

The Standard Bearer

A Reformed Semi-Monthly Magazine • December 1, 2014

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Joy in Affliction

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

James 1:2-4

James, the brother of Jesus and Jude, is addressing “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.” These twelve tribes were the church scattered by persecution into Syria. The church was almost exclusively Jewish at this point and thus identified as the twelve tribes.

After greeting the church in this way, James deals immediately with the suffering and persecution that the saints were experiencing. He refers to their sufferings in persecution as “temptations.” This is because these sufferings presented the saints with all kinds of temptations. James urges the saints to count it all joy when they fall into (meet) these temptations. The reason is that these temptations are at the same time a trial of their faith.

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And that is good, because the trial of their faith produces patience. But the saints must let patience have her perfect work, that they may be perfect and entire, wanting (lacking) nothing.

All this applies to us as well. God sends suffering into the life of every one of us. To some there is persecution for Christ’s sake. In addition, there are the sufferings that are common to mankind. These sufferings become the occasion for many kinds of temptations. However, they also constitute a trial of our faith that works patience. Hence, count it all joy when you fall into these temptations.

A divine trial!

James speaks of diverse temptations into which the saints had fallen.

Temptation is the work of the powers of darkness to lead us to destruction by alluring us into sin. There are several things we ought to notice in this regard.

First, temptation is the work of the devil and the wicked world—not of God.

Second, the purpose of the devil in temptation is to destroy our faith, thereby robbing us of our salvation.

Third, the method the devil uses is to allure us into sin

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

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

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Subscription Price

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

Advertising Policy

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

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of one kind or another. This is because the wages of sin is death.

Finally, temptation always involves a lie. When Satan tempts us, he tries to make us believe that sin is good. How often are we not deceived by this lie?

There are a number of ways the devil tempts us. He may appeal to our pride through false doctrine. Or he may dangle before us the pleasures of sin. He also seeks to use suffering to work in us dissatisfaction with and rebellion against God.

It is the latter that concerns James in this passage. And so we will concentrate our attention on this kind of temptation.

Although God is sovereign even in our sufferings, the devil has his hand in our sufferings. Satan brings sufferings into our lives with the purpose of tempting us to be dissatisfied, bitter, despondent, rebellious, and unfaithful. This is seen clearly in the case of Job, where with God's permission, Satan brought great suffering to Job in order to tempt him to curse God and die.

In like manner did Satan tempt the saints to whom James wrote this epistle. They were being sorely persecuted. Because of their faith, they were required to flee Jerusalem and endure poverty as the rich took advantage of them. (See chapter 5.) The devil was behind this and presented them with many temptations.

In like manner are we tempted when we must suffer for Christ's sake or when we suffer the afflictions that are common to mankind.

James indicates that these temptations also constitute a *trial* of our faith. The same situation that confronts us with a temptation also comprises a trial of our faith. However, there is a significant difference between the two.

Whereas temptation is of the devil, a trial is of God. God is sovereign in all our temptations and uses the circumstances of our temptations to try our faith.

Furthermore, God's purpose in trying our faith is not that of Satan in temptation. Satan tempts us to destroy our faith. God uses the same situation that brings temptation to strengthen our faith and thus enrich us spiritually.

What really is the trying of our faith?

It would help us to understand that the word translated "trial" has a twofold meaning. It means, first, to put

something to the test. For example, metals were put to the test to determine their genuineness. In anticipation that what is tested would prove genuine, this word also took on the meaning of approval.

Both ideas apply here to the idea of trying our faith.

Whenever we are faced with suffering, God is putting our faith to the test. Will we believe God's promises that He loves us, cares for us, and makes all things work for our good? The devil tempts us to doubt God's promises and to despair. After all, the circumstances of our suffering seem to contradict God's Word. And so our faith in God is tested. Will we believe God or will we not believe Him?

God tests our faith in this way not so that He can determine the strength or weakness of our faith. He knows our faith. He tests our faith to show *us* the weakness of our faith. How suffering and the devil's temptation that comes with suffering expose the weakness of our faith! How quickly we doubt and despair! It does not take much to bring murmuring against God.

However, our faith is also strengthened through these tests so that it emerges as approved. To overcome the temptation that confronts us in our sufferings requires that we exercise our faith. Faith is exercised through prayer, through meditation on God's Word, and by seeking the help of our fellow saints. Through this exercise faith is strengthened, even as the body is strengthened through physical exercise. And so our faith also emerges from suffering as approved.

It is this truth that James places before the church in her suffering. The church of James' day was suffering persecution and sorely tempted. However, James reminds them that behind this suffering is God, who is trying their faith and accomplishing a good thing for them.

We must remember the same in our suffering.

A blessed fruit!

The fruit of all Satan's temptations that God uses to try our faith is *patience*.

Patience is endurance. The word used here has the basic meaning of "remaining under." It emphasizes the idea that, instead of casting off a burden that you are carrying, you remain under it and continue to carry it. Patience is endurance, staying power, perseverance under a heavy burden.

Patience has especially two elements.

First, it is the ability to bear up under suffering and disappointment. Many are crushed by suffering; their spirit is destroyed and they are brought to the point of despair. One that has patience is able to hold up under suffering, bravely facing obstacles with utmost courage and confidence.

Second, patience is the ability to remain faithful to the Lord in the face of suffering. Suffering causes some to turn in bitterness from God, as the devil tempts them to do. Patience, rather, leads one to be faithful to God, persevering in the way of godliness.

According to James the trial of our faith works this patience.

It is rather striking that James indicates that trials work patience. We would expect him to say that meeting trials *requires* patience. And this is true. However, James emphasizes that the trial of our faith also *works* patience. It produces and builds up the patience we already have as God's people.

To understand how this is true, we must bear in mind a few things.

First, patience is a gift of God's grace to us. The natural man does not have this patience. There is patience on a natural level that the unregenerate have. But he does not have the ability to endure under any circumstance and certainly does not have the ability to be faithful to God in the face of suffering. This kind of patience must be given to us by God in His grace. This patience God gives to all His people when they are born again.

Second, this God-given patience is something that we are able to exercise only in faith, as we lay hold of God's promises that He cares for us and makes all things work for our good. We do not always exercise our patience. How easily we become disgruntled over the littlest things. We are much inclined to be unfaithful in the face of the daily obstacles of life. This is because of the weakness of our faith, such that we do not lay hold of God's promises to provide and care for us. But when we respond to suffering in faith, we find an amazing patience. We can bear up under a surprisingly heavy load of suffering and remain faithful to the God whose promises we trust.

And then there are times when the load of suffering God sends is overwhelming. For a while we don't know

which way to turn. And here comes Satan tempting us to curse God and die. God puts us in these situations so that we have nowhere else to turn but to Him. When life is carefree, we often think we can get by without faith. But when God sends great suffering, He forces us to use our faith. Then we not only grow in faith, but also develop patience to a degree we never experienced before.

By the providence of God the life of the saints is one of ongoing trials designed to lead them to grow in faith and patience.

An important calling!

Count it all joy, when ye fall into diverse temptations.

That means that after careful deliberation, you are filled with joy as you deal with your sufferings and the temptations they bring. When faced with suffering, we are often inclined to be full of sorrow and dread. However, when we understand what God is working through suffering, we are able to count it all joy. He is testing and strengthening our faith. And through the strengthening of our faith He is working patience in us.

But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Patience has a work that it does. Patience works contentment, peace, and godliness in us.

And when patience's work is perfected (reaches its goal) then we will be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. Notice—perfect! entire! wanting nothing! One is entire when all the virtues of God's grace are present in his life, so that he is full of good works. One is perfect when these virtues of God's grace are developed and mature. When that happens, a person wants or lacks nothing.

This is the work of patience.

The exhortation is to let patience have her perfect work. When we face temptation, we must by faith respond with the patience that God has given us. The more diligent we are in this, the more our patience will grow. And as our patience grows, it accomplishes its great work, making us perfect, entire, wanting nothing.

This is God's ultimate goal in the suffering He sends us.

In this we find our joy. 

Who Will Train the Churches' Ministers? (2) or The PRC Seminary: *Door de kerk, Voor de kerk*

"By these words, Paul means that the church is the faithful keeper of God's truth in order that it may not perish in the world. For by its ministry and labor God willed to have the preaching of his word kept pure and to show himself the Father of a family while he feeds us with spiritual food and provides everything that makes for our salvation." (Calvin's Institutes). And, "In consequence, this commendation applies to the ministry of the Word; for if it is removed, God's truth will fall." (Calvin's Commentaries). If this is true, "then training pastors and teachers belongs to the task of the church as the pillar and foundation of the truth and it is not properly the responsibility of an organization independent of the church."



"As long as a university is founded on the basis of Holy Scripture, accepts the confession of a certain denomination, and this denomination has part control in the appointing of professors of theology, it cannot be disapproved of that future ministers of the Word should receive their education at such an institution."

