

The Standard Bearer

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Washing the Disciples' Feet

If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

John 13:14

When was the last time we washed someone else's feet? Not, of course, literally, although we might have opportunity to do that; but, when was the last time we stooped below our dignity and served for the good of the church?

Serving might involve something as mundane as opening a door for someone else, helping an elderly person with his walker, or picking up a piece of trash from the church grounds. Or it might involve greater sacrifices like spending hours with someone who is lonely, giving up family and friends to serve as a missionary in a faraway place, or even giving one's life for the cause of Christ's kingdom.

Sadly, sometimes even the smallest sacrifices seem like so much for us to make. Maybe we say to ourselves, "Why should I have to do that? Why can't someone else do it?" We think we have already made great sacrifices and done enough.

But even the greatest sacrifice that we ever made, or that any of the prophets and apostles ever made, cannot

compare to what Jesus did when He gave Himself on the cross for us. Though many saints gave their very lives in service to God, their sacrifices do not come close to the humiliation that Jesus willingly endured for our sakes.

Part of Jesus' entire work of humiliation involved His washing His disciples' feet. When Jesus, the King of kings, humbled Himself to perform that lowly task, He was teaching us about His greater work of humbling Himself unto death in order to wash away the guilt of our sins. When we consider that great sacrifice, the question becomes, How should we respond to it? Surely, we ought to humble ourselves and wash one another's feet.



Jesus was about to reveal His great love for His people. But before humbling Himself to the death of the cross, Jesus would eat one last meal with His disciples. Prior to eating the last Passover meal and instituting the Lord's supper, Jesus took off His outer garments, poured water in a basin, and washed His disciples' feet.

Washing feet was common enough in those days of dirt roads and leather sandals. One can imagine how much filth would build up under the soles and between the toes of travelers walking through the countryside, not to mention the odor. It was a job for the lowest of servants.

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Probably for that reason, in the absence of a servant, none of the disciples took it upon themselves to wash the feet of the others. The basin, the water, and the towel were all there; but no one moved. Significantly, on this very occasion the disciples had been disputing among themselves who should be counted the greatest (Luke 22:24ff.). They all wanted greatness; but they didn't know what true greatness was. Perhaps they imagined that washing the feet of others would show their smallness.

Whatever the disciples were thinking, the fact remains, none of them washed the feet of the others as they should have. Maybe they thought to themselves, "I'm more important than that." Or, "I've done enough foot washing in my day; it's someone else's turn." Or, "Foot washing is not really that necessary anyway; besides, I don't want to get my dinner garments dirty." Perhaps some of the disciples didn't even think about washing feet.

We need to examine our own hearts as to why we have not washed the feet of others. How often do I draw back when I have opportunities to serve? No doubt we have our excuses lined up too. We say, "I've already done my fair share helping this way or that." Or, "I'm just too tired." Or, "I'll do it if no one else does." Or, "I'm not very good at that anyway." Or, if we do wash the feet of others, we still complain in our hearts. To be sure, there are legitimate reasons why we are unable to help others. Some are already very busy helping the body of Christ in other areas. Nevertheless, we need to ask God to show us where we have been unwilling to wash the feet of others. And we need to ask Him to grant us repentance and forgiveness for our failures, and strength to step up and wash the feet of others.

Strikingly, the disciples were not even willing to wash Jesus' feet. What a stark contrast to Jesus. First, He laid aside His garments so they would not get dirty; He even looked like a lowly servant as He washed the feet of His disciples.

How truly amazing it was that the Creator of the heavens and the earth would stoop down and wash the dirty, stinking feet of the disciples, who were but creatures of the dust! How astonishing that the righteous and holy God would wash the feet of sinful disciples! What earthly king would set aside his dignity and humble himself to that level? Would we ever expect the King of kings

and Lord of lords to do that? Considering who Jesus is, the act of washing the dirty feet of His disciples was an amazing display of humility in and of itself.

Such was the disparity between Jesus' dignity and His humbling Himself that Peter decided that he was not going to allow it: "Lord, dost *thou* wash *my* feet?" As if to say, "Lord, Thou who hast authority over the wind and waves, Thou who hast authority over me, Thou who art the Christ, the Son of the living God, *Thou* art washing *my* feet?" Peter understood how incongruous it was for the Master to be washing his feet.



In response, Jesus assured Peter that he would understand things later. Still Peter wouldn't have it: "Thou shalt never wash my feet." The same Peter had rebuked Jesus earlier when Jesus told His disciples about His coming death: "This shall not be unto thee."

That's when Jesus let Peter know the seriousness of what he was saying: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Finally, Peter relented: "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."

Jesus' response shows that washing the disciples' feet was a *symbolic act*: "Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all" (John 13:10). The literal idea is, if you have already washed your body, you do not need to wash your whole body again just because you got your feet dirty. But Jesus was speaking figuratively when He said, "and ye are clean, but not all." That is to say, "You disciples are clean; but not all of you." Not all of the disciples had been cleansed by the washing of regeneration. Not all of them had been born again and justified. Jesus knew who would betray Him; that is why He said not all of them were clean. Jesus knew that Judas was not spiritually clean.

In other words, Jesus' act of washing the disciples' feet was a symbol of Jesus humbling Himself as a servant to wash us with His precious blood. As amazing as it was that Jesus would humble Himself and wash the feet of His disciples, how much more amazing is it that Jesus humbled Himself and poured out His blood on the cross to wash away the sins of filthy corrupt sinners while we were yet His enemies (Rom. 5:10)? "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us" (I John 4:10).

Now we can understand why Jesus said to Peter, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” If Peter was not washed by the blood and Spirit of Christ, he could have no part with Christ.

That’s the kind of washing we need. We need the blood of Jesus Christ to be poured out on the cross for us. We also need the Spirit of Christ to regenerate us. Not only do we need that one-time washing at the beginning of our spiritual lives; we need to be washed over and over by the blood and Spirit of Christ daily, so that we seek forgiveness and cleansing from the pollution of sin.

Jesus knew how unworthy His disciples were when He washed their feet. He knew that Peter would deny Him three times; He knew the other disciples would forsake Him; and yet, He washed their feet and then went to the cross for them. Jesus also knows how unworthy we are. He knows the pride and selfishness that lies in our hearts. He knows how badly we need His cleansing. How wonderful that He would humble Himself for us!




Significantly, after Jesus washed the disciples’ feet, He told them to follow His example: “Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” (John 13:13).

Jesus could have simply rebuked His disciples and told one of them to wash everyone else’s feet. Instead, Jesus taught them by means of a powerful example.

What a lovely example to others, when someone performs a lowly task in the church expecting no recognition and no thanks in return! How beautiful when the saints wash one another’s feet! On the other hand, how ugly when we serve others only when we are forced to, or when we say, “I’ll do it, if I have to,” or require that others recognize our efforts. How opposite was Jesus’ example.

Just as Jesus humbled Himself for us undeserving sinners, we ought to humble ourselves for our neighbors, even when we think them unworthy. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5).

Finally, Jesus told His disciples, “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (John 13:17). Literally, “...*blessed* are ye if ye do them.” It is not enough simply to know these things; Jesus would also have us do them. Not, of course, to earn God’s blessing. But when we wash one another’s feet in obedience to Christ, with hearts that desire to give honor to Him, out of a true faith, this gives evidence that God has already given us great heavenly treasure in Christ Jesus. When we wash one another’s feet in love for the neighbor and in love for God, we have evidence of our blessedness.

When is the last time we washed the feet of a fellow disciple? 

EDITORIAL

REV. KENNETH KOOLE

Hoeksema and 1924 Reappraised (4)

With this editorial we bring to a conclusion our analysis of Dr. John Bolt’s essay “Herman Hoeksema Was Right (On the Three Points that Really Matter).”

Having offered in two previous editorials our analysis of Dr. Bolt’s first two propositions and his supporting arguments, we turn

Previous article in this series: October 1, 2014, p. 6.

now to his third proposition: that Reformed Church polity was violated in hierarchical actions (by the broader assemblies of the CRC in their treatment of Hoeksema and his consistory in 1924).

With Bolt’s third proposition we find ourselves in fundamental agreement.

But before we present the nub of Bolt’s arguments, we want to say something about what Bolt is dealing with here, namely, ecclesiastical

procedure as determined by principles of the Church Order. We would underscore that the issue of ecclesiastical order and procedure is not to be minimized, especially not when what is at stake is censure of an officebearer.

Church members must understand that procedural issues, which can so often occupy lengthy discussion in our broader assemblies for ‘exasperatingly’ long periods of time, are more than a matter of

mere legalities and proper protocol. Often it is this issue that determines whether a church member has been treated in a fair and righteous manner by a broader assembly, or an injustice has been done to one by the church of Christ itself (and that in the name of Christ—which cannot please Him). And if the injustice has been done to one (or to many) who has been faithful in office, faithfully representing Christ and His truth, then that injustice looms large indeed. One might properly expect evidences of God’s disapproval to follow such miscarriages of justice, something that church history has demonstrated again and again.

