Never mind that Jesus said that time was coming when the godly would not worship the Father at Jerusalem (John 4:21).

If this same Old Testament passage foretells that the nations will destroy their weapons of war and renounce war, we must expect earthly peace in the future, during the millennium. Never mind that Matthew 24:6, 7 forewarns that the beginning of sorrows related to the bringing forth of the new world will be "wars and rumours of wars," with nation rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom.

If Amos 9 prophesies miraculous fertility of the fields in Israel, so that food and drink abound in the land, we must expect huge crops and large quantities of wine in Israel during the millennium, although most premillennialists, being tee-totalers, must have a problem with the literal explanation of the prophecy of vineyards and wine.

If Zechariah 8 prophesies that all the inhabitants of Jerusalem will live to an old age and that the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing their games, we must expect that all the Jews will become very old before they die and that all families will be large and happy.

... to be continued. 

Moody Press, 1965), 158. Ryrie, of course, is a prominent premillennial theologian.

⁴ Ibid.

Rise(n); Raise(d)

The gospel is that Jesus is risen from the dead. The good news is not merely that Christ died. Indeed, Jesus must die for our sins according to the Scriptures (I Cor. 15:3). But He must also rise (John 2:22). For if Christ is not risen, our faith is vain (I Cor. 15:14). A dead Jesus does us no good. A dead Jesus is no different from any other human. And Christians who believe only a dead Jesus are themselves still dead in sin (I Cor. 15:17). The complete, comforting, pure, and powerful good news of salvation is that Jesus is risen from the dead, and if we confess this with our mouth and believe it in our heart, we also shall be saved (Rom. 10:9).

The good news of this gospel is derived from three truths concerning the resurrection. First, we are repeatedly taught (17 times in Acts alone) that *God* raised Jesus (Acts 2:32). This proves the impossibility of any salvation by the will or worth of man. So completely is salvation from beginning to end the work of God, that even Jesus did not raise Himself up. God must raise Jesus by His Spirit (Rom. 8:11). Likewise, the same God who raised up the Lord, must also raise us up by His own power and grace (I Cor. 6:14). Eternal life is the gift of God (Rom. 6:23).

Secondly, Jesus is risen from the *dead*. This is why God must raise Him. Dead is dead. God raised Him because, having paid the wages of sin, it was impossible for death to hold Him any longer (Acts 2:24). And being raised, death has no more dominion over Him (Rom. 6:9) and this enemy will be destroyed (I Cor. 15:26). The Lord is risen to scatter His enemies (Num. 10:35), rule His adversaries (Num. 24:17), and stand over His fallen foes (Ps. 20:8). Risen, He has abolished death and brings life and immortality to light through the gospel (II Tim. 1:10).

Thirdly, *He* is risen. On the third day, God did not raise merely His *body*. But God raised His *Son* (I Thess. 1:10). He raised up *Jesus* and showed *Him* openly (Acts 2:24). Likewise *we* shall be raised. It is true this includes the quickening of our *bodies* (Rom. 8:11)—the same natu-

ral body sown in corruption, dishonor, and weakness, is raised a spiritual body, incorruptible, glorious, and powerful (I Cor. 15:42-44). But the really good news is that God raises *persons*—and that if His Spirit dwells in *us*, then He who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise *us* up (II Cor. 4:14).

Because God raises persons from the dead, the good news is that we need not wait until He raises our bodies to enjoy the benefits of His resurrection. Indeed it is true, that Christ is risen as the first fruits of them that sleep, so that when He returns we will be awakened from slumber by trumpet sound, and in the blink of an eye be raised incorruptible (I Cor. 15:20, 52). But the really good news is we are *already* risen. As we are buried with Him in baptism, we are now risen with Him through faith by the operation of God (Col. 2:12). And whoever lives and believes in Jesus shall never die (John 11:26). God is not the God of the dead, but God of the living (Mark 12:27).

God has given us assurance in that He raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 17:31). Jesus is risen that we might have a living faith and hope in God (I Pet. 1:21). Faith believes that, as He was delivered to death for our offences, so He was raised for our justification (Rom. 4:25). Hope is certain that God, having raised up His Son, has delivered us from the wrath to come, and sent Him to bless us in turning us away from our iniquities (I Thess. 1:10; Acts 3:26).