The two quotations above reflect fundamentally different views of seminary training. The first, very obviously, comes from a denomination that de-

fended seminary training as strictly ecclesiastical. The second comes from our (the PRC) own *Form for the Installation of Professors of Theology*, and reflects what I pointed out in the last installment of this convocation message: documents in the PRC still have remnants of Kuyperian thinking that allow training of ministers to be separated from the church institute.

In the first half of the speech, I showed the history of these two views in the Reformed churches in the Netherlands. The earlier Afscheiding tradition (1834 ff.) maintained and supported the ecclesiastical seminary. The later Doleantie tradition of Abraham Kuyper (1886 ff.) promoted seminary training by non-ecclesiastical schools (para-church organizations). I also pointed out a few places in PRC standards that lean toward the "Kuyperian Alternative," as it was called. These remnants in our official documents ought to be removed some day. Nevertheless, if push came to shove among us over this, what has always been the PRC *practice* as well as what is found in our school's *constitutions* could easily trump what inclinations there might be toward the "Kuyperian Alternative."

It remains to show why our Afscheiding tradition, and not the "Kuyperian Alternative," is the proper tradition.

The Basis for Ecclesiastical Seminaries

Three passages can be considered the classic texts that constituted for our Reformed fathers the exegetical basis for ecclesiastically established seminaries. Even *before* the Afscheiding the churches appealed to these texts to defend ecclesiastical seminaries, although it must be admitted that their practice was not always consistent with their teaching position.

First is Ephesians 4:11,12:

When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.... And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

The church found especially three things to be significant in this text. First, the gifts Christ gave were gifts *to* the church and *for* the church. He gave gifts to the body of Christ for the edifying of the body of Christ. Second, what gifts Christ bestowed on the church are the offices and the men who occupy them—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Some of these offices, Reformed Christianity has maintained, passed away with the apostolic age. The offices

This is the second half of the Convocation address delivered on September 10, 2014.

Previous article in this series: November 15, 2014, p. 77.

of apostle, prophet, and evangelist were unique to that era. Among the offices listed in Ephesians 4, therefore, only the office of pastor/teacher remains in the new dispensation. Third, since the pastor's labor is *teaching* (the phrase: "some, pastors and teachers" refers to one and the same office), the professor of theology's work is the work of a pastor. The fathers' conclusion? Both the office of preacher and the training of preachers belong to the church, to the church as *institute*. The "teaching office" belongs to the church institute.

Second, the churches have long appealed to I Timothy 3:15, especially its last phrase, which I will italicize. "If I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the *church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth*."

If the church is the "pillar and ground of truth," central to the task of the church, our fathers reasoned, is to maintain truth, uphold truth, support truth, and even develop her understanding of the truth. Second, God gave to the church one office whose responsibility is teaching the truth—the "prophetic office" of the ministry of the Word. Third, therefore, it is the church who sees to the training of her own servants who teach and preach the gospel.

About this passage Calvin observed: "By these words, Paul means that the church is the faithful keeper of God's truth in order that it may not perish in the world. For by its ministry and labor God willed to have the preaching of his word kept pure and to show himself the Father

of a family while he feeds us with spiritual food and provides everything that makes for our salvation." And, "In consequence, this commendation applies to the ministry of the Word; for if it is removed, God's truth will fall." If this is true (the denomination recently defending the "ecclesiastical seminary" model so concluded), the training of pastors and teachers belongs to the task of the church as the pillar and ground of the truth, and it is not properly the responsibility of an organization independent of the church.

The central of the three classic texts, and most commonly used by our forefathers, is II Timothy 2:2. "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

When Rev. Foppe Ten Hoor argued for ecclesiastical seminary training over against his Afscheiding colleague Herman Bavinck who favored the "Kuyperian Alternative," Ten Hoor said: "The words of II Tim. 2:2 clinch the case; here, the principle of official ecclesiastical training is clearly and literally taught."¹

What was it that was plain to Ten Hoor that Bavinck would not concede? Ten Hoor, with the Dutch churches that preceded him, exeged the passage along these lines: First, the commission of II Timothy

2:2 is given to Timothy as *an ordained pastor in the church institute*. By the laying on of hands he was ordained into special office (I Tim. 4:14). In this position, Timothy was called to preach the gospel (Rom. 16:21; I Thess 3:2; I Tim. 4:6). Second, an important aspect of Paul's mandate to Timothy was the safeguarding of the truth. One cannot miss this in the context (II Tim 1:13, 14; 3:14-17). And the first way in which the church safeguards the truth is that this ordained pastor teach other men to be pastor-teachers-of-truth, so that these can teach yet others. Third, since no pastor labors in gospel-teaching in behalf of the church apart from *official oversight* of the church, the commission to teach is given to the church. By the commission given to Timothy, the *church* is commissioned to train preachers. We may add a fourth (and not unimportant) element: since no one church is able to do this *alone* (and really no one church *may* do this alone) churches of like faith band together to establish a denominational, ecclesiastical seminary.

In this tradition of Scripture understanding stands the Protestant Reformed Theological School. For this *ecclesiastical* seminary we may be profoundly grateful.

Reasons to be grateful for our seminary: *door de kerk, voor de kerk*

The reader may forgive me for beginning with finances, but as one who takes his turn as rector of our seminary, I start expressing gratitude for reasons financial.

¹ Quoted in H. deMoor, *Equipping the Saints: A Church Political Study of the Controversies Concerning Ecclesiastical Office in the Christian Reformed Church in North America: 1857-1982* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, 1992), 139.

An ecclesiastical seminary does not need to promote itself in order to raise its own financial support, as the independent seminaries do, often through their president or a hired director of “financial development.” In our case, it may well fall to the rector. Regularly I receive in the mail, sometimes from seminaries in dire financial straits, pleas for support lest they be unable to pay their bills—three requests just this month, and two in the last week. Although we are aware of the need to be frugal—good stewards of God’s gifts to us—we professors do not have to bother our heads with finances. At each annual synod, the churches commit to supply what is needed to finance our work. Indeed, over and above this budgeted amount, generous donors often provide extra so that the seminary is able to do more than what is necessary. We are very grateful for this, too. But the basic needs of the seminary come from the churches and all her members working together.

Of course, cautions are in order. We at seminary may not take for granted the denominational support. And as PRC members we must not write our “general fund checks” unaware that a large portion of synodical assessments goes to the running of the seminary. But cautions aside, now, what a beautiful reality it is: our seminary does not depend on promotional campaigns or fundraisers. Every member of the denomination plays his or her part in the financial provisions for the seminary. Even our *students* are fully supported by the churches, according to Article 19 of the Church

Order, so that they pay nothing for tuition and even, if need be, are given living expenses so that they may devote their attention fully to preparing to be faithful and able pastors. I am thankful.

Second, we may be thankful because an ecclesiastical seminary best enables students to be trained as *servants*. The calling of the pastor is to be a servant. *Every* church office is an office of serving, just as Christ served His people even unto death. Especially important is it to emphasize this with this lofty office of the ministry, where the temptations are so great for ministers to make themselves lords!

And only other servants can train servants. One who himself is not a servant cannot train others to be servants. This is what so disturbed Ten Hoor early last century with the appointment of Dr. Janssen—a non-ordained man—to Calvin Seminary.

Third, in an ecclesiastical seminary the *churches* are best able to *judge the qualifications* of these future ministers. Even the orthodox proponents of non-ecclesiastical seminaries agree that in the end the church institute must judge the qualifications of graduates who desire candidacy for the ministry; and that the church institute must (graciously but boldly) put aside those without proper qualifications.

However, the task of making these judgments must be taken up *throughout* a man’s seminary career, and not merely in the weeks after he has graduated. For the sake of the student, the judgment that he is not qualified must be expressed to him as *early* as possible. For the sake

of the churches, these judgments must be made as *carefully* and as *thoroughly* as possible.

So we may express our gratitude for a seminary that has officebearers as the judges. From beginning to end of the students’ careers, ordained ministers from the churches that these students will serve judge their qualifications. On the Theological School Committee to participate in this evaluation are ministers and elders *of the churches*. Officebearers judge officebearers. In an *ecclesiastical* seminary, the *churches* do as much as the *churches* possibly can do to present to the *churches* men in whom they have strongest confidence—they will serve the *churches* well.

By the way, this matter of evaluating students is reason for me often to be thankful for the present *building* we have. In my seminary days we came to class for the few hours of the morning and went straight back home, as did the professors. There were no facilities to study at seminary, no places to relax and mingle. Now, we have a large, beautiful, and comfortable facility where faculty and students can eat together, and be near one another all afternoon in our offices or study carrels. From 6 A.M. when the professors often arrive, until 5 P.M. when many of the students leave, opportunity exists for the churches—through us professors—to get to know and judge the qualifications of these, your future ministers. For four years. For every day of the school term.

Our seminary is *door de kerken, voor de kerken*. By the churches, for the churches.

A reminder is in order for us at the seminary

Our work here is the official work of you, people of God, and your consistories, as you band together to train preachers for the coming generation of your children. In a very real way, you are doing this work. You and your elders have called us professors to our work; and you and your elders are asking the students to prepare to serve you. We at the seminary may never lose that sense.