In this matter the old proverb stands: “The wheels of God’s justice may grind slowly, but they grind exceeding fine!” God has His own way of vindicating the upright who have been wronged.

A proverb that is born out by the CRC’s history subsequent to 1924.

So we judge.

The hierarchical actions to which Bolt has reference have to do with actions taken by Classis Grand Rapids East in its Fall sessions following the 1924 Synod. Its decisions were made in response to protests brought against Hoeksema and his consistory concerning his continuing to preach against common grace and concerning the censure that Eastern Ave. had placed on four of its members.

As Bolt states, the main issue “... involves a highly controversial point of Reformed church polity: Does a classis (or synod) have the right to discipline/depose a minister against the wishes of his consistory/

council?” (Bolt’s contribution to a collection of essays entitled *Biblical Interpretation and Doctrinal Formulation in the Reformed Tradition*, 309).

This in fact is what Classis Grand Rapids East did in December of 1924 when Hoeksema’s consistory refused to place Hoeksema under discipline as Classis advised them. Upon being informed by Eastern Ave.’s consistory that it had no intention of disciplining its pastor (suspending him from preaching), the Classis took it upon itself to declare Hoeksema suspended from office. And it then proceeded to inform Eastern Ave.’s consistory that, as a result, they also were guilty of insubordination and therefore were *ipso facto* deposed from their offices. They were, of course, free to appeal their depositions to the next synod of the CRC. But that was not to meet until June of 1926.

Had not Classis GR East, by such actions, transformed itself from a broader assembly to a superior assembly, and turned its advisory capacity into that of the right to command?

As far as Bolt is concerned,

Had the issue [before the Nov./Dec. classis] only been a matter of demanding that Hoeksema submit to the “synodical yoke” of the common grace doctrine, the question of hierarchical action would be simple and obviously yes [!], particularly in view of the 1924 synod’s own reticence to activate heavy-artillery church discipline (Essay, 311)

But, as Bolt points out, complicating the whole matter before the

post-synodical classes was the issue of Eastern Ave.’s consistory having placed four of its members under discipline for charging Hoeksema with the sin of preaching against doctrines taught in the creeds (so they contended), the primary one being that of common grace. Which charge was one thing. But, the consistory contended, they had made their charges without first going individually to speak with Rev. Hoeksema, putting them in violation of “following the way of Matthew 18.”

When the consistory refused to silence Hoeksema on his opposition to common grace and instead barred the protestants from “the table” (Lord’s Supper) so long as their charges stood against their pastor, the protestants appealed their censure to the May Classis of Grand Rapids East (1924).

Briefly stated, the Classis upheld the protestants’ appeal of their censure, advising Eastern Ave. to lift it. Classis maintained that the ‘way of Matthew 18’ was not required in protesting doctrinal positions stated publicly from the pulpit. But it also sent the protests against Hoeksema’s doctrinal declarations back to his consistory stating, in Bolt’s words “... that items that could be handled by a minor assembly may not be dealt with by a major assembly” (Essay, 315). This according to the requirements of Article 30 of the CO.

Being informed by their consistory that it did not intend to lift their censure, the protestants sent their protests with their charges against Hoeksema and the consistory on to synod, meeting that June in Kalamazoo. The synod would

treat these appeals together with other protests brought against Hoeksema's and Danhof's doctrinal positions as found in their public writings.

All this serves as background not only for assessing what faced the Classis of GR East in the Fall of 1924 and the judgments they were required to make on the protests that once again appeared on its agenda, but also as background for the response of the consistory of Eastern Ave. when the Classis instructed them that they were to require of their minister that he no longer preach against the doctrine of common grace, and once again advised them to lift the censure on the protestants.

If the decisions made by the 1924 Synod had been more decisive concerning what the status of the doctrine of common grace in the CRC now was, or if it had made pronouncements about the propriety of the censure placed upon the protestants of Eastern Ave., matters would have been more clear-cut as to what Classis East could require of the consistory. But, as pointed out by Bolt in his prior assessment of those synodical decisions, the cross-currents at work in that Synod meant that key issues were not at all settled. Not the status of the teaching of common grace as formulated by the Synod in its Three Points (it was a doctrine still needing more discussion, they said). And not how the churches were to assess Hoeksema in his unequivocal opposition to the teaching of common grace.

In fact, a case could be made that

Synod had basically exonerated Hoeksema.

As Bolt points out, over against the protestants' request that the synod declare Hoeksema and Danhof to be "unreformed," due to their relentless opposition to common grace (together with their over-emphasis of God's sovereignty vs. man's responsibility), Synod had instead declared that for all their tendency to one-sidedness, "...it cannot be denied that, in the basic truths of the Reformed faith as set forth in our confessions, they are Reformed [!]" (Essay, 308).

And now, if Hoeksema continued publicly to oppose the teaching of common grace, his consistory was to charge him with teaching false doctrine? If the broadest assembly of the churches (synod) had refused to substantiate that charge against their pastor and make it its own when it had dealt essentially with these same protests in June, who was the Classis now to uphold these charges and require this of Hoeksema's consistory?

Eastern Ave.'s consistory certainly had some grounds for disputing Classis' requirement at this point in the controversy, viewing them as high-handed.

What the denomination's broadest assembly had refused to do at this point in the controversy, a local classis took upon itself to do.

And then there is the issue of the protestants' being placed under censure. Was it proper to begin with? Or was the Classis GR East in May correct in advising Eastern Ave.'s consistory to lift the censure, and then again in its Fall sessions

in advising and then insisting it be lifted?

Of interest, as Bolt notes, is that Prof. Hanko, in his book *For Thy Truth's Sake*, has come to the settled conclusion that Eastern Ave. erred in placing its protestants under censure. Basing his contention on Article 31 of the CO, the professor maintains that members of a Reformed church surely have the right to challenge the Reformed character of the preaching, bringing their charges directly to the elders, without being placed under censure for being in violation of Matthew 18 (Essay, 316; for more on Hanko's perspective, cf. *For Thy Truth's Sake*, Jenison, MI: RFPA, 2000, ch. 5).

Dr. Bolt commends Prof. Hanko for his integrity in being willing to fault Hoeksema for trying to defend his consistory's actions on this matter.

Strikingly, it is the professor from the Calvin seminary who is inclined to side with Hoeksema on this issue.

Bolt expresses great empathy for the perspective of Hoeksema and his consistory. He speaks of mitigating circumstances in Eastern Ave.'s decision not to lift their censure, a censure originally placed on the protestants due to the evidence of their attitude towards their pastor—claiming that he was a teacher of false doctrine who was *willfully* contradicting the confessions—and then later refusing to lift the censure due to evidences of other improprieties that kept coming to light.

As Bolt points out (cf. Essay, 317) original suspicions about the

protests were followed by evidence that the "...opposition to Hoeksema [in his congregation] was orchestrated [by men outside the congregation] and even had some financial backing." And there was evidence that the protest that the three members had submitted together was not even written by the protestants, but that they were simply its conduits. And then it came to light that other protests addressed to the consistory were being printed and distributed to others outside the congregation while the consistory was still dealing with the allegations.

Having carefully studied and reflected upon this history, Bolt gives the following assessment:

When we put this all together—protests written by people other than the protestants themselves, cooperation in writing protests, and then publicly printing these protests before any church assembly had adjudicated them—I am less inclined to fault Hoeksema and the Eastern Avenue consistory for its act of church discipline. Without giving them full exoneration, it seems to me that it is at least fair to judge the matter as ambiguous (Essay, 317).

All of which leads Bolt to the following conclusion:

When that ambiguity is acknowledged and combined with the 1924 synod's refusal to condemn Hoeksema as "unreformed," I am comfortable in suggesting that there is a good case for saying the Classis Grand Rapids East acted in a hierarchical fashion when it suspended and deposed Hoeksema for his refusal to sign a loyalty oath to the three points of common

grace adopted by the 1924 CRC of Kalamazoo and the refusal by the Eastern Avenue consistory to lift the censure of the protesting members in his church. There was considerable unfinished business that needed the attention it never received (Essay, 317).

Speaking editorially, we find ourselves in full agreement with the professor from the Calvin seminary on this one, that is, why Eastern Ave.'s consistory had just cause not to lift its censure contrary to the advice of classis. The consistory, of course, would have had to appeal its case with its reasons to the next synod, but the classis' peremptory decision to suspend and depose Hoeksema and his consistory upon their refusal to comply prevented that course of action.

Also, in our judgment, Hoeksema's consistory had just cause to place the protestants under censure at the very beginning, not because they challenged the orthodoxy of statements found in Hoeksema's preaching (the right of every member), but because they charged him with *sin* in his declarations, which charge implies that one is willfully and knowingly teaching things contrary to the confessions. That, in our judgment, is another matter. And certainly if a consistory is convinced the charge is false, they cannot allow those members to partake at the table with their pastor while their charges of sin still stand. It is either retract the charge of sin, or refrain from partaking.