Such faith worked by the Spirit of the risen Christ is powerful to make us alive unto good works. *Now*. It is as impossible that a living faith leave us unfruitful and remiss in a holy life, as it would be for those who believe this gospel to ignore Jesus at the trumpet's call and remain unchanged in the grave (Belgic Confession, Art. 24). Christ was raised by the glory of the Father, that we should walk in newness of life and bring forth fruits unto God (Rom. 6:4; 7:4). As those alive from the dead, we yield our members instruments of righteousness unto God (Rom 6:13). Risen with Christ, we are made to sit together in heavenly places, to seek those things which are above where He sits on the right hand of God (Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:1). Good news indeed!



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Philippines Mission Field FAQ

In the course of the past years, I have occasionally had the opportunity to speak to some of our Protestant Reformed high school classes (usually via Skype, and usually in the wee morning hours here) concerning our Philippines mission field. This has always been enjoyable and an encouragement. I appreciate the fact that our teachers keep their students mindful of our denomination's mission work. But I am also grateful for the interest the students themselves show in the work and in the saints here. That interest is clearly evident from the questions they ask. This was again the case with the questions I received (over 40 of them) this past January from the church history class of Heritage Christian High School in Dyer, IN. Recently it occurred to me that perhaps some of those questions, along with the answers, would give you an insight into the work here. Thus, here follow a few Philippines FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)!

Question: How many churches do you preach at? Are there a lot of children?

Under the Lord's blessing, a denomination of Reformed churches was formed here on April 9, 2014. The name of the denomination is the "Federation of Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines." This federation consists of two congregations: the Berean PRC (23 families) and the PRC in Bulacan (17 families). Each of these churches has a good number of children, including many young people. It is encouraging to see the Lord's covenant blessings on the churches and saints here. Currently, we also preach and teach in two other churches. These are not yet part of the PRC denomination here,

but we trust that they will be ready to join in the future, the Lord willing. In addition to all this, we regularly received requests from others to teach them the Reformed faith. In fact, many more requests than we are able to fill. The harvest is indeed plenteous here in the Philippines. In all our work, the most significant and encouraging aspect is not the actual number of people, but the Lord's blessing on the Word that is proclaimed through the belief in the truth and the spiritual growth of the saints here.

Question: How is preaching and teaching in the Philippines different from here? Is it difficult to teach people who have not been Reformed from their youth?

The main difference is that many of the saints here are hearing the truths for the first time. My work mostly involves teaching Reformed doctrines, Reformed church government, and various Reformed subjects to existing pastors. The fact that many are hearing these Reformed teachings for the first time means a number of things. First, it is necessary to take more time to explain things carefully, in detail, and with clear, biblical proofs. Secondly, one needs to be ready to answer many questions. Often a class or lecture is followed by an hour or more of question and answers. I find this an excellent time of learning, not only for those in the class, but also for myself. The latter is true because I'm often challenged by questions I've never been asked before. But their questions also give me an insight into their current understanding as well their former beliefs. The most rewarding aspect of it all is to witness them embracing the truth, by the grace and Spirit of God.

Question: How did the people react to you coming and maybe hearing something they had not heard

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before? Have you had people angry at you because of your doctrines?

No one has become publicly angry with us for what we have taught, but it is, nevertheless, interesting to observe the reactions to teaching and truth that is new, or with which some might initially disagree. One reaction is that some will begin talking with each other about what I am teaching while I am still teaching it. That is certainly a clear indicator that they are hearing something for the first time. The other indicator is their many questions—very good questions, I might add, and often with biblical texts in support of their current views. The Q&A sessions provide an excellent opportunity to clarify the truth and to demonstrate that it is biblical. We have also experienced some leaving because of the truth—for example, in connection with the truths of double predestination, particular grace, infant baptism, and limited atonement.

Question: How do you talk to someone who does not know the faith and does not believe you?

We regularly have attendees in our classes and worship services who are not yet convinced of the truths of Scripture and the Reformed faith. Always the proper and most effective approach is to open up the Bible and show as clearly as possible that the truth is thoroughly biblical. In this way we are also able to make clear that being “Reformed” is really synonymous with being “biblical.” What has also helped is providing them with pamphlets to read (usually for free), or books (which we sell at a significant discount—something we are able to do because of the collections taken in our churches for the Philippine Book Fund). To date, we have not had opportunity to explain the Bible to someone who has never heard it, since the Lord has given us so many contacts and groups of saints who are already Christian, although not yet fully Reformed.

Question: Do you have a common language? Do you understand what people tell you?

The Philippines has two official languages—Tagalog and English—but we are able to do most of our preaching and teaching in English. As regards learning Tagalog, we have reached the point where we are able to understand most things that Filipinos say, although sometimes

it requires asking them to repeat what they have said. The interesting thing is that while Tagalog is the main Filipino language on the island of Luzon (where we live and do most of our work), there are close to 70 other Filipino dialects. That means that if we would ever move to and take up a work in a different part of the country, we would probably need to learn another dialect.