Remembering this helps us in our attitude toward our work. It is so much more than merely academic! It is a *spiritual* work that requires a careful attitude, an attitude not unlike that required of those who receive the elders at family visitation, and of cat-

echism students who receive their pastor.

And a final caution

People of God, I urge and beseech you, never allow your seminary to degenerate to the point that the people of God lose trust in it. It is striking to me that, when I study the emergence of the para-church institutions in the history of the church—the mission organizations and the seminaries especially—they almost always arose in reaction to the weaknesses and errors in these *ecclesiastical* institutions. Do not allow that to happen to our seminary.

Our Form for the Installation of Professors ends with a beautiful exhortation to the newly installed professor. The exhortation is anchored

with what must be one of the deepest motivations for the professor to be faithful: that “our Seminary may continue to enjoy the respect, the support, the appreciation, the love and the prayer of the church...” Therefore, people of God, remember that this seminary is your institution—it is the churches’ seminary, established and maintained by you as members of the churches. Do not allow it to become corrupt, or weak, or compromised in any way. Know what takes place there. Visit us. Talk to the students. Read the Acts of Synod as it reports on all the activities of our school. Call us to our responsibilities, both officially and privately. We thank God for this work. We thank you for your support. It is your seminary.

Door de kerk, voor the kerk. ∞

ALL AROUND US

REV. MARTYN MC GEOWN

Houston Mayor Subpoenas Pastors’ Sermons

Annis Parker is the first openly lesbian mayor of Houston, Texas. In June 2014, the city of Houston passed a bill called the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance (HERO) which, among other things, allows persons of “confused gender identity” to use public restrooms of their choice. In other words, men may use women’s bathrooms, and women may use men’s bathrooms. The controversial law immediately drew attempts to have it repealed. Many worked to gather signatures to force the city authorities to place the bill on the ballot to allow voters, rather than politicians, to decide its fate. A broadly interdenominational coalition of pastors and churches led opposition to the law. On August 1, the secretary of

the city of Houston announced that a sufficient number of valid, qualified signatures had been submitted, but shortly thereafter Houston’s city attorney threw out the petition. The case proceeded to court for adjudication.

At this point, the case becomes chilling for free speech and freedom of religion—rights protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Attorneys for the mayor’s office have demanded—subpoenaed—from a number of Houston area pastors a long list of documentation, among other things, “all speeches, presentations, or sermons related to HERO, the Petition, Mayor Annis Parker, homosexuality, or gender identity prepared by, delivered by, revised by, or approved by you or in your possession.” The word *subpoena* comes from two Latin words, “under” and “penalty.” To defy a subpoena, an official request for information, is to be in contempt of court, punishable by either fines or imprisonment or both.

In America—in Texas!—pastors are threatened with penalties if they do not hand over copies of their ser-

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mons! The Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), representing five pastors, is challenging the subpoena in court, asking that the subpoena be quashed. The ADF argues, among other things, that

... the discovery requests are overbroad, unduly burdensome, harassing, and vexatious. They are so much so, in fact, that it appears they were designed to punish the Nonparty Pastors for being part of the coalition that invoked the City Charter's referendum provision, and discourage them and other citizens from ever doing so again. The message is clear: oppose the decisions of city government, and drown in unwarranted, burdensome discovery requests. These requests, if allowed, will have a chilling effect on future citizens who might consider circulating referendum petitions because they are dissatisfied with ordinances passed by the City Council. Not only will the Nonparty Pastors be harmed if these discovery requests are allowed, but the People will suffer as well. The referendum process will become toxic and the People will be deprived of an important check on city government provided them by the Charter.¹

Following a public outcry, Parker backed down. On October 15, she tweeted, "If the 5 pastors used pulpits for politics, their sermons are fair game." Later she admitted that the subpoenas were overly broad, and on October 29, the city of Houston withdrew them. There was even a campaign to send Bibles to Mayor Parker—she received in the region of a thousand Bibles from across the USA.

It is not my intention to comment on the legality and constitutionality of the subpoena—that would be the task of the rubric "Church and State." Rather, I want to comment on this as a sign of the times, a sign of increasing intolerance for Christians, a sign of mounting persecution for Christians in the Western world, and to give some perspective. Iniquity is abounding, the love of many grows cold, and the church is hated by all nations, just as Jesus warned (Matt. 24:9-13).

First, for Christians, the First Amendment is useful—and I write as a non-American without First Amendment rights, although there is some form of freedom of speech in Europe—but not sacrosanct. The U.S. Constitution is

¹ "Memorandum in Support of Nonparty Pastors' Amended Motion to Quash Subpoenas to Produce Documents or Tangible Evidence or Otherwise Issue a Protective Order," <http://www.adfmedia.org/files/WoodfillQuashBrief.pdf> (accessed October 15, 2014).

not the Bible, and Christians in many ages have lived—and died—without First Amendment privileges. In fact, in church history, freedom of speech has been very rare. Our spiritual forefathers did not have freedom of speech. The church must not panic. She can survive without the First Amendment.

Second, if a Christian has legal rights and protections, by all means let him use them to further the cause of the gospel. Paul was a Roman citizen with certain rights that he asserts on occasion. In Acts 16:37 Paul said, "They have beaten us openly and uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? Nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out." Later, Paul avoided being scourged by asserting his rights as a Roman citizen: "And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?" (Acts 22:25). Paul was willing to suffer as a Christian, but if that suffering could be avoided, he availed himself of that opportunity also. Therefore, it is perfectly legitimate for the pastors to seek to quash the subpoenas with the help of the ADF.


Third, when pastors bring politics into the pulpit, they bring needless trouble upon themselves. I do not know if that was the case with the plaintiffs in this case, but I have seen many examples of the pulpit misused for political purposes. Our calling as Reformed pastors is to preach sermons that expose the sins in our own congregations, and in our own hearts, to warn against the temptations of the world that endanger our congregations, and to bring the comfort of the gospel to our people, as well as to preach the gospel to the unconverted. And when we preach, we will have a text that *we exegete and apply*. Preachers need to be faithful to God's Word, which is not the same as delivering political harangues from their pulpits.

Fourth, the authorities' interest in the pastor's sermons is puzzling, and troubling. Do they want to check whether the pastor's have condemned sin from the pulpit; do they want to assess their political involvement and advocacy with a view to challenging the churches' tax exempt status, for religious organizations in the U.S. are not permitted to endorse political candidates or encourage people to vote for or against specific legislation issues. Would you be happy if your pastor's sermons were

scrutinized to see if he had ever criticized homosexuality or addressed “gender identity”? And with many of our sermons online, will subpoenas even be necessary for that purpose?

Fifth, God’s Word does not forbid the handing over of our sermons for scrutiny. If a court demands a copy of our sermons, we do not sin if—after having exhausted all legal avenues to overturn the subpoena—we comply. We *do* sin, however, if, after having our sermons scrutinized, we water down the Word to avoid further persecution. In Acts 4:18 the authorities commanded the apostles “not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus,” an order that Peter and John respectfully defied: “We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (v. 20). Later, the authorities complained, “Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine...” (Acts 5:28). The apostles’ response was clear: “We ought to obey God rather than men” (v. 29). We preach that marriage is between one man and one wom-

an; that homosexuality, lesbianism, adultery and fornication are sin; and (against modern transgenderism) that “He that made them at the beginning made them male and female” (Matt. 19:4). Perhaps reading the sermons of Christian pastors will do the mayor and her legal team good. One could hope that exposure to good sermons would bring Mayor Parker and others under conviction of sin and to saving faith in Jesus Christ. In our sermons we “by manifestation of the truth, [commend] ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (II Cor. 4:2). Christian pastors have nothing to hide.

Above all, we do not fear. God is sovereign over the ineffectual attempts of Satan to destroy the church. God will preserve His truth. May we be faithful. Pray that God would give pastors courage in these dark days. Let us follow Him who said, “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world” (John 9:4-5). 

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

REV. THOMAS MIERSMA

His Portion, the Gift of God

Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion.

Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God.

For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth him in the joy of his heart.

Ecclesiastics 5:18-20

A profound contrast is introduced in this text: all is not darkness; rather, the light of grace shines upon the life of a child of God. The rich fool seeking uncertain riches, the “wind,” has nothing in his

hand. He is man by nature, in the darkness of sin and death, walking in the folly of unbelief. “And all his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness” (Eccl. 5:17). This we see in the world around us, though by faith through the Word. Solomon now addresses us, “Behold that which I have seen...” (Eccl. 5:18). He has in view another man, another portion, a work of grace, a gift of God, which is truly blessed. This too is seen under the sun, but with the eye of faith in the light of the Word of God.

Riches may be there. “Every man to whom God hath given riches and wealth...” (Eccl. 5:19). Solomon may have himself in view, but the blessedness is not dependent on material riches; his true treasure is the fear of God. The laboring man (for the idea is that of a child of God who may be small in the eyes of the world) possesses it also, for his sleep is sweet (Eccl. 5:12). This is the thing that is seen: “...it is good and comely for one to

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Previous article in this series: September 1, 2014, p. 465.

eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion" (Eccl. 5:18).