That said, we find ourselves in complete agreement with Prof. Hanko and his judgment that un-

der no circumstance may a broader assembly assume to itself the right to suspend and depose officebearers. As Prof. Hanko argues, this is the sacred right of the autonomy of the local congregation. (Cf. *For Thy Truth's Sake*, ch. 5.) It strikes me that if anything is 'Reformed' in church polity and in keeping with the Reformers' controversy with Rome and their 'Re-formation' of the church, that is. Broader assemblies may advise to suspend and depose, but they have no power to do so themselves. Not that their advice has no weight. If a consistory refuses to submit itself to such judgment, it places itself with its congregation outside the federation of churches. But the officebearers still have the right to function as ordained by God and as lawfully called by Christ. Classis GR East, in effect, attempted to step between Christ and the calling of Eastern Ave.'s officebearers.

Hierarchy is no small matter.

But we concur with Bolt, "unfinished business" indeed.


By which we understand Bolt to imply *not simply* that there was unfinished business back in 1924 prior to Classis GR East's hierarchical (Romish!) treatment of three of its ministers and their congregations, *but the business, the basic issues* raised by the controversy, including *the doctrine of common grace itself*, are matters that ought to be reconsidered and addressed today. For instance, what evidence for any confessional basis for the teaching of common grace is there to be found in the Reformed creeds? And if not, what does that say about this

doctrine that has taken on a life of its own? A wildly growing vine that is choking the life out of the tree of Reformed Christendom today.

What will come of Bolt's challenging his colleagues to review this era of their history with its deci-

sions? Probably not much. But, for all that, Dr. Bolt's essay is a testimony from the outside that we appreciate. If nothing else, it does serve to support the Protestant Reformed denomination's defense of her origins, that she was forced out by her mother church—and

therefore is not to be charged with creating schism in Christ's church as some are wont to allege, which charge is no small matter, having far-reaching implications.

Thanks for the honest effort, Dr. Bolt. 

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

REV. THOMAS MIERSMA

Nothing in His Hand

Ecclesiastes 5:13-17

In the preceding verse, the text concluded, "...the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep" (Eccl. 5:12). Riches, for a man given to covetousness, bring with them fretful care and worry lest they be lost. In verses 13-17, the Preacher turns to this reality of loss by again describing what is seen under the sun in the life of men. What is seen is a sore or grievous evil, a spiritual sickness. "There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt" (Eccl. 5:13).

What is this evil? Riches kept for or by the owners thereof. The picture of that keeping is one of a guarded hoard, like a walled prison, a secured barn, a bank vault, acquired by heaping and gathering and building bigger barns and treasure hoards. The owner is truly rich according to this world. The world about us proclaims that this is a good thing, for riches and wealth give one security, power, and the ability to enjoy life, lifting a man above his fellows. Yet these riches are hoarded "to their hurt," that is, to the owner's own hurt, particularly of his soul, in covetousness. The Word of God declares that "this is a sore evil," which the text further explains in two ways.

First, "but those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and there is nothing in his hand" (Eccl.

5:14). The "evil travail" is not specified. It may be a bad business decision, some physical or natural calamity, or upheaval in the world. The precise circumstance is not the point. Trouble comes; the riches are lost, destroyed, or perish. They are gone, and of them the once rich man now has nothing. He is reduced to poverty. His hand is empty and his son has no inheritance. Where earthly riches are one's only treasure, the loss of them leaves one with nothing. The man who is not rich toward God gives no spiritual treasure to his children, and if his earthly riches fly away he is empty-handed. His riches are vanity, and he himself is vain.

Solomon does not mean that this loss of earthly riches happens to all rich men, but examples of it are frequent enough, as warnings from God to testify to both the people of God and the world of sin as well, of the folly of trusting and seeking after uncertain riches. The man who would keep his riches under the sun has no peace, for an evil travail can and does carry them away. He cannot by his own power truly keep them, though in his pride of heart he deceives himself concerning them. This also besets us, so that the psalmist in Psalm 73 speaks of his battle with this temptation when he says, "For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked" (Ps. 73:3). The rich man of this world who trusts in uncertain riches is not simply wicked, but spiritually "foolish," though he may think that he is the smartest person in the room because of his riches. "Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain..." (Ps. 73:6).

Secondly, regardless of his keeping of his earthly

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treasure in this world, he himself, the rich man, flies away. This second further explanation is universal and absolute: he shall die. "As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand" (Eccl. 5:15). Whatever legacy of the things of this world a man leaves behind him, he himself leaves. He came into the world naked, that is, with nothing, and so also will he leave it. The text as it were piles up the horror of the reality of death under the sun. First, as he came so shall he go; second, he shall take nothing of his labor; third, he may carry nothing away in his hand. He is stripped. His labor is vain and he is empty; he has nothing.

This confronts all of us in the labor and toil of life under the sun. Solomon, who had wrought many works, feels the weight of it. "And this is a sore evil, that in all points as he came so shall he go..." (Eccl. 5:16). Yet the issue is not simply death, but that the one who is here described as leaving this life is one who has no fear of God, who has accomplished nothing, of whom nothing of value abides. "And what profit hath he that hath labored for the wind?" (Eccl. 5:16). His earthly riches and treasures are the wind, empty air that blows away. Seeking earthly riches as the end and goal of life is a vain striving after the wind, after that which does not and cannot profit. Riches cannot deliver from death. Moreover, death as the judgment of God upon sin is such that riches cannot obtain righteousness, pardon for sin, or deliverance before God. The man striving after uncertain riches is a fool striving and laboring after the wind.

Yet the world abounds with this seeking of material riches, with seeking the god of materialism, Mammon. It preaches such laboring after the wind, and its song fills our ears as we are also in the flesh and have need of earthly things. We have the calling to labor, to provide for our families. We seek to establish businesses and make them prosper. We are called so to labor in this life under the sun, but if this be the end and goal of our life, if it is first, and not subordinate to seeking the things above, then we also fall into the folly of seeking after the wind. The text calls for some sober assessment of our spiritual priorities. The picture is not one of pessimism. There is positive instruction to be heard in verses 18-20, but we will not rightly understand its blessedness for a child

of God, as the "gift of God" (Eccl. 5:19), unless we first make a right evaluation of the folly of the sin that seeks uncertain riches and labors after the wind.

The Word of God then brings the picture of this unbelieving laborer after the wind to its concluding assessment. While a child of God may struggle because of the flesh and the temptations of indwelling sin, the man described here is the rich, unbelieving, and reprobate fool, and the consequences described are of his seeking after the wind. His days are very different from those of the one blessed of God. He does not "enjoy the good of all his labor" (Eccl. 5:18). Rather, his days, *all* his days, have a certain character. "All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness" (Eccl. 5:17).

The viewpoint is not one day or a collection of days but the organic whole of his life, the tenor or character of his days, and that particularly in the context of the rich man who heaped and gathered and then lost it all through an evil travail. His days are spent in darkness, darkness of mind, of gloom and disappointment, a darkness that is the consequence of the spiritual darkness that is without the light of the knowledge of God and His fear. In darkness he heaped and gathered. Enough was never enough. In darkness he lost much sleep worrying over his riches, seeking to guard them from evil travail, and yet the travail came upon him. Riches were his god, and losing them he now has nothing. He will die and carry nothing away. He has striven for the wind and obtained empty air.

He ate his meals in that darkness, and the loss of his riches now reminds him of that loss whenever he sits down. He is sick at heart; frustration, anger, and bitterness of soul are his portion. The sickness mentioned is the sickness of his soul without true peace and joy, rather than that of the body. It is a spiritual sickness over the very emptiness of his life. Wrath and anger at the circumstances that robbed and cheated him of his riches, an anger not just at men, who may have been the instrument, but at God who is Lord of all. His sickness is a spiritual one, not a physical one.

It is out of that bondage to covetousness and that darkness rooted in man's depravity that grace brings us as children of God and gives to us the light of life, even eternal life. That blessing gives us to eat and drink with a well founded joy: "This is the gift of God" (Eccl. 5:19).



Chapter Five

Premillennialism (1)

Orientation (1)

“Every idea of a Millennial Dominion with its throne established in Jerusalem, in connection with previously resurrected Jews and Gentiles, converted unto Him, is contrary to the entire economy of the Sacred Scriptures, and as such must be rejected...and thus be destroyed root and branch in the heart of the brethren.”

Abraham Kuyper,
“Chiliasm or the Doctrine of Premillennialism”

“All prophecies, which speak of Israel, Jerusalem and Zion, and which even after the coming of Christ, still await their fulfillment, must...be understood...as pertaining to the spiritual glory of the true church of the Lord after His return. Any other interpretation of these prophecies is a return to the Ministry of Shadows, which is ended once and for all and to which there is no return without causing the Christian to become a Jew again, that is to say: without denying the fulfillment of all prophecy in Christ our Lord.”

Abraham Kuyper,
“Chiliasm or the Doctrine of Premillennialism”

“The church of Jesus Christ in her orthodox development has ever condemned Chiliasm [dispensational premillennialism—DJE] as heretical.”

Abraham Kuyper,
“Chiliasm or the Doctrine of Premillennialism”
(See footnote “4.”)