Question: What are some of the changes you had to make to adjust to life in the Philippines? What is the most significant struggle you face in doing mission work there?

Some of the changes we have experienced include the climate (summer all year around), the language (learning Tagalog), food (which has included trying “balut”), communication, traffic, being easily noticed (because of skin color and height), etc. Perhaps the most significant challenge has been communication. Filipinos are bilingual, knowing both Tagalog and English. But Tagalog is their first language and thus the language they use in most of their conversation and communication. Mostly, they understand English well, but they are most comfortable speaking in Tagalog. The result is that I sometimes communicate with someone in two languages, each of us using some English and some Tagalog. That is, the conversation is done in “Taglish.”

Question: How long will you work with someone to show him the truth?

We do not have a set time for this, but in general we take the approach that as long as someone is still interested in the truth and has not actively rejected it, we continue teaching. We believe the Lord uses the receptivity to our teaching to indicate whether or not we still have an open door. We must always remind ourselves that while the Lord may use us to bring His Word, the fruit is His work. God gives the increase (I Cor. 3:7). And our confidence is that His Word does not return to Him void, but accomplishes His purpose (Is. 55:11).

Question: How many people do you preach to at a time?

Mostly, the number of people to whom I preach at a time is in the 30s or 40s. In some instances, I preach to a group of about 15 people. Thus, while the interest in the

Reformed faith is widespread here, most of God's faithful people are in small groups—a small pocket here and there, a remnant, a hut in a garden of cucumbers and a besieged city (Is. 1). Filipinos themselves, however, consider 30 to 40 as a relatively large group.

Question: What kind of controversies do you have there?

The Philippines is mostly Roman Catholic (about 90%), thus many controversies and disagreements involve Roman Catholic errors. One example of such a disagreement in the churches in which we labor centered on the question of whether or not to accept Roman Catholic baptisms. (By the way, the position eventually taken by the PRCP denomination was to follow the historic Reformed practice of accepting them.) Another significant area of controversy concerns our rejection of common grace and the well-meant offer of the gospel. A few others arise on account of the views of the Baptists: dispensationalism and believers' baptism. But perhaps the most prominent belief (error) that we confront is Arminianism. Many of our contacts have come from Arminian backgrounds. Some have not yet fully overcome their Arminian thinking. Others, on the other hand, have become so determined in their rejection of Arminianism that they are inclined to become Antinomian and to reject the law as well as the demand of Scripture that we do good works. This provides a significant challenge in our preaching and teaching.

Question: What are some of the Roman Catholic superstitions you know about or face?

Here is a brief listing of some of the superstitions we have heard about and/or observed: 1) that you can be healed by touching certain images of Jesus; 2) that the spirits of dead relatives are still around you; 3) that you need to pray for your dead relatives or friends to get them out of purgatory; 4) that you should not use knives or go out of your house on Black Saturday (the day after Good Friday) because something bad might happen to you since Jesus is dead and unable to protect you; 5) that if you run a store, you should take the money received from the first sale of the day and touch everything in your store as that will bring you good business for that day; 6) that if a business name, or name on a public vehicle,

has reference to God, Jesus, Mary, or the Bible, that will guarantee success; 7) that a new car/bike/truck/bus/motorcycle should be sprinkled with holy water and receive the priest's blessing (for a fee, of course) in order for it to be safe on the road. These are just a few. Some are indeed very strange, and remind us of the terribleness of the darkness of unbelief.

Question: Do the Roman Catholics dislike the Protestants?

The Roman Catholics do not show this so much in ordinary day-to-day life and interaction. But if you speak out publicly against them, they do become antagonistic. Because of the prominence of Roman Catholicism, we frequently need to address their errors in our preaching and teaching. But we have not yet faced any open or significant opposition because of it.

Question: Have you ever seen a pagan worship service?

No, not yet. We have been inside Roman Catholic churches and observed some of their worship activities. And in many ways, that is close to pagan worship. The reason for this is that when the Spanish occupied the Philippines (from 1521-1898) and introduced Roman Catholicism, they allowed Filipinos to hold on to their pagan beliefs and practices. Thus, the Romish church here is a mix of paganism and Roman Catholicism, as is evident from their superstitious practices, their animism, etc.

Question: How do you go about your work?