That it is "good and comely" sets the matter before us as a principle of life under the sun. What is fitting, given the very transitory character of life, is that one enjoy the fruit of his labor in its temporary character, not as a matter of self-indulgence, but as that which is fit and right according to God's design for man's earthly life. What is in harmony with man's nature as a creature of the dust, of flesh and blood, is that he eat and drink the fruit of his labor with enjoyment, which, by implication, is with thanksgiving. It is his portion for the day, his daily bread. That is the purpose and design of food and drink, of the things of this life, of material wealth and well-being. It serves a transitory goal and passing purpose.

It is exactly the point that this the covetous man cannot do. Not satisfied with silver and gold (Eccl. 5:10), he is given over to fretful care over earthly riches, keeping and hoarding that which is transitory, "the wind." He eats in darkness. That which is the good, fitting for his station and character of life escapes him "all his days." The issue is the spiritual attitude of one who enters into the true blessings of life under God's care. The rich man would be in charge of his own portion. He would determine its boundaries, have it under his power and in his own hand. He would keep and hold, and yet an "evil travail" comes upon him and it is taken from him, so that he dwells in bitterness and darkness of soul. Unbelievers sense this when they talk about simplifying life, but they are unable to do so because, being in bondage to covetousness, they can only live for the life of this world as an end in itself.

The description is not only of one or two occasions of contentment, but of a whole pattern of life: "...to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life" (Eccl. 5:18), that is, not one day, but "all the days of his life." It is to work and labor in the vanity of this life. It is to toil at one's calling from the Lord in the sweat of one's face, with toil that is wearisome, repetitive, and in itself vain, for it passes away. It is to work, eat, sleep, and go to work again, whether in business or in cleaning the supper dishes. But in the midst of it, the believer is content, possessing an enjoyment of life that is not dependent on material circumstances and things. It is that which is good and comely, that is beautiful: to be

blessed with the proper enjoyment of life that is fitting for man's nature. Such labor and toil, yea, even the repetitive labor that is transitory, is that "...which God giveth him..." (Eccl. 5:18). Why? "...for it is his portion!"


Now God gives to each one his labor, calling, and vocation. The measure of our days is in God's hands. Also the wicked receive their place in this life, their talents and gifts, their circumstances and opportunities, so-called. But the text is describing something more. The idea of blessing, we might say, is of one who walks *in* that will of God, who walks by faith in the fear of God and His design for human life, also after the fall, where he must labor in the sweat of his face as a creature of the dust who returns to the dust. To that believer is given the grace of contentment. The bitter, unbelieving, rich man whose treasure is here below does not possess this portion, for it is not only food and drink but the enjoyment of it in contentment "all the days of his life" here below.

To whom is this given? To the unbelieving rich fool? Not at all. To all men by some common grace? Such a notion would be to fail to understand the text entirely. God gives to him that is good in His sight (Eccl. 2:26), that is, to His justified, believing children, this blessing. Do we possess it by nature or of any merit? No. Have we attained unto it perfectly? No, but it is a matter of constant prayer, for both the portion for the day and the grace of contentment. But this portion is given to them that fear God, and it is for them alone. "This is the gift of God." God works it by His providence and by His grace in their hearts. It is a blessing of salvation that delivers from bondage to covetousness. Only one whose treasure is in heaven can so eat and drink with such joy because he tastes the blessedness of a portion from the hand of his heavenly Father, his portion for the day. Understand well, this also is a blessing that is in Christ, who has delivered us from the darkness of sin and death, the bondage of corruption, also the bondage of covetousness, and brought us in Christ into the light of life, which is eternal.

This is really Solomon's confession in the next verse: "Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God" (Eccl. 5:19). Such was Solomon himself, not only as one to whom God gave riches and wealth, but one also to whom He gave the power to eat thereof; for

as he will point out, to some He gives such gifts but no power to eat of them (Eccl. 6:2). These earthly blessings, which pass away and belong to this present vanity as a portion under the sun, are also a “gift of God.” This gift, in contrast to the rich fool’s darkness and bitterness, is very really a gift of God, even though these earthly blessings are only a portion for this present passing life. It is a profound wonder to stand in this present life, to eat and drink of that portion with thanksgiving in contentment of heart and rejoice in that portion. The world does not possess this blessing. It is by grace, as a gift of God in Christ. Its foundation, which ultimately rests in the cross of Christ, is given us of God as a gift and portion for the day, by which we receive every creature of God with thanksgiving (I Tim. 4:4, 5). The world of darkness lying in covetousness does not know it. Even in food and drink and the eating and drinking thereof, God’s grace is particular!

“For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth him in the joy of his heart” (Eccl. 5:20). Thus does Solomon draw out the reason for this blessing. The years of life pass in the transitory

vanity of this present life. They fade away. Fretful care, worries over uncertain riches, fruitless toils for what is only an earthly end that is vain, characterize the life of wicked men. God gives to His people a different blessing. The passing of the years, yes, also with their trials and sorrows in the things of this life, are passing years that are not remembered. Why? Because riches lost or gained are not our treasure. God is the source of the real joy of heart in daily life under the sun. God answers the prayers for our provision and for the grace of contentment and makes what are the passing moments of life, which are temporary, blessed in Him. God does this! He is the author also of this true joy, though it be but the passing enjoyment of life in the vanity of this world. To have peace with God and live under His Almighty Fatherly care makes all the difference. The result is the opposite of a worldly man’s bitter regrets and remembrance that brings no joy. “For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth him in the joy of his heart.” It is God’s doing. He is the author of this blessing of peace and contentment even to old age, “... because God answereth him in the joy of his heart.” 

WHEN THOU SITTEST IN THINE HOUSE

REV. ARIE DEN HARTOG

The Covenant Home:
God’s Ideal Institution for the Nurture of Children (3)

The Family With Many Children

One of God’s chief purposes for our marriages is the bringing forth of covenant children. This matter is not merely one of the choice of a godly couple but a matter of their calling and responsibility before God. Bringing forth children is a very impor-

tant question because of its personal nature. How many children we have in our home is going to affect many things. Even one child requires sacrifice on the part of the married couple. Childbearing involves considerable expense, especially in our modern times. It involves the physical size of our home and a question of whether we can provide for our children. Does father have sufficient income? Can a large family exist today on one income? Challenges are faced when there are a number of chil-

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Previous article in this series: September 15, 2014, p. 491.

dren, such as whether mother also should have an occupation outside of the home. This question must be faced when there is an even greater urgency today for mother to stay home to be a full-time mother. The same God who gives us our children also will give what we need to raise each new child. Each new child gives added responsibility to its parents. We need to maintain strong Christian homes to nurture our children. This requires order and discipline in our home, which is more demanding with each additional child. Not the least of the considerations of this question is the exhaustion of mother in the home.

Not all marriages are blessed with the same number of children. To some marriages God gives no children. This is commonly a deep sorrow for God-fearing couples. These need much grace and encouragement to bear their heavy burden and submit to the will of the Lord. These must find their joy and fulfillment in serving the Lord in other ways in His church and kingdom, perhaps even in helping large families. Many do this and are a wonderful godly example to others.

Sometimes God gives only one or two children; sometimes He gives many children. When there is only one child God also blesses this home when parents continue in the fear of His name and the exercise of their covenantal responsibility.

Psalms 127 and 128, the classic “family” psalms of the Bible, set before us the picture of a family where there are several children. They speak of children like olive plants round about the table. This presents a beautiful scene in the godly home with several children, especially at meal times, sitting around the table not only enjoying food but also experiencing covenant fellowship together. Psalm 127:5 makes this interesting statement: “Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.”

Godly parents must be willing and ready to receive many children into their Christian home. They must humbly trust in the Lord to provide graciously all things necessary for the raising of their many children, and He will.

Commonly in Reformed churches, there are families with many children—infants, little children, and young people—worshiping God together with their parents and grandparents. The young people of the covenant

are often heard making confession of their faith before the church. The strong Christian home plays a vital part in whether these young people, when come to years of maturity and independence, will remain faithful members in the church. There is great joy and excitement in the church where generations of the covenant are present—sometimes even three or four generations together—and these live together in the communion of the saints, one generation serving and being an example to another.

The world strongly discourages large families. Some in the world decide, from the very beginning of their marriage, for selfish reasons, not to have any children at all. Some consider children to be too great a burden, involving too much trouble.

One of the sacrifices women of the world refuse to make involves the effect that bearing children has on their own bodies. In our age, the greatest concern in life for many is remaining physically attractive. So much of this is driven by sinful lusts and passions, which if left unchecked, can have a very serious effect on marriages. It is shocking to see even married women dressing and behaving in such a way that they stir up sinful passions in the minds and hearts of men in society. The men who look at such women, imagining them to be more attractive than their God-given wives, are just as evil. Such conduct gives an evil example and influence in the home and for children. It is the cause of the breaking down of Christian marriages and families. The fruits of this are the many evils seen in our modern society and nation.