Introduction

In our study of the biblical truth of the millennium, or thousand years (Rev. 20), we move from postmillennialism to premillennialism. Thus, we move from fantasy to absurdity.

Such is the foolishness of premillennialism, or, more

fully, dispensational premillennialism, that the Reformed Christian might be tempted to suppose that a critique of premillennialism is unnecessary.

That the risen, exalted, glorious Jesus Christ—the Jesus Christ of Revelation 1:10-18—should reign, bodily, on a material throne in the city of Jerusalem in the country of Palestine, in the historical flow of this sinful world, among sinful people, including reprobate sinful people, for one thousand years before history ends, is absurd, on the face of it.

That during this thousand years, the ungodly should scheme against this glorious King and finally dare, and be able, to launch an attack on Him and the seat of His power with jets, tanks, and machine guns, beggars the Christian imagination. Indeed, by virtue of its vaunted commitment to the “literal” understanding of Old Testament prophecy, premillennialism is bound to teach that the ungodly will someday attack the exalted Christ in Jerusalem with horses, swords, bows and arrows, and handstaves (Ezek. 38, 39).

That in the course of history, Christians should suddenly, mysteriously disappear from the scene, while time goes on and history continues, the farmer from his milking stool, the mother from her preparations for supper, the husband and father from the midst of his family, the young man in the Christian high school in the midst of his jump shot on the basketball court, and the bus driver from his seat (as the properly ridiculous sign, “In case of the rapture, this vehicle will be driverless,” warns), is silly—the stuff of jokes.¹

¹ As, for example, the novel, *Left Behind*, which has hundreds of persons suddenly disappear from a plane in flight: “All over the plane, people were holding up clothes and gasping or shrieking that someone was missing” (Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, *Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth’s Last Days* [Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House, 1995], 23).

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Against such foolishness, against such absurdity masquerading as the biblical gospel concerning the last days, the Reformed faith is firmly closed.

Because the fantasies of *postmillennialism*—the “Christianizing” of the whole world; the earthly, political reign of the saints; and a coming “golden age” within history—are defended and aggressively promoted by Reformed and Presbyterian theologians within the Reformed community of churches, a thorough critique of postmillennialism, such as I have just concluded, is in order.

Dispensational premillennialism, on the other hand, is both so entirely outside the sphere of Reformed Christianity and so foolish that a Reformed teacher might be tempted to limit his critique to the bare statement that premillennialism is un-Reformed and ridiculous, or to ignore premillennialism altogether.

John Calvin was right in his judgment of the “chiliasts” of his time, “who limited the reign of Christ to a thousand years,” that “their fiction is too childish either to need or to be worth a refutation.”²

The Necessity of Critiquing Premillennialism

The temptation simply to ignore premillennialism, however, must be resisted. First, premillennialism is a theological explanation of the thousand-year period of Revelation 20. A thorough study of the millennium, therefore, ought also to take premillennialism into account.

Second, by contrasting his amillennial belief with the premillennial error the Reformed Christian will better and more clearly understand the truth he confesses.

Third, even though premillennialism is un-Reformed from stem to stern and is not the internal threat to the doctrine of the last things for Reformed Christians that postmillennialism is, premillennialism is prevalent and popular in Christian circles. Likely, a majority of Christian churches today proclaim the gospel of premillennialism and entertain themselves of a Sunday evening by producing and studying elaborate premillennial charts. Multitudes of professing Christians believe, support, and

² John Calvin, *Institutes*, ed. John T. McNeill, tr. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960) 3.25.5. Calvin was right also when he immediately added that the “Apocalypse [book of Revelation], from which they undoubtedly drew a pretext for their error, does not support them.”

witness to the premillennial gospel, making their “blessed hope” (Titus 2:13) the rapture of themselves out of the world and its history at any moment.

It is profitable, if not required, therefore, that the Reformed Christian know what premillennialism is, and why the Reformed faith rejects it, root and branch.

Fourth, although the Reformed faith renounces premillennialism, and the Reformed creeds condemn it, the sheer prevalence and popularity of the eschatological error have their subtle influence on Reformed Christians. Almost unconsciously, Reformed Christians are seduced by the error.

For fourteen years, as pastor of a Protestant Reformed church on the south side of Chicago, I moved in the large Reformed community in that area. During that time, I observed that that community was heavily influenced by the radio broadcast and periodic Christian conferences of the Moody Bible Institute (MBI) in Chicago, a premillennial organization. Reformed men and women who regularly tuned in to the radio station for Christian programming and who attended the effectively advertised religious conferences would speak freely of the impending rapture of the church out of the world, while history continues, as though this were standard, orthodox Christian and Reformed doctrine. Such influence of premillennial media and propaganda upon Reformed Christians and Christianity is not limited to the Chicago area.

Enormously popular of late have been the books of fiction known as the *Left Behind* series, by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins.³ They popularize fictitious premillennialism by the genre of writing that befits the heresy: fiction. It is not impossible that Reformed Christians have wasted their time and even corrupted their minds by reading this series.

Evidently, Abraham Kuyper had similarly noticed the

³ The first volume in this only slightly disguised series of propaganda on behalf of premillennial dispensationalism is *Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth's Last Days* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House, 1995). The only value of this series of potboilers is to demonstrate both to the contemporary, supposedly more “moderate,” “progressive” premillennialists and to the gullible Presbyterians who accept “moderate” premillennialists as genuine evangelicals and worthy partners in honorable theological discussion that the essence of premillennialism, be it “moderate” or “radical,” original or “progressive,” is the heretical nonsense regurgitated in the form of fiction in the *Left Behind* series. This is, and always will be, the premillennialism of the *people* in dispensational, premillennial churches.

influence of premillennialism upon Reformed church members in his day. He began his criticism of premillennialism with the observation that “this is a rather delicate subject to touch upon, also within our [Reformed] circles [in the Netherlands in the early 1900s—DJE].”⁴

A warning against premillennialism, therefore, has its value for Reformed Christians. Reformed Chris-

⁴ Abraham Kuiper, “Chiliasm or the Doctrine of Premillennialism,” tr. G. M. Pernis (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1934), 6. This booklet is a “free translation” mainly of Kuiper’s treatment of “chiliasm,” or premillennialism, in his commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism, *E Voto Dordraceno: Toelichting op den Heidelbergschen Catechismus*, vol. 2 (Amsterdam: Hoveker & Wormser, 1905), 252-290.

tians must know that premillennialism differs radically from amillennial orthodoxy, and what this difference is. Rightly dividing the word of truth, as is commanded by God of the preacher and theologian in II Timothy 2:15, includes rightly explaining and understanding the word of truth about the last days. As the next verse in II Timothy 2 points out, right explanation of the truth about the last days, as about all aspects of the Christian faith, must “shun profane and vain babblings.” That the apostle had specifically in view babblings about the truth of the last things is evident from verses 17 and 18. Paul mentions two false teachers of his day, who “concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already.” ∞

ALL AROUND US

REV. DANIEL HOLSTEGE

The Rise of ISIS

In the August 25, 2014 issue of *Time* magazine we found an article with this heading: “An Evil That Must Be Stopped: ISIS is the most serious threat to American interests in a decade. Why we must counter it.”

If you have been watching world events lately, you have surely heard of ISIS, or ISIL. But maybe you wonder, who or what is ISIS? The acronym ISIS means “Islamic State of Iraq and Syria,” and ISIL means “Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.” ISIS and ISIL are the same group. ISIS is a new radical Islamic terrorist group of the Sunni branch that split off from the older al-Qaeda, but is worse than it. According to the article above, “ISIS is considered so extreme that Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of al-Qaeda’s central command, has condemned it.” “People like [ISIS leader] Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi have been in a fight for a decade. They are messianic in their vision, and they are not going to stop.” Their vision is to set up a new caliphate, an Islamic state, by taking over the entire Middle East, including Israel, and ultimately the whole world. “Terrorism has a new name, and now, for the first time, it has a well-organized, well-funded, well-armed military with the ability to take and perhaps hold territory.” ISIS makes use of brutal and shocking tactics. As of this writing, they have beheaded three Western

journalists on camera and crucified many Christians in the Middle East. They are growing in numbers: “There are reports of hundreds of would-be jihadis from around the world joining ISIS, including dozens from the U.S.” Is it really a threat to the United States? ISIS “aspires to attack the U.S. and will, no doubt, soon attempt to do so. This is a threat we cannot ignore.”

In the September 22, 2014 issue of *Time*, in an article entitled “The Never-Ending War,” we read that President Obama did not anticipate this new threat. In his second Inaugural speech he declared “a decade of war is now ending.” In a May 2013 speech he said, “This war, like all wars, must end.... That’s what history advises. It’s what our democracy demands.” But this noble ideal will not be realized until Christ returns and ushers in the new heavens and the new earth. The terrorists do not care about our president’s ideal to end all wars. According to the same article, “The number of radical Islamic groups has increased nearly 60% in the past four years.” A former Homeland Security adviser said that our president “wanted to end the war on terror and is now dealing with a threat that is actually much more global....”