When we have a new contact or group, we usually meet with them in order to get to know each other. Then after receiving our consistory's approval (Doon PRC), we often start our work in that group with a monthly or weekly Bible study. Eventually we include them, if possible, in our schedule for Sunday preaching. Our teaching centers on leading them to understand what it means to be historically and confessionally Reformed in 1) doctrine, 2) church government, 3) worship, and 4) life/living. We also assist the consistories in their work, and provide instruction for the pastors in courses or subjects they have not yet received, or did not receive from a Reformed perspective. In all this work, we have as a goal

that the churches and groups might join the Federation of Protestant Reformed Churches here.

Question: Would you say that everyone would benefit from seeing what is happening in our mission field in the Philippines, if this could be done?

Yes. I believe that if any PRCA member has the opportunity to visit here, he or she would grow in love for the universal church of Christ. Visitors would also benefit from seeing the different struggles the people of God face here compared to the struggles in North America (as well as the similar struggles), and thus be able to pray for them in a more meaningful way. I know that such visits would also be an encouragement to the saints here, as has proven to be the case in the past.

Question: Do you enjoy your work?

Yes, I certainly do. We consider the work a privilege and a blessing. For a more detailed answer to this question, please refer to the recent *Standard Bearer* article I wrote entitled “Mission Work Privileges” (January 1, 2015 issue of the *Standard Bearer*).

In conclusion, I cannot help but mention—especially because this becomes clear from the above answers—that the harvest in the Philippines is plentiful, and the laborers are few. It is my prayer that the interest our young people have in the work here may be an indicator that the Lord will direct some of our young men to pursue the call to be ministers and missionaries of His gospel. ☞

SOUNDING OUT THE WORD

REV. CARL HAAK

The Church That Echoed

Reformed Witness Hour:
A distinctively Reformed radio ministry,
proclaiming the truth of the
sovereignty of God
and His grace in Jesus Christ.

“For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.”

I Thessalonians 1:8

In this chapter of I Thessalonians the apostle Paul states that he knew that the believers in Thessalonica had been eternally chosen of God unto salvation. He says to them in verse 4, “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.” How was it that Paul was able to know that they were the elect of God? Was Paul given by God a look into the Lamb’s Book of Life, the registry of God’s eternal election, where God recorded the names of those whom He would give to Christ? No, Paul did

not look into that registry. Paul knew their election because he saw the fruits of election in their lives.

The truth of election is not only that God chose who will be saved and did so from eternity, based only on His own grace, but also that God determined to work in these elect to bring them to faith and to the fruits of faith. We read in Ephesians 1:4, “According as he hath chosen us in [Christ] ... that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” We read in II Thessalonians 2:13 that God has chosen us to salvation “through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” The truth is this: God, with an unchangeable and eternal decree of election, not only determines who shall be saved but determines also that in them He will work His good and holy pleasure, so that they will bring forth the fruits of saving faith.

What were the fruits of faith that Paul saw in the Thessalonians? He says in verse 3: “Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of

Rev. Haak is pastor of Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan and radio pastor for the Reformed Witness Hour, on which this message was aired.

God and our Father.” That is, the apostle saw the great trio of Christian graces (faith, hope, and love).

But more. The apostle says that he recalls how they had received the preaching of the Word of God. That, especially, was an evidence to him that God had worked faith in their hearts. 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.” The gospel came to these Thessalonian Christians not merely as a discourse on religious issues, but, in the power of the Holy Spirit, as the very Word of God, it had given them unshakable assurance. Paul sees the *effect* of the gospel that was preached. He sees the effect that it had upon their lives and especially the effect that it produced in their witnessing. He says, “for from you sounded out [or echoed] the word of the Lord.” Having received the Word of God, the believers in Thessalonica began to echo that Word of God. It reverberated from them to others.

Now Paul is reasoning back from effect to cause. He sees that the Thessalonians showed faith and love and hope. He sees that the Thessalonians had received the gospel in all of its power. He sees that the believers of Thessalonica engaged in sincere evangelism and witnessed of the truth of the gospel. And all of this, says the apostle, could be true only if God had first elected them unto salvation. A fruit of God’s sovereign election is that He works in us the desire to echo forth the Word of the Lord.

It is alleged that those who believe in the doctrine of God’s eternal election are people who do not evangelize. The truth is that those who are elected of God show their election by evangelism. Nothing is lovely, attractive, or catches our eye in the gospel unless God wills of His grace to soften our hearts so that we receive the Word. But then God also makes the believer a sounding board to echo the word that he has heard. This, in fact, was the reason for our election. God has, from the beginning, chosen us in order that we might show forth His praise. The church built by God’s sovereign election, the church that is built because God from the beginning chose it to salvation out of His own free grace, will also, by the power of God’s grace in them, become an echo of the Word of God.

The Thessalonian church echoed. The Word of God reverberated from them.