It is also said by the world that giving birth to children and raising them is very costly. Exaggerated numbers are often put out by the media as to how much it costs to raise a child from birth to adulthood, including the cost of a modern-day college and university education. Who can afford to have a large family in our day? We all want to live in palatial houses and have all the modern conveniences and expensive electronic gadgetry of our times. Who has enough money for all of these things if there are many children to feed and clothe and educate?

Further, it is stated by the ungodly world that having children dramatically limits one’s freedom to enjoy the pleasures of the world. These imagine that they must have time for sports and recreation, for nights out every week, for regular eating out at expensive restaurants, and for expensive vacations. The proper care of children

requires that mothers are devoted to being keepers at home. Few women want to leave their careers in the world because they do not want to forego the public attention they receive there. Few want to be full-time devoted mothers in the home because this calling has no glory in this ungodly world.

The ungodly world maintains that parents do not have enough love to go around to care for a number of children and nurture them properly. In the home where there are many children, it is said that children will be deprived of attention and adversely affected in their psychological development. The economic opportunity for achievement and success will be limited for the children of large families. Having large families leads to poverty.

And then, what about the argument concerning over-populating the world? Is it not really more noble to forego having children and to do one's part in avoiding over-population of the world? Does man have the right to make this world such a crowded place, exhausting the resources of this world and jeopardizing future generations?

Godly parents, who know the blessing of the Lord and who have the right understanding of life and the purpose of God in raising covenant children, can see the folly of the world's vain reasoning.

Especially the mother of such a family, in her self-sacrifice and devoted service in the home, far excels all the women of the world in their egotistical and self-centered life style. The God-fearing woman in her modesty and loving service to her family, in the tender care of her God-given children, is beautiful in the sight of the Lord, whom she loves and serves. She has the promise of His favor and blessing, and His care and protection for her covenant children. She may safely trust in Him to provide for all the needs of her family. She is worthy of the praise of her husband and the church she also serves.

In the home of the godly, children are taught to serve one another, and to be satisfied with the gifts of God, and to use them wisely. In the ungodly homes of the world where there are only one or two children, children often grow up being trained in self-centeredness and insatiable covetousness. Material abundance, modern conveniences, the presence of every imaginable toy, and expensive sports equipment do not naturally lead to great benefit in the lives of children. As Christian parents, we

should be concerned about giving our children too much rather than imagining that they have less than others and that this will somehow hurt them.

Our children are conceived and born in sin. This sin is often the cause of strife and bitterness in the family and has the potential of tearing the family apart and breeding resentment and hatred. Sibling rivalry is grievous. In the daily life of the home where there are several children, children are pressed into the service of caring for one another. The covenant home is the ideal institution where children can be admonished daily against the evil of sibling rivalry and taught the importance of love and care for one another. The daily needs of the functioning of the home require that each child be given a task to do and have individual responsibility in the home. Through this practical instruction they will be trained for later life in society and especially in the church. None of us as parents is perfect in giving this kind of needful instruction. But the home is the God-ordained sphere that can best give this instruction.


Children growing up in the home with several, even many siblings, can have a significant influence on each other. It is an amazing thing to observe how children are even naturally attracted to other children. Under the guidance of the godly home and the circumstances there, children teach each other. Some of the best educated persons in the history of the world have come from large homes, and some of the most successful in later life came from large families. Though we must immediately add, that even this is vanity without the fear of God.

Valuable lessons are learned by children when necessity requires this and daily life demands it. Many covenant families in which there are many children have to learn to live on a lower economic standard than other families in the neighborhood. When this is directed by the grace and Spirit of God and godly instruction in the covenant home, this serves for the great good of these children, giving them important moral and spiritual lessons for their whole life.

Many covenant families have the opportunity and blessing of sending their children to good Christian schools. Very large tuition bills are involved in doing this. When necessary, young people in these homes can be taught to help bear the burden of this expense for their own education—for the good of their own future well-

being. Wisdom in parenting knows that such behavior is good and not evil for children to learn in the days of their youth.

Members of the covenant family united by the grace of God, with proper spiritual guidance, discipline, and instruction, through the daily life of the covenant home,

grow up in the close and blessed relationship of friendship and care for fellow members of the family. This will endure for a lifetime and prepare these children well to live in the communion of the saints in the church of Jesus Christ as well as in society. 

Premillennialism (2)

Orientation (2)

“Jesus only knows of two aeons [ages]: the present and the future aeons. In the present aeon [age] his disciples cannot expect anything other than oppression and persecution and must forsake all things for his sake. Jesus nowhere predicts a glorious future on earth before the end of the world.... Only in the age to come will his disciples receive everything back along with eternal life.”

“Nowhere in the New Testament is there a ray of hope that the church of Christ will again come to power and dominion on earth.... It is a constant New Testament expectation that to the extent to which the gospel of the cross is spread abroad, to that extent the hostility of the world will be manifested as well.”

“Not only did Jesus not expect anything from the Jews in the present; in the future also he expected nothing for them.”

- Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*

What Premillennialism is

By premillennialism is meant the teaching about the last days—the end of the world—that holds that there will be a millennium—a literal, thousand year period—of earthly peace, prosperity, and power for the Jews, the

earthly nation of Israel, which has been restored as the kingdom of God on earth. The establishment of this earthly kingdom, centered in the city of Jerusalem, in the geographical region of Palestine, is, in fact, the goal of God with history. Premillennialist Charles C. Ryrie has written, “Concerning the goal of history, dispensationalists find it in the establishment of the millennial kingdom [of the Jews—DJE] on earth.”¹ Alva J. McClain agrees: “The great purpose of His second advent will be to establish the [earthly] Kingdom [of physical Jews and national Israel] on earth.”²

Because the Greek term for “thousand” is *chilias*, the teaching of a coming millennium of Jewish glory is also known as “chiliasm.”

In order to establish this earthly kingdom within histo-

¹ Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), 17.

² Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God* (Winona Lake, Indiana: BMH Books, 1959), 397. This large (556 page) and not unskillful, if not ingenious, pressing of the entire Bible into the mold of premillennialism is, if no longer canonical in premillennial circles, a thorough, authoritative presentation of the theology, specifically, of course, the eschatology, of premillennialism. Everything in every part of the Bible revolves around, is directed towards, and ends in the physical, natural seed of Abraham—the Jews—and the nation of Israel with its center in the earthly city of Jerusalem, the Jerusalem which “now is, and is in bondage with her children” (Gal. 4:25).

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Previous article in this series: November 1, 2014, p. 58.

ry, Jesus Christ will come again, in the body, visibly. This second coming will be before (“pre”) the millennium. For one thousand years—a millennium—this earthly, Jewish kingdom will prevail, with King Jesus ensconced on a material throne in Jerusalem.

Premillennialist John F. Walvoord has accurately and authoritatively expressed this expectation of premillennialism in these words:

[The future] glorious return of Christ to the earth...is the occasion for the deliverance and judgment of Israel [the Jews as an earthly nation—DJE], [and] the inauguration of the kingdom of righteousness on earth.... The curse of sin is lifted from the material world. Righteousness, peace, and prosperity become the rule. Jerusalem becomes the capital for the whole world. The kingdom continues for one thousand years....³

That this millennial kingdom is of, by, and for the Jews—a Jewish dominion—Walvoord also makes plain. He describes the millennial kingdom as “concerning Israel.” He adds that the explanation of the coming millennial kingdom is that “God has promised Israel a glorious future and this will be fulfilled after the second advent. Israel will be a glorious nation, protected from her enemies, exalted above the Gentiles, and the central vehicle of the manifestation of God’s grace in the millennial kingdom.” He acknowledges, in conclusion, that “the doctrine of Israel remains one of the central features of premillennialism.” “Israel as a nation will be exalted.”⁴

During the millennium, there will be a “literal reign of Christ upon the earth.” “Of central importance in the... life of the millennial kingdom is the fact that Christ in His glorious person will be present and visible in the world during this period.” “The glorious presence of Christ in the millennial scene is of course the center of worship and spirituality.”⁵

At the end of the thousand years, so goes the premillennial fancy, Satan will unite multitudes of wicked

everywhere in the world to revolt against Jesus and His earthly dominion. With their physical weaponry, they will attack King Jesus and His Jewish world-power. Defending Himself against these foes, Jesus will conquer. This victory will signal the end of history. Then will take place the final judgment and the onset of eternity.

With its teaching that at the end of the millennium the wicked will dare to attack the risen, glorified, and awesome Jesus Christ, present on earth in His glorified body and attended by more than twelve legions of angels (Matt. 26:53)—and that with physical arms—premillennialism has plumbed the depths of religious absurdity and has very likely distinguished itself as propounding the most ridiculous idea ever put forward in all the long history of theological foolishness. “Christ will be ruling.... Yet at the end of the period enough rebels will be found to make a formidable army which will dare to attack the seat of government [that is, the risen, glorious, awesome Jesus Christ Himself—DJE].”⁶ Ryrie’s “formidable army” will not be fighting the Lord with false doctrine, but with physical arms.