Not surprisingly, therefore, another war has now begun. On Tuesday, September 23, 2014 the United States and five Arab nations (Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Qatar, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates) launched a set of intense air strikes against ISIS targets in Syria and Iraq that essentially began another war. It has yet to be

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seen whether this new war will be brief, with this alliance of powers quickly crushing ISIS, or whether it will be a long and drawn out conflict.

We might also note that in addition to this larger threat, involving the rise of ISIS, the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas (in Gaza) has heated up again in recent months.

But how should we view this current war as Reformed Christians? What is the significance of it from the viewpoint of biblical eschatology? How does it fit into our view of the last things?

The premillennial dispensationalists, who include a huge number of American evangelicals, see these events as incredibly significant indicators that the rapture of the church will be any day now. They are on high alert. One prominent dispensationalist by the name of Joel Rosenberg, who writes novels in which he imagines possible scenarios leading up to the last days, gave a speech at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago on September 10, 2014 urging some 1,600 students to pay close attention to this crisis in the Middle East and to do whatever they can to support Israel (www.joelrosenberg.com. Click on "Joel's Blog"). Dispensationalists see these wars as setting the stage for a series of events in a seven-year period after the rapture and before the coming of Christ. Either before or after the rapture, on the basis of a wrong interpretation of Ezekiel 38-39, they expect a massive assault on the modern state of Israel by a coalition of nations including Russia, Turkey, Iran, and Libya (cf. Mark Hitchcock, *Iran, the Coming Crisis: Radical Islam, Oil, and the Nuclear Threat*, Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2006, 167). Therefore they are on high alert as the conflict heats up again in the area that Rosenberg calls the "epicenter" of the world, the Middle East. They are busy praying for the peace of Jerusalem, meaning not the church but the city in modern Israel. In his speech on September 10, Rosenberg urged the students to "learn, pray, give, and go" to help Israel, because God promised to Abraham, and thus to modern Israel, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curseth thee" (Gen. 12:3). Rosenberg urges us to bless the modern nation of Israel.

But all this tremendous enthusiasm on the part of dispensationalists is based on a foundation of sand. It is based on the error that Israel of the Old Testament was

not the church, and that as a nation, even though they reject Jesus as the Messiah, the Jews are still the special people of God to whom He intends to fulfill His Old Testament promises. But Paul emphatically teaches that the true children of Abraham are not physical Jews, as for example when he writes, "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (Gal. 3:7). Moreover, the enthusiasm of dispensationalists is based on an overly literalistic interpretation of names, numbers, and other biblical data that produces this bizarre prediction that Russia, Turkey, Iran, and other nations are about to join forces and attack Israel. And this erroneous interpretation also produces the strange doctrine of the rapture of the church before the rise of Antichrist and the great tribulation. Scripture knows nothing of a pre-tribulation rapture of the church. Rather, we are warned that Antichrist will make war with the saints, that is, with the church (Rev. 13:7). The zeal of dispensationalists in respect to this current conflict is thus misguided.

And yet we ask, is there any significance to the rise of ISIS and the ongoing Middle East conflict? After all, we are not postmillennialists either, who discard these wars as signs of Christ's coming, who dream of a world that is getting better and better, who close their eyes to reality and look for a golden age of Christian history over the whole world.

No, the rise of ISIS and the wars in the Middle East are clear signs of the coming of Christ. Concerning the whole period prior to His second coming, Jesus said to His disciples, "Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars." And He added: "See that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet" (Matt. 24:6). Christ sits at God's right hand now and opens the seven seals. He opens the second seal too. This is what John then sees: "And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword" (Rev. 6:4). Christ sovereignly rules over all wars. He causes nation to rise against nation in order to prevent, until the proper time, the antichristian kingdom from achieving world dominion and peace. He prevents this in order that His church might do her work of preaching the gospel in all nations and training up her children in

the fear of the Lord, until the full number of the elect is gathered. According to Herman Hoeksema, if the red horse did not run, if there were no wars, “the kingdom of Antichrist would reach the height of its development prematurely,” and it “would naturally leave no standing room for the true church of God on earth. It would persecute and, if possible, destroy the kingdom of God in the world” (*Behold He Cometh*. 2nd ed., Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2000, 214).

The rise of ISIS and this new war is a means Christ is using to prevent that premature development of the kingdom of the Beast and to give His church time to finish her work in the world.

But maybe there is something more to be noted in this present conflict, as well as in the entire set of conflicts in the Middle East in the past ten years or so. I have my eye on the second set of judgments shown to John in Revelation, the trumpets, which indicate an increase in the severity of the judgments that will come before Christ returns. I am looking specifically at the sixth trumpet, which gives rise to a voice in heaven saying,

Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt (Rev. 9:14-19).

This trumpet blast, which results in the slaying of one third of men, unleashes a war that is greater than all that have preceded it. As was said earlier, it has yet to be seen whether this war with ISIS will be brief or drawn out, whether it will involve much or little bloodshed, whether it will remain chiefly in the Middle East or spread into other parts of the world. Thus, we do not at all mean to

say that this specific conflict is the sixth trumpet. Yet there is something here that calls for our attention. The sixth trumpet causes a voice to cry out for the loosing of the four angels in the great river Euphrates. And these angels release an army of 2,000,000 horsemen who kill the third part of men with fire, smoke, and brimstone. This war begins in the great river Euphrates, which Hoeksema calls “the ideal and real boundary-line between the outward kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness, and therefore the symbol of the boundary-line between the Christian and the heathen nations, between the so-called civilized world and Gog and Magog” (*Behold He Cometh*, 331). We might add: between the Christian West and the Islamic Middle East. Hoeksema, who wrote decades before the rise of Islamic terrorism in the twenty-first century, says this about the sixth trumpet:


For our text pictures to us, according to our deepest conviction, a war which is caused by the inroads of these numberless nations [“the nations that are living at the four corners of the earth, outside the pale of civilization, and which in Scripture are known as Gog and Magog”] into the so-called civilized and Christian nations.... The purpose of these four angels is evidently to seduce the nations of Gog and Magog, and inspire them to war with the Christian world.... When they are let loose, the woes of war and famine and desolation and pestilence flood the world, rising from the east and coming from the direction of the Euphrates upon the entire world (331-332).

Look at a map of the Middle East. Do you see the Euphrates River running from the northwest to the southeast and emptying into the Persian Gulf? I am looking right now at a map of the Middle East that plots all the areas under ISIS control. These areas are along the Euphrates River.

Again, I will not assert at this point that the rise of ISIS is the blowing of the sixth trumpet. But I call your attention to this passage of Scripture, so that you will keep your eye on these current events and how they unfold. It may be that this is only one more war among the many wars that have occurred since Christ ascended into heaven. Then too, it is a sign of His coming. But we believe that someday a war is going to happen that will “rise from the east and come from the direction of the

Euphrates upon the entire world.” Let us watch, for we know not what hour our Lord will return (Matt. 24:42).

But, let us not fear. Our Lord said, “See that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet” (Matt. 24:6). We may suffer affliction, even war, but these things are not judgments of God for us. They are trials of faith. They can do us no real harm. They are meant for our good. They are sent and controlled by the Lamb who shed His blood for us. They are signs that He is coming back for us. They ought, therefore, to quicken in our hearts a yearning for His coming. For after the sixth trumpet, the seventh shall sound and give rise to voices in heaven saying,

The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth (Rev. 11:15-18). 

BELIEVING AND CONFESSING

REV. RODNEY KLEYN

The Means of Grace

Lord's Day 25

Question 65. Since then we are made partakers of Christ and all His benefits by faith only, whence doth this faith proceed?

Answer. From the Holy Ghost, who works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel, and confirms it by the use of the sacraments.

Question 66. What are the sacraments?

Answer. The sacraments are holy, visible signs and seals, appointed of God for this end, that by the use thereof, He may the more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel, namely, that He grants us freely the remission of sin, and life eternal, for the sake of that one sacrifice of Christ accomplished on the cross.

Question 67. Are both Word and sacraments, then, ordained and appointed for this end, that they may direct our faith to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as the only ground of our salvation?

Answer. Yes, indeed: for the Holy Ghost teaches us in the gospel, and assures us by the sacraments, that the whole of our salvation depends upon that one sacrifice of Christ which He offered for us on the cross.

Question 68. How many sacraments has Christ instituted in the new covenant, or testament?

Answer. Two: namely, holy baptism and the holy supper.

This Lord's Day is an introductory lesson to the rather lengthy treatment of the sacraments in the following five Lord's Days. This introduc-

tion is not limited to the sacraments, but includes the subject of preaching, and describes for us how the Holy Spirit uses both preaching and sacraments as means of grace in the life of the believer.

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The Means of Grace

When we speak of the means of grace we are talking about the official ministry of the church through the Word and sacraments.

There are many other means of grace in the life of the believer, for example, prayer, personal study of God's Word, good reading, fellowship with other believers, mutual admonition, parental instruction, etc. In a sense, everything that God brings into our life is a means of grace, and we acknowledge this especially when we are going through trials and afflictions—they “work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (II Cor. 4:17).