We want to answer this question: What is the connection between the life of the Thessalonian church and their witnessing? Usually we think of evangelism or witnessing in terms of special activities: going door-to-door with tracts, or holding special classes. These are good and profitable. But these activities are not first and are not most important. The Word of God teaches us that the spiritual condition of the congregation is most clearly seen in the witness that the congregation gives to the community. Our witness does not begin when we go forth in various activities. But it begins in how we live together as fellow believers in the church, and how we stand towards the Word of God. Jesus said, “Ye are the salt of the earth.” But a church that loses its salt, its savor, is good for nothing.

You see, we leave a witness before we go out, before we speak. In all that we do and at all times, we leave a witness. It is not a question of whether or not we witness. It is a question of what kind of witness we leave. And everyone plays a part in this, as members of the church: children, youth, adults—all the members of the church. Witnessing is, first in the way of living a sanctified life, a holy life together in the church, under the Word of God, obeying that Word of God.

From this chapter we learn that there were a number of things that characterized the life of the church in Thessalonica that are given for our example.

First of all, they genuinely received the Word of God as it was preached to them. In this chapter Paul is reminiscing. He is recalling how the gospel he preached to the Thessalonians had been received. He says that it came not only in word, not only some new philosophy or fad. But it came in power, a power of the Holy Spirit, even as Jesus had promised. And it came in much assurance, so that the people came under conviction. As Paul preached to them, the Holy Spirit of God worked in their hearts, and that Word possessed them and brought them assurance and conviction and joy of their salvation.

And they had received that Word, says Paul, in much affliction and joy. That is, that Word came at a cost to their families and to their business. They had to suffer for the Word of God. But the very power of heaven broke into their souls through the gospel as Paul preached it to them in all of its truth and wonder. By the Holy Spirit, their hearts were opened so that they embraced it.

How did Paul preach to them? He tells us in Acts 17 that he reasoned out of the Scriptures. Still more, he says to us in Acts 20:27 that he left out nothing. He spoke the whole counsel of God—all of the truth of the Word of God—as the truths of the Word of God are all arranged around one center, all hanging upon one line. That one center and line is the glory of God—the absolute sovereignty of God! That means that God is almighty, that all things are of God and by God and unto God, as we read in Romans 11:36.

That Word the Thessalonians eagerly received as the Holy Spirit worked in their hearts. Not only did they receive the Word preached to them, but they also lived it with a reverent, vibrant faith.

That sounds very strange today. That is the missing element so often today, the element of reverence. Many in the Christian church feel put off by reverence for God. But the Thessalonian faith was, above all things, reverent. They stood in awe of God. Their faith was not a giddy, superficial, flippant, surface faith, but a reverential fear and knowledge of God. Their faith was genuine because they had been brought before God in His majesty and in His grace. They saw that they were dead sinners, and that they had no claims upon God, and that they could not lift themselves up by their own will out of their debt. They saw that all of their salvation was of God's grace working in their hearts. And they embraced that not as a mere doctrine, not with stiff formalism, but with a reverence and a godly awe of the Almighty.

What was the nature of that church? This was the nature of the church that echoed out the Word of God: there was a loving reception of the Word preached to them, and there was a faith that breathed out a reverence for the majesty of God. When those two are in the congregation of the Lord—a reverence for God and a love for His Word preached—then the results will be that the congregation echoes the Word of God. “For from you sounded out the word of the Lord,” says the apostle, “not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.”

“Echoed,” is literally “sounded out, reverberated, resounded.” The picture is this: Through the life and witness of the Thessalonians, the Word of the Lord was resounding throughout the region. As sound waves or

as an echo goes out over and over again, being heard everywhere, extending ever broader and farther, so the Thessalonians, in their life as they went forth upon the roads, upon the sea-lanes, in the shops, with their friends, and as they traversed the Mediterranean world, echoed forth the Word of God. So much so, Paul says, that we need not say anything. The apostle is not saying that his work as an apostle and preacher of the gospel was no longer needed, no longer necessary, that he could just as well be quiet. No, but he means that, as far as reporting, giving an explanation of the faith and zeal of the Thessalonians, he did not need to report or explain to other Christians what had happened in Thessalonica because it became evident from the Thessalonians themselves. It was very plain to all that Christ's church was established in Thessalonica because the believers echoed the Word.

The Word of the Lord that the Thessalonians (and we) speak did not originate with them or with us. An echo does not create the sound. It repeats the sound. They had received the Word. They spoke that which they had seen and heard.

