

The Standard Bearer

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God's Covenant with Noah

But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

Genesis 6:18

There is nothing so beautiful and precious to us as is the truth of God's covenant. It is good to be reminded of this glorious truth from time to time.

We see in the context that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord (v. 8). Noah is in the midst of wickedness as a righteous man. He walks with God, his covenant friend. As the object of God's favor he received the blessings of grace, which created in him a new heart, delivering him from the power of sin, so that he hated wickedness and sought redemption and forgiveness.

As such, Noah was saved. God was displeased with the world, but He rejoiced in Noah. God continues His covenant in Noah. Chapter 5 ended with the generations

of Adam. Chapter 6 verse 9 begins a new section of generations, those of Noah. This shows that the line of the covenant did not end with Noah, but continued on in his generations.

The world was to be typically destroyed in the flood. This was not to be the final destruction. Therefore the church must continue in Noah. In verse 9 the covenant is spoken of in a most beautiful way. God speaks to Noah as Friend to friend and makes known to him the secrets of His covenant, His purpose to save His people and to destroy the wicked world.

A very definite covenant is referred to. God referred to something that Noah knew and understood. It is plain from the entire revelation that the covenant was not unknown or something new. It is not *a*, but *my* covenant. There are not all kinds of covenants, but only *one*, God's, already known to Noah, which God will establish with him. All the distinct dealings with man in Scripture are so many historical phases, revelations, realizations of the one covenant. This covenant He establishes and realizes throughout history. It shall have its final realization in the new heavens and the new earth. This is important for

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the history following the flood. The covenant in chapters 6 and 9 are one and the same covenant. This covenant, identified as *my* covenant, is the same throughout the ages. Always it is the one covenant that God makes.

God's covenant means that Jehovah is a covenant God in Himself. The triune God, even apart from the creature, lives a covenant life. That life is based on absolute unity of Being, of nature, and of life, on the one hand, and on the threeness of persons, on the other hand. God is one in Being, one in heart and mind and will, one thought, purpose, and desire, all characterized by infinite goodness and perfection. Yet He is three Persons, so that there is distinction and interaction of Persons, fellowship and communion in God. The covenant of God is the most intimate fellowship of love and friendship of the Father, in the Son, and through the Holy Spirit. That, in the deepest sense, is the covenant of God.

God chose to reveal that covenant outside of Himself. He chose to impart it to His people in Christ Jesus, so that they might be taken up into the current of His own covenant life. It was His eternal will to reveal it through Christ in the flesh, Immanuel, who is Head of His elect. The essence of that covenant relation is a relation of fellowship and friendship in Christ, according to which they partake of His own life, dwell with Him, enjoy His favor and blessings, serve and glorify Him as their Friend-Sovereign. For the greater manifestation of the beauty of His covenant He chose the deep way of sin and grace, to reveal light in darkness, as well as election and reprobation. That is why we stand in the midst of a wicked world in an antithetical way fighting the Lord's battle. That is why we are always redeemed through judgment.

This covenant has a history. It was first revealed to Adam, who, in the state of righteousness, was God's friend-servant, which was an earthly picture of the better things to come. But Adam falls, and, according to God's purpose, *must* fall in order to make room for Christ. God purposed to realize His covenant in Christ along the lines of sin and grace. That is why there is the announcement of the protevangel, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." This at the same time was an announcement of friendship between God and the seed of the woman, for "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the

world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4).

Now the same covenant is given to Noah. The Lord had continued that covenant in the seed of the woman: Abel, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, and Lamech the righteous, who was Noah's father. Now the whole world is wicked and ripe for judgment and is to be destroyed. It seems as if God's purpose must fail; but His promise cannot fail, for Noah is God's covenant friend by sovereign grace. Therefore: "...with thee will I establish my covenant."