But the primary means of grace, which are essential to the life of every believer, are the preaching of the Word and participation in the sacraments. God, by the Holy Spirit, uses these two means to create and confirm faith in the believer, that is, He saves us and preserves us in salvation by these means. Among these, the chief means of grace is the preaching of the gospel.

The administration of the sacraments and the work of preaching the gospel belong to the instituted church of Christ on earth. The sacraments are not intended for private administration, but are a part of the commission that Christ gave to the apostles, and in them to the New Testament church, to teach and baptize in His name (Matt. 28:19-20). The administration and oversight of the sacraments, as we will see in subsequent Lord's Days, is the work of the elders in the church. For this reason, we do not administer the sacraments in hospitals or nursing homes or to individuals in their private residence. And for this reason too, the administration of the sacraments is limited to believers and—in the case of baptism—to their children.

In a similar way, the preaching of the gospel is a work that belongs to the church. This is not to say that individual believers are not called to witness by their speech to others. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost qualifies and calls every New Testament believer to be a prophet. In fact, in Acts 8:4, the biblical word for preaching is used to describe the witness of the early believers—“Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.” So, as prophets we are all called to proclaim the Word of God to others, being “ready always to give an answer to every man that

asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (I Pet. 3:15).

However, as an individual, no believer has the right to appoint himself to the work of preaching and to gather a congregation to hear his/her preaching. As Romans 10:15 puts it, “And how shall they preach, except they be sent?” This sending is the work of the church, and the church does this by calling and installing into the ministry men who have been set aside for this work by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2-3). When this is done, the ministry of the Word becomes, not simply the thoughts or message of an individual man, but they become the official proclamation, by the church, of the Word of God. The minister's sermons are, in a very real way, the sermons of the church, overseen and approved by the elders of the church who have called and ordained him to this work.

How Grace Comes

The Catechism's focus in this Lord's Day is how grace is worked through these means. When the Word and sacraments are properly administered by the church, Christ Himself works grace through them, so that by the Holy Spirit faith is given to the participants.

The Catechism points out a difference between how the preaching and the sacraments work that helps us see that preaching is the primary means of grace. Whereas preaching “works” faith, the sacraments “confirm” faith (Q&A 65). In the gospel (preaching) the Holy Ghost “teaches” us and in the sacraments he “assures” us (Q&A 67). Preaching is used both to create and to confirm faith, whereas the sacraments are limited to the confirmation of our faith.

An illustration may help us to understand this difference. When a seed is planted in the ground, it is essential that it have water in order to germinate and grow into a plant. Water remains essential if the plant is to survive. In the same way, the preaching of the gospel is essential both to bring the seed of faith to life, and to keep it alive. Sometimes a farmer will add fertilizer to the plant that, though not essential for the plant's survival, will make the plant stronger. In the same way, the sacraments are added to the preaching of the gospel to confirm, assure, and make stronger our faith.

This difference needed emphasis at the time of the


Reformation over against the Roman Catholic emphasis on sacraments at the expense of preaching. The Roman Catholic Church has seven sacraments, and teaches that grace comes to the participants through the sacraments themselves. The Reformation was a return to the primacy of the preaching of the Word of God, while the sacraments were given their proper secondary place. Still today, this is important, especially with regard to newer converts and the children of the covenant. The sacraments are not essential to our faith in the same way that preaching is, and though interested visitors as well as our children may not be able to partake of the Lord's Supper, still they need to be encouraged to sit under the preaching of the gospel.

Both the Word and the sacraments work grace by directing our faith to the cross of Jesus Christ as the only ground for our salvation. This means that neither the Word nor the sacraments have an innate power, but rather, are a means that point us to Jesus Christ, in whom all grace is to be found.

Only when the preaching faithfully calls us to look to Jesus Christ is it a means of grace. When sermons focus on social ills, or on moralisms, and there is no preaching of Christ and the cross, they will not function as a means of grace. The preaching should call sinners to look away from all self-righteousness and to come in repentance over their sins to Jesus Christ alone. The preaching must be the proclamation of the cross and work of Jesus Christ. To the church in Corinth, Paul says concerning his preaching, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2).

Because the sacraments are signs, they also direct our faith to Jesus Christ. A sign always directs our minds to something other than itself. For example, when I see a sign advertising refreshing ice cream at a local parlor, I don't give the sign itself a second thought (unless I work for a sign company). I don't think about the colors or the height or the artwork on the sign. No, I think of the ice cream and the place that sells the ice cream. So the sacraments, in their elements of water, bread, and wine, call me to look away to Jesus Christ, to the washing of His blood, and to His suffering on the cross. This is the way the sacraments confirm my faith: they cause me to lift the eyes of my faith to Jesus and His work.

In giving us the sacraments, God shows His pity on us. He remembers that we are creatures of the earth, and He uses things that are a common part of our daily life to teach us what our salvation is, to show us how Jesus saves and washes us from our sins. The sacraments are not extraordinary signs, such as miracles, which would draw attention to themselves; but they are ordinary things used to point us to the extraordinary work of Christ.

May God give us faithfulness in the administration of the means of grace, and be pleased also to use them to keep us in the faith. 

Questions for Discussion

1. Where does your faith come from?
2. What connection is there between the strength of your faith and your attendance to the means of grace?
3. As a believer, what attitudes should you have toward the preaching of the gospel (e.g., Romans 10:17)?
4. To whom does the right to preach the gospel belong? What role do you play as a believer?
5. What is the central message of the preaching of the gospel?
6. How do preaching and the sacraments differ as means of grace? How are they similar?
7. Why would it be wrong to administer the Lord's Supper to an individual in the hospital?
8. Why are the sacraments called signs? To what do they direct our attention?
9. Do the sacraments convey anything different or anything more than the preaching? If not, why do we need them?
10. Who alone can appoint sacraments in the church? How many did He appoint?

The Impossibility of Missions

At first glance, one might think from the title that this article will fail to promote a healthy interest in missions. Who would be interested in biblical and Reformed missions if he is told that it is a humanly impossible work from many perspectives?

Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to remember that the work of faithful missions, including its important result of positive fruit, is truly a wonder of grace alone. Faithful missions is the wonder-work of the sovereign Lord of the harvest, in which the faithful missionary is only a servant and a tool in His hand.

Due regard to the impossibility of missions does not hinder support or interest in it. It will not drive a missionary to quit, nor produce pessimism about missions. Instead, it gives a missionary proper direction, realistic expectations, a humble attitude, burning motivation, and sustaining encouragement in his labors.



The labors of a missionary are demanding. He must “preach the Word” (II Tim. 4:2a), which requires that he study the Word of God and rightly divide the Word of truth for faithful, expository, Christ-centered, and edifying preaching within the context of his field of labor. He must preach the Word in season and out of season, reproving, rebuking, and exhorting with all longsuffering and doctrine (II Tim. 4:2b).

The missionary must serve the Lord with all humility of mind and faithfulness of heart in the work. He must testify “...repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:19-20). He must in all his teaching and preaching not fail to declare “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). He must apply the Word of God to those who are in his audience and not fail to warn them of idolatry, heresy, false doctrine, radicalism, and

ungodliness. He must call sinners to repentance from their sin and to faith in the only Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The missionary seeks to fulfill his work after the example of the apostle Paul, who testified about his work that “though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.... I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you” (I Cor. 9:19-23). He crosses the cultural and economic boundaries as best he can to prevent unnecessary hindrances to the hearing of the gospel.

When we consider his demanding duties, it should become clear to us that a missionary faces an impossible task. This becomes even clearer when we notice that, as the Lord sends His servants through His church into mission endeavors, He charges them essentially with the same charge He gave to the apostle Paul: “...unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me” (Acts 26:17b-18). What missionary of himself can do *that*?



If a missionary, particularly in a foreign work, might forget the human impossibility of missions, then it will not take long for him to be reminded. For example, some missionaries are met with hostility by those who refuse to turn from the darkness of their false religion and idolatry, seeing the messenger of Christ as a serious threat. As a result, we know that missionaries have suffered death for the sake of Christ.

More commonly, there are other daily realities that a missionary probably did not think much about before he came to the foreign field. There may be for him the daily reality of a language barrier, if he does not enjoy

Rev. Smit is a missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, stationed in Manila, the Philippines.

complete fluency in the local language of his field of labor. He may experience occurrences of miscommunication due to differences in ways of communication. He may have day-to-day irritations of living: air pollution in a major city, roads choked with traffic, time consumed in perplexing traffic jams or in seemingly endless lines at government offices, and such like things. Compared to former experience in his home country, his family's simple trips to a grocery store or bank in his foreign field of labor now consume much more time than expected. His work output, which previously in his home country may have been quite high, may drop due to unexpected demands from daily life in his mission homeland.

Perhaps when he preaches there are the irritations of the tropical climate that sap his energy for the preaching and the energy of the congregation or mission group for their full attention. During worship he may experience the irritations of interruptions and distractions from the noise of passing trucks, muffler-less motorcycles, farm tractors, barking dogs, crowing roosters, cackling hens, the deafening noise of an afternoon downpour on a tin roof, and, sometimes, loud karaoke music from ungodly neighbors. With all of the disruptions and distractions, he may well wonder in discouragement if his work is effective.