Still more. An echo reinforces. It passes the sound on with power. An echo is not a muffler. The power of the Word went on. The Christian, you see, does not simply absorb the sound of the Word of God. Oh, we do absorb it. By the grace of God, we pull it into our hearts. But then the child of God becomes an echo of the Word of God.

If the Word of God does not live within you, it is purely academic and outward. Then you hear it and it sinks into the gray matter and it peters out and you become absorbed in all of your own things. But when the Word of God is received in the soul, then that Word echoes in your life. It reverberates, going out farther and farther, so that our witness goes on and passes from one to another. You never know where that Word is going to end up. God does. But we never know.

I am reminded of what we read in II Kings 5, during the ministry of Elisha, of how Naaman was told that there was a prophet in Israel who could heal him of his leprosy. That word came to him through a little girl who was carried captive—a little girl of Israel who became a maid to Naaman's wife who, almost in an off-hand way, said to Naaman's wife, “Would God, my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria. For he would recover him

of his leprosy.” Just the word of a little girl, repeated by a wife to her husband, and Naaman heads off for Israel. That is the power of God’s Word.

Your calling as a member of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is to live a holy life in your neighborhood, in your school, in your office, in order that your holy life and your words may be as an echo of the truth that God is God.

From you, says the apostle, echoed forth the Word of the Lord. Are you one who has received the Word of God? Have you been brought to know the truth of your salvation, that it was founded in God’s eternal election, not in you, not in your will, not in your choice, but

that it was God alone who, from all eternity, chose and determined who would be saved and, by grace, rescued you out of death so that your salvation is not built upon something you did or you decided but upon what God has done? As a result of that election, has God, then, continued to work in you so that you receive and love the Word of God? Then the Word of God will also echo from you—wherever you go, wherever you are. Your life will be as an echo of the living Word of God. And it will be said of you, “For from you sounded out the word of the Lord.”

May God so graciously grant this to you and to me.



BRING THE BOOKS...

MR. CHARLES TERPSTRA, review editor

The Best of the Reformed Journal, editors James D. Bratt and Ronald A. Wells (William B. Eerdmans Publishing: Grand Rapids, MI, 2011), 343pp. [Reviewed by Philip Rainey.]

This volume is a representative collection of articles taken from the *Reformed Journal*, a magazine published from 1951 to 1990 by Eerdmans Publishing. The collection of ninety articles commemorates the centennial of the company. The value of the book lies not in the profound theological insights it contains, but rather in that the collection of articles represents the changing theology of the Christian Reformed Church and, secondarily, of Eerdmans Publishing through four decades.

The *Reformed Journal* was born out of the bitter struggle between the progressives (or liberals) and the conservatives in the CRC. The *Reformed Journal* was the organ of the liberals in the denomination; the *Torch and Trumpet* (which became the *Outlook*) was the organ of the conservatives. Although originating as the

voice of the progressives within the CRC, the *Reformed Journal* also sought to address issues in the wider world. Accordingly, within this collection there are articles on the church’s role in politics, the Civil Rights movement, gender, apartheid, the arts, and even one on Babe Ruth, the baseball star of the 1920s.

An article entitled “Pitch Your Tents Toward Sodom” is instructive for much that follows. The author calls upon the graduates of Calvin College to “correct” and “reform the culture” (36). According to the author, Lot’s mistake was not his living in Sodom; it was rather that he “was not adequately prepared or wholly committed to advance the cause of truth” in Sodom. Besides the fact that this is a wrong interpretation of Lot’s sinful dwelling in Sodom, the article proceeds on the basis of common grace. Culture is capable of being transformed by Reformed Christians because the power of common grace improves the world and enables God’s people to cooperate with the wicked in the institutions of the world.

There is only one problem. God did not transform Sodom; He destroyed it! Our calling, like godly Abraham, is to live the life of the antithesis over against the wicked world.

That Harold Dekker’s article in which he argued that God loves all men and consequently that Christ died for all men is included in the volume is worthy of note.

Mr. Rainey is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Though his position is heretical, it nevertheless shows the direction of progressivism in the CRC and the inability of CRC conservatives to defeat it. Dekker, in arguing for universal atonement, points out the inconsistency of the “free-offer men,” such as Louis Berkhof, with whom he was taking issue. Berkhof argues for limited atonement on the basis of the doctrine of election, but at the same time he believes in a love of God for all men expressed in the offer of the gospel. As Dekker points out, in order to be consistent Berkhof ought to let election control the preaching of the gospel as well as the extent of the atonement.