Literally, "to establish" means "to cause to rise up," to make something stand, and thus, "to make firm." We have here, then, "I will cause that relation of friendship between Me and thee to be. And I will cause that relation of friendship to be firm and to abide." In this particular connection it means, "I will cause that relation of friendship to remain firm even when all the world perishes" (vv. 17, 18). Through judgment, the destruction of the world, God reveals and maintains that covenant of friendship with Noah.

These words look to the future. They speak of continuation, for God's covenant is not yet fully realized. That shall take place in the Great Seed of the woman, Jesus Christ, of which seed and victory the Lord had spoken to His people immediately after the fall. This victory had not yet been attained, and God was about to destroy the earth. But God singles out Noah and assures him: "With thee will I make firm, with thee will I continue, My covenant."

We can see that this establishment is strictly a *work of God*. I will put enmity.... "I will establish My covenant...." God does not ask Noah's permission to enter into an agreement and say, "Shall we be friends?" No! He simply comes to Noah, His covenant friend, with His own Word, "But with thee will I establish my covenant." It is all of God, nothing of Noah.

God established His covenant organically. God's work is personal, but not individualistic. When God created Adam, He did not create him merely as an individual. He created Adam head of an entire human race and king of an entire creation. When Adam fell, the whole race and entire creation fell with him. And when God works His work of salvation, the realization of His everlasting covenant, He does not work individualistically, but He


saves an entire church, the glorious body of our Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, He saves a whole world, the church with the creation.

We read, then, that not only Noah must enter the ark, but also his wife, his sons, and his sons' wives. They constituted the organic church of that day. All creation was included in that covenant. God not only saves a church, but He also provides a place where she may dwell. So when God is to destroy the earth, Noah must take with him animals. After the flood there must be continuity; the earth must be inhabited again. This must be, for the flood is not the final end, but a stage in the realization of God's final purpose. The final end will be when God takes up His church and provides for her a new heaven and a new earth where all shall be perfect and glorified.

As a result Noah becomes of the party of God. He does not become an antinomian, or a passive stock and block and assume the attitude, "If God does it all, then I can sit down and I have to do nothing but wait until the flood comes." Through the grace of God, Noah and his family are God's people, who have a calling that follows from the very fact that they are God's covenant people.

Their calling is to manifest themselves as God's friend-servants in the midst of the world that lies in darkness.

Therefore, Noah must be busy with the work of the Lord, the work of faith. He must manifest himself over against the world that lies in darkness as believing and obeying and serving the Lord. God commands him to build the ark, which Hebrews 11:7 describes as a work of faith. As it was positively a work of faith, so in the negative sense it was an act of condemnation of the world. Noah, in his work, manifested himself as God's friend antithetically. The building of the ark was a testimony against the wicked world and a testimony that God was a righteous God. In all his ways he manifested that he was of the party of the living God, through the grace of the everlasting covenant.

This speaks to us today. We live in a world that is becoming increasingly similar to the world before the flood. God is giving us all kinds of signs of His coming judgment. In all of this we have the comfort to know that we belong to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ in whom the Lord will finally realize His covenant. So may we also find grace in the eyes of the Lord. 

EDITORIAL

PROF. RUSSELL DYKSTRA

Pray For Us

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: and that we may be delivered from unreasonable

and wicked men: for all men have not faith.

II Thessalonians 3:1, 2

Of all the daily benefits that God gives to His people, surely prayer is one of the most precious. Every Christian knows the tremendous importance of prayer in a right relationship to God, as well as for his life as a Christian. My purpose is to call attention to the importance of bringing our petitions to God continually. More specifically, as we begin another year

of instruction in the Protestant Reformed Seminary, I wish to urge you listeners, and now readers, to pray for the seminary.