If he is a western missionary, having come from a relatively affluent country and laboring in a place that has lesser wealth, he faces the reality of unfamiliar poverty. He will feel constantly the economic differences between himself and those among whom he labors and among the world in which he lives. This in itself brings an element of daily stress, concern, and responsibility in his labors.

The faithful missionary soon faces the reality of his own limitations. While he may want to preach far and wide and take on a massive load of mission work, his unique set of God-given abilities allows for only a limited workload. Especially in his times of sickness, he has time to reflect on his human limitations, his weaknesses, and the human impossibility of missions.

Even a calling church faces the impossibility of missions when calling a missionary. A calling church faces the question: will it be this call, the next one, or the next one after that, that results in a favorable answer? There are many factors and considerations that go into a call. Whether a minister accepts the first, second, or twelfth

call of the calling church, that acceptance of a mission call is a remarkable work and gift of the Holy Spirit.

When a missionary considers that the work of missions is to bring sinners to repentance from their sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, he realizes that he cannot open one heart to receive that Word. He cannot make the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk in the ways of God. He cannot breathe true life into a dying, withering soul. He cannot make lost sinners into saints, unbelievers into believers, lost sheep into repentant sheep, and the proud into the humble. It is humanly impossible to create that good fruit.

There are a multitude of things that are necessary to make this entire, spiritual enterprise of missions do what Christ promised that it would do and to make it possible for His servants to fulfill their mission duties. When one considers carefully all of the aspects of missions—from the calling of a missionary, to the moving of a missionary to the foreign field, to the establishment of a missionary in his work, to the actual preaching and the hearing of the preaching, and to many more factors and elements in missions besides—we need to realize that foreign missions, like the ministry of the Word in a local congregation, is a humanly impossible enterprise.



How should we respond to this reality? Our response might often be discouragement. Lofty expectations may have been dashed. Repeated calls to the mission field are repeatedly declined with repeated disappointment. The direction desired for important aspects of the work may often take unexpected turns. Unanticipated problems seem to interrupt progress. All of these things can add up in a missionary's mind and heart, and he can be tempted to thoughts of quitting. He may feel as Elijah did, when the aftermath of the display of Jehovah as God alone on Mt. Carmel was not an immediate and dramatic national reformation of Israel. It appears that even the apostle Paul, when facing hardened and fierce opposition to his initial labors in Corinth, and experiencing some discouragement before the hard reality of missions, perhaps contemplated leaving Corinth and going elsewhere (Acts 18:8-10).

Our response should be, among other things, that we reckon with the reality that missions is humanly impos-

sible, and that the struggles and problems one faces underscore that fact. We need to reckon with that reality, lest we become proud when there are positive results, lest we quit when anticipated results do not materialize, and lest we forget the extent of our dependence upon Jehovah for faithful missions.

We must also remember God's promises in connection with missions, and remember that God is willing and able to fulfill those promises for the sake of Christ. He knows that He has His sheep and lambs in this global city (Acts 18:9-10). He will gather those other sheep that yet must be brought under the rule of His grace, Spirit, and Word. Concerning His promises and commitment to them, "is anything too hard for Jehovah?" (Gen. 18:14a). No. What remains impossible for faithful missionaries to do is possible with our covenant God.

Often the work of foreign missions does not grow in grand, staggering leaps of progress. Often the work progresses slowly, with periodic setbacks; yet it is nourished and nudged forward by the still small voice of the foolishness of preaching. The work often begins in a humble way and continues in a humble way, which the Scriptures admonish us not to despise, because God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty (Zech. 4:10; I Cor. 1:27). What is the reason for that with respect to missionaries? The reason is, that no flesh should glory in His presence (I Cor. 1:29)—particularly when we observe that the Lord is using us to gather His people into the fellowship of His truth.




The wonder-work of missions is entirely dependent upon Jehovah from beginning to end. That truth gives missionaries incentive to do their work faithfully, within their limitations, and in their particular field of labor. They have the confidence that, by His Holy Spirit, the Lord will direct the preaching where it needs to go. He will make sure that His chosen people among the nations hear His Word at the right time and place for their repentance, faith, and salvation. That encourages missionaries, and even those who support and oversee them in the mission work, to give their best efforts in the service of the Lord, not doubting the value and usefulness of their instruction, sermons, advice, discussions, decisions, and labors. It encourages missionaries to fervent trust in Christ for His indispensable blessings unto faithfulness in the service of Christ.

Even though what will remain day after day is impossible of ourselves, yet day after day missions is possible for our God in and through us. Daily He will add to His church such as should be saved (Acts 2:47b). By His grace, Jehovah will draw unto Christ His elect out of their sin and depravity from all of the different cultures and nations of the world, and create them as one body in Christ and His truth. It is possible for Him to do that through the foolishness and weakness of the preaching of His glorious Word.

What a wonder of God's grace alone to behold!

What a blessing it is to be involved in His wonder-work!

To God alone be the glory because He makes the impossible possible! 

CLASSIS WEST REPORT

REV. DOUGLAS KUIPER

September 24, 2014
As a general rule, the pastors of our churches in Classis West look forward to a meeting of Classis. If the great distance between our churches can be called a chasm to fellowship, the meetings of Classis are the bridge. Some of our colleagues we have not seen in the six months since our last meeting!

Two factors heightened our anticipation for the meet-

ing of Classis West on September 24, 2014, at Peace PRC, in Lansing, IL.

The first was the scheduling of an officebearers conference on Tuesday, September 23. This meant that we had an opportunity for intellectual/spiritual stimulation, even more time for fellowship with our colleagues in the west, and the ability to see other ministers from the east, as well as the professors and students from our seminary.

The keynote speaker was Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, who emphasized the importance of developing our preaching beyond seminary, and suggested some ways to do so. Prof. Dykstra spoke on “The Art of Making Christ-Centered Sermons, with Biblical Illustrations.” Prof. Gritters set forth the necessity of making applications in the sermons, and gave some templates to help in that. Prof. Cammenga concluded the day by speaking on “The Elders’ Supervision of the Preaching.”

Anyone can hear these speeches by visiting Peace PRC’s website at www.peaceprc.org, and following the link to their page at www.sermonaudio.com.

The second joyful event of this meeting was the examination of Mr. Joshua Engelsma, who had accepted the call to be pastor of Doon PRC. Following the prescribed custom in Classis West, Peace PRC’s consistory called an official public worship service for Tuesday evening, at which Mr. Engelsma preached his specimen sermon. On Wednesday he was examined in the areas of the six loci of

Reformed doctrine, knowledge of Scripture, knowledge of the confessions, controversy, and *practica*. Classis West, with the concurrence of the synodical deputies from Classis East, unanimously approved his examination and advised Doon PRC to ordain him to the ministry. Doon intends to do this at a special worship service on October 3.

Chairing this meeting of Classis for the first time was Rev. Erik Guichelaar, who proved himself capable. The four elders who had never before been delegated to Classis signed Classis West’s copy of the *Formula of Subscription* in the presence of the Classis.

All of the other work of Classis was routine, and Classis adjourned before mid afternoon. The expenses of this meeting totaled \$10,032.05. Classis is scheduled to meet next on March 4, 2015, at Doon PRC.

I’m looking forward to it!

Rev. Douglas Kuiper,
Stated Clerk

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

MR. PERRY VAN EGDOM

Minister Activities

On September 21 the Lord of glory took Rev. Dale Kuiper to his eternal reward. Rev. Kuiper served faithfully for thirty-six years, pastoring six Protestant Reformed congregations, and in addition served for a short time as a home missionary. He was also the author of many timely articles in this publication. We give thanks to God for Rev. Kuiper’s diligent labors, sorrow with the Kuiper family, and commit them to the care of their heavenly Father.

At the meeting of Classis West on September 24, Pastor-elect Joshua Engelsma sustained his examination. Mr. Engelsma was ordained as minister of the Word and

sacraments in the Doon, IA PRC on October 3, with Professor David Engelsma leading the service. Rev. Joshua Engelsma preached his inaugural sermon in Doon the evening of October 5.

On September 21 the calling church for the mission field in the Republic of the Philippines issued a call to Rev. Cory Griess, pastor of Calvary PRC, Hull, IA, to be the next missionary there. Rev. Griess planned to answer this call on October 19.

Also on September 21 Faith PRC, Jenison, MI issued a call to Rev. Clayton Spronk, of Peace PRC, Lansing, IL, to be their next pastor. Rev. Spronk planned to answer this call on October 19.

In a special congregational meeting held October 2, First PRC of Grand Rapids, MI called Rev. Brian

Huizinga, pastor of Hope PRC, Redlands, CA, to be their minister.