Dekker also points out how the well-meant offer of the gospel requires a universal availability of the atonement: “Otherwise the well-meant offer of the gospel is a farce, for it then offers sincerely to all men what cannot be sincerely said to be available to all” (57). The CRC conservatives’ opposition to the modernism represented by Dekker was enervated by the inconsistency of their own position and by their adoption, with the modernists, of the well-meant offer.

There is a very interesting section on “Church and Society.” These articles should be read by every Reformed Christian who has any affinity with the “cultural mandate” of common grace. They constitute an urgent warning of the deadly consequences of this approach. The idea underlying all of these articles is that the power of the state can be used to create the “good society,” as envisioned by Prof. Lewis Smedes (70ff.). Smedes argued that the church should have a “social ethic,” what he calls elsewhere a “God-willed structure for society,” and that this social ethic is to be enacted by legislation—state legislation. All of the writers (with the exception of Carl Henry) put their faith in the State to create a society reflecting a Christian ethic.

The articles on the policy of apartheid in South Africa bring to mind the affinity of Liberal Christianity with international Marxism. During the 1970s and 80s Christian leaders such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu of Capetown and Dr. Allan Boesak were part of a political movement that included the (Communist) African National Congress. The misguided activities of these men helped to foment social revolution in South Africa and thus brought upon them the condemnation of Romans 13:2.

Reading Harry Boer’s and Dr. Boesak’s articles, one would think that apartheid was the greatest enemy of Christ’s church in South Africa. The Heidelberg Catechism, a creedal statement for both Boer and Boesak as Reformed ministers, teaches differently: “our mortal enemies (are) the devil, the world, and our own flesh” (Lord’s Day 52). These enemies are overcome not by social revolution, but by the preaching of the gospel; and not by the liberation struggle, but by the Christian struggle for sanctification.

There follow in the book collections of articles on Vietnam, gender, American politics, Evangelicalism, movies, the Palestinian issue, and ecology.

If someone says I have been entirely negative in reviewing this book, it is for the very simple reason that as a confessional Calvinist I could not find anything to be positive about. There is one thing, however, I find highly instructive in the book: principles work through. And specifically the doctrine of common grace has worked its way through the Reformed churches, engulfing them in worldliness. In the introduction to the book the editors allude to the adoption of the doctrine of common grace by the CRC Synod of 1924. Interestingly, they also point out that in adopting common grace, synod immediately issued a caution lest it lead to worldliness. This caution was in the form of a condemnation of three forms of worldliness, one of which was the movie. Ironically, the book records the first movie review to appear in the pages of the *Reformed Journal* in 1967, following the CRC Synod’s lifting the proscription of theater and movie attendance the year before. With the adoption of common grace the genie of worldliness was well and truly out of the bottle, and no amount of caution and warnings from synod could ever put it back in. In this there is a warning to us today as Protestant Reformed Churches and as Reformed Christians. And maybe in this warning is to be found the value of the book. 

Congregation Activities

The Adult Bible Society of Crete PRC in Crete, IL invited the area Adult Bible Societies to a combined Bible study on March 24. The topic for discussion was "The Christian's Inheritance." Refreshments and a time of fellowship followed in the fellowship hall.

Crete also opened the registration for the Senior Retreat they are hosting from September 22-25 at the Cedar Lake Conference Grounds in Cedar Lake, IN. Visit the website www.creteprc.org to download registration forms and other information. Or you may phone in your registration to (219) 718-8732. The theme for the retreat is "The Christian Life" with speeches planned by Prof. David Engelsma, Rev. Carl Haak, and Rev. Nathan Langerak, D.V. We look forward to your attendance at the retreat!

The Adult Bible Society at Grandville, MI PRC invited everyone in the congregation to a speech by Prof. David Engelsma on March 17 entitled "The Real and Grave Threat to Reformed Christianity of Antinomianism."

Young People's Activities

The Young People's Society of Hull, IA PRC invited the area congregations to a singspiration, moving it to the later date of April 12 so that all might gain advantage from the new organ recently installed in the Hull church.

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

School Activities

The annual meeting of the Society for Protestant Reformed Secondary Education was scheduled to take place at Covenant Christian High School (Grand Rapids, MI) on March 30.

The Genesis Protestant Reformed School of Lacombe, AB Canada held their spring potluck and program March 27 at their new Satinwood location. In addition to a delicious meal, those in attendance enjoyed a short program of song and recitations provided by the school children, and a display of some of their school work.

Taste of Covenant VII was held March 20 at Hudsonville, MI PRC, organized by Covenant Christian High School's Foundation to assist in providing distinctive Protestant Reformed education for the children enrolled at Covenant. Punch bowl and a presentation by the CCHS Robotics Team were followed by a delightful meal.