At the end, Jesus will divide the eternal realm into two parts, and Himself into two parties. Heaven will become the everlasting abode of the church, with Jesus as head. The earth will become the home of the Jews of Israel, over which Jesus will reign as king. Jesus evidently will be kept busy traveling back and forth from and to His two domains and adapting Himself to His two, distinct roles—king of Israel and head of the church. On the thinking of premillennialism, which favors the Jews, the church will get the “short end of the stick.”

The Rapture

Basic to all this absurdity is the exotic premillennial “rapture.” Before Jesus can get back to the all-important, divine work of making physical, national Israel the kingdom of God and establishing the millennium for

³ John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 137. Indicating the popularity of premillennialism in the English-speaking world, this 1979 edition of the book was the “thirteenth Grand Rapids printing.”

⁴ Walvoord, 136, 303.

⁵ Walvoord, 299, 306, 307.

⁶ Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 63. See also Walvoord, in his *Millennial Kingdom*: “At the conclusion of the thousand-year reign of Christ,” hordes of people, who were “born in the millennial kingdom,” will “rebel against God...and...gather themselves to battle against the Lord and surround the earthly city of Jerusalem [where the risen, exalted, glorious, awesome Jesus Christ is sitting on a throne surrounded by hundreds of thousands of majestic angels, one of the least of which would frighten the hardest hearted rebel into shivering terror at the mere glimpse of the angel—DJE]” (331).

the Jews—the main work of God in history and a work that was unfortunately delayed by the Jews’ rejection of Jesus as their king at His first coming—Jesus must get the church out of the way. He will do this, according to premillennialism, by the secret rapture. This rapture will be Jesus’ taking the elect church of true believers off the earth into heaven. Involved will be the resurrection of the believers who have died prior to the rapture. The rapture will include the first of two or more resurrections posited by premillennialism, in total disregard of Jesus’ own teaching of one resurrection at His one, bodily coming: “The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28, 29).

H. A. Ironside spoke for all premillennialists, “moderates” as well as radicals, when he taught that “at any moment now the Lord may descend from Heaven to raise the dead and change the living, and then will come the dark days predicted in both Testaments for apostate Israel and apostate Christendom.” This imminent event, according to Ironside, will be the “rapture which precedes the great tribulation.” And this rapture is the “blessed hope” of the church. The church is to live “in daily expectation” of this event.⁷

Inasmuch as the premillennial rapture is sheer fiction and, what is worse, false doctrine, all premillennialists entertain a vain hope. They do not live in the “blessed hope” of the second coming of Christ, after the great tribulation and at the very end of history. Looking for the “blessed hope,” rightly understood as the one “glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” at the very end of history, perfecting the salvation of the one people of God, and finally realizing the Messianic kingdom of God in all the new creation, is essential to living “soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world” (Titus 2:12, 13).

In view of this fundamental importance of looking for the “blessed hope,” the sin of the premillennialist is no minor matter.

Upon rapturing the church, premillennialism teaches, Jesus will deal once again, on God’s behalf, with national,

earthly Israel. He will attempt once again, this time successfully, to make the Jews the willing, obedient citizens of the kingdom of God, thus forming the Jews into God’s carnal kingdom in the world. He will establish the Jews as the holy nation and kingdom of God on earth. This work of Jesus upon Israel will last for seven years. The period of seven years is derived from premillennialism’s atrocious interpretation of the seventy weeks of Daniel 9, about which more later.

Accomplishing the re-establishment of Israel as God’s earthly kingdom will involve the rise and raging of Antichrist. During the seven years between the rapture of the church out of the world and yet another coming of Jesus, this time in order to set up His carnal kingdom in Jerusalem, Antichrist will persecute the Jews. According to premillennialism, Antichrist will not persecute the church, for the church will be in the air, having been raptured. The great tribulation of Scripture (see Matt. 24:21) will not afflict or affect the church.

This is yet another grievous error of premillennialism. Premillennialism renders the church unprepared for the great tribulation that is coming under Antichrist upon the church. According to premillennialism, the tribulation will fall on the Jews. By this tribulation, the vast majority of Jews will repent and turn to God in faith, so as to become again His kingdom.

Here again the utter foolishness of premillennialism is evident. What Jesus Christ Himself at His first coming could not accomplish, what the glorious preaching of the gospel by the apostles themselves could not accomplish, what the witness to the truth by the church over the past two thousand years could not accomplish, great tribulation is supposed to be able to accomplish in a few years, namely, the conversion to God of the majority of Jews, if not all of the Jews.

In fact, tribulation is not God’s means of the conversion of sinners. Tribulation is not the power of God unto the creating of citizens of the kingdom and of the forming of His kingdom. Tribulation chastises sinful believers (Heb. 12:3-17). Tribulation punishes and destroys ungodly unbelievers (II Thess. 1:6). Tribulation glorifies God by the willingness of godly saints to endure the most extreme suffering for the sake of their confession of Jesus Christ (II Thess. 1:4, 5). But it does not convert unbelieving sinners. The power

⁷ H. A. Ironside, *Not Wrath...but Rapture* (Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1941), 42-48.

of God unto salvation is the preaching of the gospel (Rom. 1:16). It was not tribulation that translated the Colossians—Gentiles, not Jews!—into the kingdom of God’s dear Son, but “the word of the truth of the gospel” (Col. 1:5, 13).

Nevertheless, premillennialism has the tribulation under Antichrist accomplishing the conversion of multitudes of unbelieving Jews and, thus, the re-establishment of the Jews as the kingdom of God.

... to be continued. 

STRENGTH OF YOUTH

REV. BRIAN HUIZINGA

“To Teach Them War” (4)

Knowing War’s Origin: In God

By way of introduction in this series, we have, first, sounded the bugle-call to battle. Second, we have proved the necessity of viewing the Christian life as one of warfare. Third, we have defined the holy war in which we are engaged. We proceed now to our first main topic in treatment of the subject of Christian warfare, namely war’s origin.

A proper understanding of any subject demands an examination of its origin. In Heidelberg Catechism class, prior to studying Lord’s Day 1, we ask and answer concerning the writing of the Catechism, “Who? Where? When? Why?” That is, what is the *origin* of our Catechism? The answer to that question helps us understand the Catechism. In the same way, we want to know the origin of our holy war, and really, the origin of all war. There is and must be an explanation for war. History textbooks trace warfare back to the dawn of the small-scale raids of club-wielding, prehistoric, yet-evolving Neanderthals. We trace warfare back to God.

Romans 11:36 says of God, “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for-

ever. Amen.” God is the eternal Source, providential Governor, and transcendent Goal of all things. Warfare belongs to the all-comprehensive class of “all things” in Romans 11:36. Thus we may understand, “For of God is warfare.” Any understanding of the origin of warfare that leaves out the triune God is not only fundamentally impoverished but hopelessly flawed. Instead of beginning with a club, or a shot heard round the world, or man’s heart of hatred and envy, or nations, or angels, or the devil, or with the fall of Adam, we begin with God. The origin of war is in God.

The Eternal Godhead of the Three Persons: Peace not War

When we trace the origin of war back to God eternally, that is, when we begin with God as the eternal source of war, we do *not* mean that war or conflict began in God among the persons of the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Accepting the truth that God exists eternally as a plurality of persons, it is philosophically conceivable to imagine conflict among the three persons. For, according to our own experience, any time there is a plurality of persons, there is the possibility (and often reality) of conflict. A husband and wife fight. A boyfriend and girlfriend fight. Brothers fight. Sisters fight. Neighbors fight. Best friends since kindergarten fight. Because Christ dwells within the members of the church there

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

Previous article in this series: October 1, 2014, p. 18.

will be repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation (powerful cross!). Yet the truth remains, whenever there is a plurality of persons, even in the church, there is always the possibility of sinful actions, words, and expressed attitudes that generate strife. Thus, it is philosophically conceivable that there could have been conflict among the Persons of the Godhead.

Philosophically conceivable. Biblically *inconceivable*. For the man of faith, *unthinkable*. God is God! There cannot be war in the Godhead. The attributes and names of God we learn in the *Essentials* catechism class forbid any conception of warfare among the Persons of our triune God.

For example, God is one (Deut. 6:4)—three Persons perfectly and eternally united in one being. Even the hint of an adversarial spirit in any Person of the Godhead—Father, Son, or Holy Ghost—would deny God’s fundamental unity. God is love (I John 4:8)—the Father and Son, through the Spirit eternally contemplate one another with the greatest delight. God is Jehovah, the “I Am That I Am” (Ex. 3:13-15). “I Am That I Am” is, in English, a collection of five of the simplest words in human language, and yet a deeper expression of perfect unity there could not be. God is what He is. God is not what one person desires to be in opposition to the others. God is nothing other than what He is. Then consider that the Son of God incarnate takes the name Jesus (“Jehovah salvation”). Not only is Jesus the divine Son who is one with the Father in essence (John 10:30) but one with the Father in will, perfectly obedient even when He must lay down His life (Matt. 26:42, John 5:30). God’s attributes of oneness and love, and His name Jehovah are only three examples that clearly demonstrate that God is eternally, in Himself, a God of peace, not war. Therefore, when we trace the origin of war back to God, we do *not* mean that warfare arises out of the relationship of the three Persons of the Godhead.