Congregation Activities

The expression “many hands make light work” was exactly the case in Covenant of Grace PRC of Spokane, WA where two work bees were held this summer. The first was for some demolition prior to remodeling in the parsonage. Then the congregation gathered to clean up landscaping, trim trees, do some weeding, etc. Children joined in to help the adults, and neighbors commented how pleasant things looked. The former parsonage has been sold, so the Rev. Rodney Kleyn family is living in a rental house across the street from the church while the current parsonage is being remodeled.

A special needs Bible study is in

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

its fourth season at Faith PRC, Jenison, MI. This group meets the first and third Thursday of each month from September through April. A helper is supplied for each of the 10-15 members who attend. The hour-long meetings include a 20-30 minute discussion on a passage or topic, and song singing, followed by a craft. The book "Show Me Thy Ways" by Gertrude Hoeksema is used in the discussion. We give thanks to hear that this important opportunity remains available to our special needs children, young people, and adults who attend!

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of the First PRC in Edgerton, MN sponsored a presentation by its pastor, Rev. Douglas Kuiper, in the nearby Chandler, MN community center. Rev. Kuiper spoke on the topic "As for Me and My House: The Importance of Family Devotions." All those from Edgerton whose last name *did not* begin with "B" were asked to bring cookies or bars for refreshments. We hope there were enough cookies. Lots of "B"s in Edgerton!

On September 16, the Evangelism Committee of the Grandville, MI PRC held a workshop on the theme "Personal and Church Evangelism." Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, Eastern Home Missionary based in Pittsburgh, PA, and Rev. Daniel Holstege, pastor of the First PRC of Holland, MI, were the speakers.

School Activities

Many schools held kick-off festivities. Such was the case with

the Protestant Reformed Christian School in Loveland, CO. All ages enjoyed "Western Night," with activities including donkey-cart and horseback rides, panning for gold, and digging in a "feed trough" for treats. Children eagerly parted with two tickets to have the "sheriff" put a friend in jail for 15 minutes. Prizes were awarded to best-dressed, best calf-roper, the strongest wrangler (arm-wrestler), and for the farthest cow-pie toss. Following a supper of pulled pork and baked beans served in tin plates, all gathered to sing a few cowboy-style songs accompanied by banjo and guitar.

On September 15 the members of Heritage Christian School Society in the Hudsonville, MI area attended a special meeting to vote whether to purchase the recently closed Freedom Christian School building and whether to sell their present building to the Hudsonville Public School system. Both votes passed with overwhelming support. There seems to be much excitement in anticipation of this transition, as well as a measure of sadness as the old building will no doubt be missed.

Mission Activities

You may recall the problem of the Federation of Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines, when they attempted in the last year to register their name with the Securities and Exchange Commission of the Philippine government. Because the initials FPRCP closely resembled those of the Philippine Red Cross (PRC), there was a delay in the formation of the federation while the situation was addressed.


Now one of the members of that federation, the First Reformed Church of Bulacan, has encountered the same conundrum. In attempting to change their official name to the First Protestant Reformed Church of Bulacan, difficulty arose again as the initials closely resembled a present organization. To make the story short, their name will no longer include the word "First" but will be Protestant Reformed Church in Bulacan. Their website is <http://prcbulacan.org>

The only effect of a mid-September northern Philippine typhoon felt in the Antipolo area was a deluge of rain. It's a good thing our missionary families live on a hill, enabling them to escape local flooding.

Classis Activities

Classis East of the PRCA met September 10 at Grandville PRC, Grandville, MI. The usual agenda items were completed. Also, four protests regarding the changing of the date for Prayer Day were put in the hands of a sub-committee. Classis planned to reconvene October 15 to deal with these protests.

Classis West was hosted by Peace PRC, Lansing, IL, on September 24. The most significant item on the agenda was the examination of pastor-elect Joshua Engelsma. An officebearers' conference on the topic of "Preaching" was held the day before.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wedding Anniversary

■ We give praise and thanks to God for our parents,

HENRY and SHIRLEY BERGMAN, who will be celebrating 45 blessed years together on November 11, 2014. Because of their faithful instruction as godly parents, we can confidently say the words, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

- ❖ Randy and Barb Moorman
Stephanie, Matt, Jon, Nate
- ❖ Tom and Mindy Bergman
Jack, Sam, Tessa, Quinn, Molly
- ❖ Julie Bergman
- ❖ Dan Bergman

Hudsonville, Michigan

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Southeast PRC express their Christian sympathy to Vel Kuiper, to Victor and Lisa Kuiper and their children, and to Alex and Dana VanDerSchaaf in the death of Vel's husband,

REV. DALE KUIPER.

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Corinthians 5:1).

Rev. Kuiper was our pastor for eleven years. Since his ordination in 1967, Rev. Kuiper faithfully served in five other PRC churches, as a home missionary, and in many other capacities.

Rev. William Langerak, Pastor
Mark Ophoff, Asst. Clerk

Wedding Anniversary

■ With sincere thanksgiving to God, our beloved parents and grandparents,

PAUL and DEBBIE HAAK, celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary on October 25, 2014. We are thankful to God for their godly example and for His covenant faithfulness to us. "I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens" (Psalm 89:1, 2).

- ❖ Nathan and Michelle Haak
Tori, Lili, Deklan
- ❖ Jeff and Katie Baatenburg
Mila
- ❖ Trisha Haak
- ❖ Alyssa Haak

Crete, Illinois

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Grandville PRC extend their sympathy to Jason and Lois Engelsma and children, in the death of their father,

REV. DALE KUIPER.

■ We are thankful for his faithful labors in our churches for many years. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Revelation 2:17).

Rev. Kenneth Koole, Pres.
David Kregel, Asst. Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express their sympathy to Luke and Rebecca Koops and family in the recent passing away of their brother-in-law

PETER RIZK.

It is our prayer that they may take comfort from God's word to us in Philippians 4:7: "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ."

Rev. Carl Haak, President
Gerald Kuiper, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation at Southeast PRC express their Christian sympathy to Duane VanDenBerg, Jim and Kathi Holstege, and Doug and Beth Mingerink, and to Duane's grandchildren and great-grandchildren, in the death of Duane's wife,

MRS. JANET VANDENBERG.

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Corinthians 2:9).

Rev. William Langerak, Pastor
Mark Ophoff, Asst. Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The School Board of the Free Christian School of Edgerton, MN express their Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Skip Hunter, as well as to Adam and Beth Fennema, in the death of their mother and grandmother,

VIVIAN HUNTER (Grandma Hunter).

May the words of Psalter #29:3 comfort them in their sorrow: "My soul in death's dark pit Shall not be left by Thee; Corruption Thou wilt not permit Thy holy one to see. Life's pathway Thou wilt show, To Thy right hand wilt guide, Where streams of pleasure ever flow, And boundless joys abide."

Jason Brands, President
Jim VerHey, Secretary

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Grandville PRC extend their sympathy to Doc and Jan Kuiper, Brad and Becky Butgereit and children, and Derek and Lydia Kuiper and children, in the death of their mother, grandmother, and great grandmother,

NELLIE KUIPER.

May they confess with the psalmist in Psalm 42:11: "Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

Rev. Kenneth Koole, Pres.
David Kregel, Asst. Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express their sympathy to Doug Vandenberg and to Alex and Heather Dykstra in the passing to glory of their mother and grandmother,

JANET VANDENBERG.

Our prayer is that God may encourage and comfort them with His word in Psalm 37: 5 and 6: "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday."

Rev. Carl Haak, President
Gerald Kuiper, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Grandville PRC extend their sympathy to Herm and Lorraine DeVries, John and Becky DeVries and children, and Laura DeVries in the death of their son, brother, and uncle,

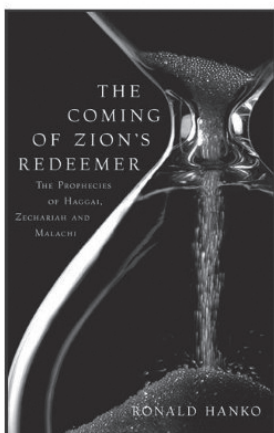
TIMOTHY DEVRIES.

May the family find comfort in the words of Psalm 120:1-2: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth."

Rev. Kenneth Koole, Pres.
David Kregel, Asst. Clerk

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by Ronald Hanko



These prophecies, though not always easy to understand, are as much needed today as when they were written. Written for those living at the end of the Old Testament and looking forward to the first coming of Christ, they speak with authority and promise to those who are looking forward to the second coming of Christ and who live near the end of

this present age. Very different in style, they have a unity of theme and purpose in Christ, the great king, priest, and prophet of his people.

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Friday, **November 14, 2014**

7:30 P.M.

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Kalamazoo, MI

sponsored by
the Evangelism Committee
of Kalamazoo PRC

Reformed Witness Hour **November 2014**

Date	Topic	Text
November 2	“The Use of Our Gifts”	I Corinthians 12:4-7
November 9	“Preaching: The Power of God”	I Corinthians 1:17-2:5
November 16	“The Beauty of God’s House”	Psalms 84:1-4
November 23	“Thanks Be to God!”	II Corinthians 9:15
November 30	“Holy Commitment to the Preaching”	Acts 20:28