Young Adult Activities

Over 40 young adults were scheduled to attend the Young Adult retreat hosted by Loveland, CO PRC and held in Estes Park, CO from April 6-10. With the theme "Our Calling to be Holy," taken from Colossians 3, Pastors Steven Key (Loveland PRC), and Joshua Engelsma (Doon, IA PRC) were scheduled to deliver timely speeches. Attendees could participate in activities such as skiing, hiking, zip line, and volleyball. We note that this was the 23rd Young Adults' Retreat sponsored by Loveland PRC—an event that many have enjoyed over the years.

Another Young Adults' retreat

is upcoming! Edmonton PRC, Alberta, Canada Young Adult Society is hosting this event from August 4-7, 2015 using the theme "Knowing God Even as We Are Known." Speakers will be Rev. John Marcus and Rev. Tom Miersma, with registration slated to open in April. For more information please email edmontonprcretreat@gmail.com.

Sister-Church Activities

On behalf of the PRC Contact Committee, a delegation consisting of Rev. Garry Eriks (Hudsonville, MI PRC) and Rev. Steven Key (Loveland, CO PRC) traveled to visit the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore from March 20-30 to conduct church visitation with our sister church and to provide pulpit supply while they were there.

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of the Randolph, WI PRC is organizing a Spring Lecture to be held April 24. Rev. Audred Spriensma, pastor of Byron Center, MI PRC, plans to speak on the topic "Heavenly Citizens in Earthly Kingdoms." More information is forthcoming. Please reserve the date and spread the word about this lecture.

Mission Activities

You may remember that over a year ago the Consistory of the Berean Protestant Reformed Church located in Antipolo City, Rizal, Philippines discontinued their work in the All of Grace Protestant Reformed Fellowship of Gabaldon in the northern province of Nueva Ecija. This was

due to the decline in attendance there and the shortage of qualified men in the group. For a time the BPRC provided transportation for the saints in Gabaldon to attend the worship services in the BPRC. This was no small gesture, as the trip between the two was over four hours in one direction. After a while, this transportation was discontinued also due to a drop in attendance of those from Gabaldon. Still today, the family of Brother Lando uses public transportation to make that trip twice a month to attend services led by Rev. Vernon Ibe. And now, a possible new development: the Berean Church plans to hold twice a month Bible studies in the Gabaldon area as requested

by some of the saints there. We shall see what God has in store for those in this remote area that many of us have come to embrace.

Minister Activities

Rev. Cory Griess (Calvary PRC, Hull, IA) had been considering the call from Peace PRC in Lansing, IL. On March 22, Rev. Griess announced that he was led to decline this call as directed by the Almighty. We thank God for clear revelation of His will, and look forward with Peace to the man of God's choosing.

On March 8, the calling church for the Philippine mission field located in Doon, IA heard the decline of Rev.

Daniel Holstege to her call. Without delay the council formed a new trio and announced it to their congregation on March 15. That trio consists of Rev. Allen Brummel (Heritage PRC, Sioux Falls, SD), Rev. Nathan Decker (Trinity PRC, Hudsonville, MI), and Rev. Garry Eriks (Hudsonville, MI PRC). The next call was to be extended on April 3, D.V. We pray the King of His church and the Lord of the harvest to send another man to work in this corner of His vineyard as He determines.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Adult Fellowship Society of Hope PRC (Redlands) expresses Christian sympathy to Mike and Brenda Gritters and family in the death of Brenda's father, **ALBERTUS DEVRIES.**

May they find comfort in these words from Psalm 33:20: "Our soul waiteth for the LORD; he is our hope and our shield."

Marlin Feenstra, President
Beth Feenstra, Secretary

Classis East

■ Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 13, 2015 at the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church. Material to be treated at this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk by April 13, 2015.

Jon J. Huiskens,
Stated Clerk

Wedding Anniversary

■ With thanksgiving to God we rejoice with our parents, **RYAN AND NANCY REGNERUS,**

on the occasion of their 40th wedding anniversary on April 18, 2015. We are thankful for their godly example and praise God for His mercy shown to them and the blessings He has bestowed upon our family. Psalm 106:1: "Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever."

✠ Ryan and Stephanie Regnerus
Anna, Elaina, Ryan, Hunter, Olivia
✠ Brandon and Kelly VanOverloop
Thomas, Addison, Emelia, Silas
✠ Aaron and Bobbi Regnerus
Jonah, Aaron, Andrew, James, Kyle
✠ Travis and Katie VanderKolk
Mason, Sophie, Oliver, Charlotte, Jasper
✠ Chad and Mary Nienhuis
Brady, Laeni

Lansing, Illinois