Before we continue, pause. Contemplate. Say in worship, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name.” In our holy war may this contemplation be, today, the sword of the Spirit to slay the old man of pride and hatred in us. What a covenant life is the eternal life of our God! Three Persons. Yet, no jealousy, no fighting, no bickering, no deliberate avoiding and looking the other way, no evil glares, no dis-

simulation, no tension, but perfect, uninterrupted peace and communion. Bless Him! Adore Him! And God is willing to shew us His covenant and through Jesus draw us into that life? What grace! To Him be glory forever. Amen.

The Eternal Counsel of God: War Ordained

When we say that the origin of war can be found in God, we mean first of all, that God in His eternal counsel ordained all warfare. No war takes place apart from God’s decretive will. The very idea of war was ordained by God. Only faith in the decreeing God truly understands the origin of war.

As noted, Romans 11:36 teaches that “all things” are “of God.” Moreover, the Ephesian saints were “...predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (Eph. 1:11). God works all things, including warfare, after the counsel of His own will. In the counsel of His will God ordained Assyria to be the rod of His anger and to make war with idolatrous Israel. The *blame* for the sin of making war with Israel lies with the king of Assyria who in pride said, “By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent...” (Is. 10:13). Justly, therefore, God “...will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks” (Is. 10:12). But the *origin* of Assyria’s war with Jerusalem is not to be traced merely to the stout heart of the Assyrian king but to the eternally decreeing God of absolute sovereignty who says, “O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation...” (Is. 10:5-6). Behind the king’s wicked heart is Jehovah’s good providence working His good decree (cf. Ex. 9:12-16; Prov. 21:1).

Our Holy God did not ordain warfare—warfare between His kingdom of light and Satan’s kingdom of darkness, warfare between the true church and the false church allied to the world, warfare between nations and men, warfare in our own flesh—because He wickedly revels in bloodshed, ruin, and death. Our Righteous God is not to blame for the sinfulness of war, as if He were the Author of the sin of war. God is pleased to reveal His glory, power, and grace in the establishment and perfection of a kingdom of peace and righteousness in Jesus

Christ. And God is pleased to ordain enemies of His kingdom, and especially victory over them in warfare, for the realization of the fullness of the glory His kingdom in Christ. Warfare has a good purpose. "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things to whom be glory forever, Amen." Warfare is "to God." It is for His glory. Because He, our God for Jesus' sake, ordains warfare, "we know that all things (including war) work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). Warfare is for our saving good. The rod of Assyria chastened elect Israel.

What consolation for us!

When comes the full manifestation of the kingdom of Antichrist to make war against the Lamb and us, we will be soaked with the blood of the martyrs. Our consolation? The Lamb shall overcome (Rev. 17:14). And, our God ordained this war. "For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled" (Rev. 17:17). The ruling of the state in denouncing our sermons, leading us to prison, and then to the execution block is the decretive will of God that He sovereignly works through the hearts of wicked men. For their condemnation—willful sinners. For His glory. For our good. To bring the fullness of Christ's kingdom.


The nominal church not only rejects the Reformed creeds, but with vim and vigor does all she can to eradicate the distinctively Reformed faith of the creeds and wrest it from the church. Sober-minded young people of the church lovingly and valiantly cling to their doctrinal heritage, choosing rather to suffer reproach than to allow the false church to take their treasure. This is war. War hurts. But we know God ordained this war. For His glory. For our good. To bring the fullness of Christ's kingdom.

Should a declaration of war be issued, and the country mobilize for conflict, the believers in the land take comfort in knowing their covenant God ordained this war. Even if the young men of the church are summoned to battle, and even if the battleground includes the town in which the church institute is situated so that the newly renovated church building and accompanying parsonage are reduced to smoldering heaps of rubble, it is good.

Chance did not bring this. The will of men alone did not bring this. God did. Every war, from Assyria's attack of Jerusalem to World War I and World War II, and all the wars and rumors of wars today, is ordained by God. For His glory. For our good. To bring the fullness of Christ's kingdom.

God has ordained the very war that takes place between our flesh and spirit. God does not glorify us at regeneration. Every believer is engaged in a vicious war to overcome the flesh and its powerful propensity toward particular sins. Suppose the sin is jealousy. The young person struggles so often and so painfully to be content with the looks, gifts, and position God has given. It is so easy to go to school and be bitter in heart toward a classmate because she is "cuter" or he is smarter. The sanctified young person hates that sin of jealousy, but has a most difficult time crucifying and overcoming it, and groans deeply beginning to question, "Will I overcome?" If we are content with our bosom sins and not struggling to overcome them, then we may take no comfort in the counsel of God. But in the way of Spirit-worked warfare, we may take comfort in knowing the very warfare of our regenerated heart is ordained by God. For His glory. For our good. To bring the fullness of Christ's kingdom.

God ordained the awful warfare among families and brethren. If we are sinfully contributing to that war we may have no comfort in God's sovereignty. If we are fighting for truth and righteousness we, may take comfort in God's sovereignty. He ordained this war in the family, this division in the marriage, this hatred of my relatives for me, these tongues of my brothers saying, "let us slay him, and cast him into some pit." He ordains and works this warfare—though meant by man for evil—for our good and the coming of the kingdom of Jesus (Gen. 50:20). What consolation is afforded the believer in tracing the origin of war to the eternal counsel of Jehovah our covenant God! What glory is His who worketh warfare after the counsel of His own will! What honor will be the Lamb's in whom all things will be gathered together in one!

Next time, in our next lesson on the origin of war we will take another look at God. 

Are We Together? A Protestant Analyzes Roman Catholicism, R.C. Sproul. (Reformation Trust Publishing, a division of Ligonier Ministries: Sanford, FL, 2012.) 129 pp. ISBN: 978-1-56769-282-2. [Reviewed by Aaron J. Cleveland.]

The author asks a worthwhile question. Nearly 500 years of history have passed since the great Protestant Reformation. Rome has remained steadfast in maintaining her false doctrines for the past 500 years. In fact, in the centuries since the Reformation she has repeatedly confirmed her false gospel, and by her pronouncements concerning papal infallibility and Mary as both a mediator and intercessor, Rome has developed in her falsehood.

As clearly as Rome expresses herself doctrinally, and as obvious as her developments of the doctrines of papal infallibility and Mariology are, most Protestants seem to think that the time for renewed cooperation and reunion with Rome has come. However, as the author states in the introduction, “I hope to show, often using her own words, that the Roman Catholic Church has not changed from what it believed and taught at the time of the Reformation. That means that the Reformation is not over and we must continue to stand firm in proclaiming the biblical gospel” (9).

Throughout the next six chapters the author clearly sets forth the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church concerning Scripture, justification, the church, the sacraments, the papacy, and Mary. Leaving no doubt as to what the *official* teachings of Rome are, the author, R.C. Sproul, quotes directly from the decrees of the Council of Trent, various papal encyclicals, Vatican Council I (1869-70), Vatican Council II (1962-65), and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1995). In stark contrast to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church stand the teachings of the Reformation. Sproul uses the Westminster Confession of Faith to express the position of the Reformers. As a (Protestant) Reformed reader, I

could wish that the author made use of the Heidelberg Catechism, especially Lord’s Days 23 and 30, and the Belgic Confession, especially Articles 4, 6, 23, 24, 29, and 35.

For anyone who wants to know for the first time, or to be reminded of what the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church are, this is an excellent book to read. Sproul has a well-organized and clear manner of writing. The chapter on justification is of particular interest to the readers of this magazine. As Sproul writes, the Romish view of justification “requires faith *plus* works, grace *plus* merit, Christ *plus* inherent righteousness” (34). Yet in our day, Protestants are tripping over themselves in their run back to Rome and her deadly perversion of justification.

The chapter devoted to the sacraments is also instructive. Part of Rome’s appeal is her liturgy and the sacramental nature of her worship. This aspect of Rome’s worship appeals to apostatizing Protestants who are leaving churches with informal, ever-changing, and contemporary worship. Sproul briefly explains Rome’s seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, matrimony, extreme unction, ordination, penance, and the Mass. In order fully to understand why Rome’s sacramental errors are so serious, one must know that

the Roman Catholic Church believes the sacraments do what they are designed to do *ex opera operato*, that is, “by the working of the works.” In other words, simply performing the sacrament causes it to operate and perform what it is designed to perform. According to this view, the sacraments automatically convey grace to the recipient (68).


While appreciating and learning from most of the book, I strongly disagree with the author in two areas. The first has to do with his approval of cooperating with Rome on so-called “common-grace issues” (4). He writes about *Evangelicals & Catholics Together* (ECT, 1994):

This initiative was driven by deep concern among some leading evangelicals and Roman Catholics over so-called “common-grace issues,” such as family values, abortion, and relativism in the culture. Protestant and Roman

Mr. Cleveland is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Catholic leaders wanted to join hands to speak as Christians united against this growing tide of moral decay and relativism. All that was fine. I would march with anyone—Roman Catholics, Mormons, even Muslims—for civil rights for people and unborn babies (4).

Related to his desire to cooperate with Roman Catholics on “common-grace issues,” is his call to the reader to establish friendships with Roman Catholics in order to “earn the right to lovingly critique their views” (121).

He briefly describes a “very close friendship” with his Roman Catholic “best friend” at the time of his marriage (52, 53). Further, he contends “when our involvement in social issues brings us into contact and camaraderie with Roman Catholics, we need not draw back” (122). I am reminded of the sad history of Jehoshaphat’s foolish affinity with wicked Ahab in II Chronicles 18. May the consequences of this kind of friendship and cooperation be a warning to us. 

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

MR. PERRY VAN EGDOM

Congregation Activities

The First PRC of Holland, MI holds weekly Bible studies at the Holland Rescue Mission and every Monday evening a group of 10-12 people participate. The recent topic was: “How Do I Know I Am a Christian?” Now the discussion centers on each of the Ten Commandments with the emphasis that we obey God’s law not in order to be saved, but in thanksgiving because we are saved. These hour-long sessions meet at 7 P.M. in the lower level of the Rescue Mission and all are welcome to come!

Ladies’ League, the annual meeting of women of the Tri-state area churches was held in the Doon, IA PRC on October 28. Rev. Joshua Engelsma spoke on the topic “John Knox and Our Calling to Search the Scriptures.” A freewill offering was taken for the Trinity Christian High School kitchen, and a light lunch and fellowship followed the speech.

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

The Covenant Christian High School choir presented a program of praise in song October 26 at the Jenison Center for the Arts, with the Hope Heralds joining them for a final song. The Covenant Choirs are also offering for purchase a new CD entitled “Be Still.”

Evangelism Activities

A Reformation lecture was held October 24 on the campus of Dordt College in Sioux Center, IA. Prof. Barry Gritters presented the speech entitled, “What it Means to Be Reformed.” This address was sponsored by the Reformed Witness Committee of the area Protestant Reformed Churches. Prof. Gritter’s speech—asserting that a Reformed Church is covenantal, Calvinistic, confessional, and more—fell upon the ears of a sizeable audience that submitted follow-up questions for him to answer. Some continued an interesting discussion with the speaker over refreshments and after much of the crowd had waned. Prof. Gritters gave the same speech in the mission church at Pittsburgh (its 17th annual Reformation Day lecture) on November 7.

Also on October 24, in Loveland, CO PRC Rev. Rodney Kley, pastor in the Covenant of Grace PRC, Spokane, WA spoke on the “Life of Guido de Brés.” This man was a student of John Calvin and the author of the Belgic Confession of Faith. At the conclusion of the speech a Young People’s Society ice cream social fundraiser was held in the church basement. Rev. Kley gave the same speech on October 31 in his home congregation.

No less than six lectures took place on Reformation Day, October 31, in various Protestant Reformed churches in the USA and Canada! A grand tradition indeed, and great opportunities to bring to remembrance the workings of the Protestant Reformation.

Church Visitation

Often church visitation occurs in the fall of the year; many visits have been made recently. Article 44 of the Church Order states the purpose of church visitation. At least two ministers shall “visit all the churches once a year and take heed whether the minister and the consistory faithfully perform

the duties of their office, adhere to sound doctrine, observe in all things the adopted order, and properly promote as much as lies in them, through word and deed, the up-building of the congregation....” We are thankful that God also uses this means as a method of preserving the unity of the churches.

School Activities

The 60th Protestant Reformed Teacher’s Convention was held October 23 and 24 at Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, MI, with Protestant Reformed teachers from around the country in attendance. Rev. Nathan Decker gave the keynote address based on Zechariah 4:6: “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.” Many beneficial sectionals and round table discussions took place each day. This event is an annual, valued opportunity for the teachers in our schools to share and learn things about their vocation, as well as a time for mutual encouragement in their work. May God bless those who stand in the place of the parents and teach our children in love! Hope Protestant Reformed School is the planned site of the 2015 convention, to be held October 15 and 16.

Mission Activities


On October 31 the third Classis of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines convened at the Protestant Reformed Church of Bulacan. Rev. Smit (president of the previous Classis) opened with devotions and Rev. Kleyn was selected to chair this meeting. Reports were rendered by the clerk, treasurer, and two standing committees. Classis received a letter from the Stated Clerk of the Synod of the PRCA expressing congratulations and encouragement in accordance with the organizing as a denomination. Classis received a request from the Maranatha PRC to join the federation. The request was placed in the hands of a committee designated to report at the next meeting of Classis on a proposed method to accomplish this. Financial items, including a subsidy request and classical assessments, were also treated. It was good to see many members of the Berean PRC and the PRC of Bulacan in attendance. The next meeting of Classis, scheduled for February 25, 2015, will be held in the Berean PRC, D.V.

Seminary Activities

Senior student Ryan Barnhill continues his internship in the Edgerton, MN PRC under Rev. Doug

Kuiper and will rejoin the Seminary in January, 2015. Mr. Barnhill testifies that he is enjoying and growing in his full range of pastoral experiences. The nine second-year students are busy with their courses (Hebrew reading, New Testament Exegesis, Dogmatics, Church history, Catechetics, and Church polity) and have also begun practice preaching. What a busy time for them! It is good to remember them in your prayers before the King of the church. In addition to their normal duties, all three professors presented timely and informational Reformation lectures in various churches in our denomination. We are thankful for the faithful labors of our seminary faculty!

Minister Activities

The calling church for the foreign mission field in the Republic of the Philippines announced a new trio from which to call a missionary. That trio consisted of: Rev. Allen Brummel (Heritage PRC, Sioux Falls, SD), Rev. William Langerak (Southeast PRC, Grand Rapids, MI), and Rev. Jonathan Mahtani (Cornerstone PRC, Dyer, IN). The congregation at Doon, IA planned to call from this trio on November 16. 

Reformed Witness Hour
December 2014

Date	Topic	Text
December 7	“The Key of Preaching”	Hebrews 4:12, 13
December 14	“Mary’s Miraculous Conception”	Matthew 1:18
December 21	“The Song of the Angels”	Luke 2:13, 14
December 28	“God’s Saints Preserved”	Psalms 37:27, 28

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Just Dad

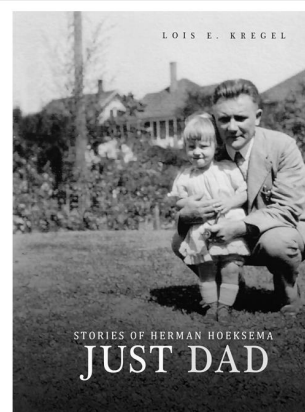
Many people are familiar with the public persona of Herman Hoeksema. As one of the leading theologians of the twentieth century, a seminary professor, the pastor of a large congregation, and a prolific writer, he was well-known in ecclesiastical circles, as well as in the world in general. But to his family, he was "Just Dad." This anecdotal biography written by his youngest child records many stories about him, some perhaps familiar but others never before told.

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Reminder:

■ Bring your loose issues of the *Standard Bearer*, Volume 90, to the RFPA office for binding.

Classis East

■ Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, January 14, 2015 at the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk by December 15 2014.

Jon J. Huiskens
Stated Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Consistory and congregation of Edgerton PRC publicly express our Christian sympathy to Chester (Skip) and Barb Hunter and to Beth and Adam Fennema due to the death of their mother and grandmother,

MRS. VIVIAN HUNTER.

May the bereaved find their hope and comfort in the Word of God, as did their mother; and say, as she said, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psalm 73:24).

Rev. Douglas Kuiper, President
Allen Brummel, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express their sympathy to Mr. John Hoekstra, Ike and Jane Kuiper, and Jerry and Bonnie Kuiper in the death of their beloved wife and sister,

MARIE HOEKSTRA.

Our prayer is that they may be comforted and encouraged by the words of God as given us through Solomon in Proverbs 3:5: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding."

Rev. Carl Haak, President
Mike Moelker, Asst. Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Loveland PRC express their Christian sympathy to Kris and Jaime Campbell and to their children in the death of Jaime's father,

MR. RAY HAWK.

"This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me" (Psalm 119:50). "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

Rev. Steven Key, President
Robert Van Uffelen, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Hull PRC express their sympathy to Ann Miersma, Rev. Rodney and Sharon Miersma, and Gene and Daris VanBemmel in the death of their son-in-law and brother-in-law,

REV. DALE H. KUIPER.

May the Spirit apply the words of Christ to their hearts: "Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psalm 73:23, 24).

Rev. Laning, President
Gerald Brummel, Clerk of records