We are all aware that in some circumstances the request "pray for us" can be made thoughtlessly, perhaps flippantly, or even superstitiously. It may happen that nonreligious people, who never darken the door of a church on Sundays, find themselves in a tragic situation and ask you to pray for them. Unbelieving rulers in our nation, whose lives and policies

[Note: This (and subsequent) editorials are the content of the speech given publicly at the seminary convocation for the current school year, held in September of 2013. Even though the seminary year is now half finished, the need for the saints to pray is no less pressing. The speech is given here with only slight modification.]

indicate that they do not know the Lord, yet will say in a time of tragedy, “Our thoughts and our prayers go out to those who have suffered loss at this time.” Still others have prayer-chains and prayer-requests that ask others to pray for such mundane things as sick pets or lost luggage. The effect on us might be that we shy away from asking someone to pray for us. But that would be a wrong reaction.

The Bible gives us good direction in this matter of praying for each other. Paul, in most of the epistles that he wrote, made it plain that he was praying for the saints in that congregation to whom he addressed his inspired epistle. The Bible instructs us in James 5:14-16 to pray with each other, to confess our faults one to another, and pray for each other that we may be healed. On more than one occasion, the apostle Paul specifically asked believers to pray for him and for his fellow laborers, the missionaries and the ministers. He does so point-blank in a verse that stands all by itself: I Thessalonians 5:25. Without any specific requests for what they ought to pray or even a reason why they should pray, he simply exhorts: “Brethren, pray for us.” Likewise in the passage that we read tonight, II Thessalonians 3:1: “Brethren, pray for us.” And the writer to the Hebrews has the same request in his final chapter (13:18): “Pray for us.”

Hence, I feel entirely justified in taking that inspired admonition, “Pray for us,” and applying it to us and our situation, specifically applying it to the seminary and to all of

you, friends and supporters of the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

The (speech) article is organized with three points, which constitute three reasons why you ought to pray for the seminary, reasons that will at the same time give the content of proper petitions on behalf of the seminary. 1) The spiritual nature of the work. 2) The difficulties faced. 3) The importance of the work. For those reasons I urge you to pray for the seminary, for the professors, for the students, for the staff, and for the Theological School Committee that oversees the work of the seminary.

The Nature of the Work

The nature of the work demands that prayers be offered for it, because it is a spiritual work. That makes God’s gifts and blessing indispensable.

If the work were a physical labor, for example, if the work in which we were engaged involved making aluminum windows and doors, or building houses, or computer programming, we would not have a convocation where we call people together and admonish them, “Please, pray for us.” When Scripture addresses this matter of praying for each other, it never does so concerning success in business, or even that we would have enough money or have good health. Rather, always, it is the spiritual needs of the church that are in view when the Bible exhorts, “Pray for us.” The work of the seminary is a spiritual work.

Seminary work is spiritual because it is the work of the ministry of the Word. All the professors are

ordained preachers of the gospel, ministers of the Word and sacraments. They have themselves served in the ministry of the Word for at least ten years. They were called by the churches to perform a vocation that is an aspect of the gospel ministry. That is how seminary instruction is to be viewed: an aspect of the gospel ministry. The Spirit, through the apostle Paul, indicated that that was the nature of the training of men and an aspect of preaching. Paul did that, in the first place, by his own example. He selected young men and called them to accompany him on his journeys in order that he might teach them and prepare them for the work of the ministry. He did that with Timothy, to whom he wrote two epistles. He did the same with Titus and with others. That, first of all—the very example of the apostle Paul, taking men along and training them as he went—indicates that it is the work of a *preacher* to train men for the ministry.

Secondly, in I Timothy 4:14 Paul writes this: “Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” That is a clear reference to Timothy’s being ordained a minister of the gospel. Hands were laid on him. Now Paul says, “Neglect not the gift that is in thee”—a necessary gift, one that Timothy must draw on, must use, to be a faithful minister of the Word. How did Timothy get that gift? That gift was given, says Paul, by prophecy, that is, by preaching. How did Timothy hear preaching that prepared him, gave him a gift, and equipped him to be a minister

of the Word? We know that from a child he heard the Holy Scriptures, he was instructed in Holy Scripture, and surely, after he was converted to faith in Jesus Christ, he heard preaching about Jesus Christ. But it was especially the preaching that he heard through the instruction of the apostle Paul that gave him the gift equipping him to be a minister of the gospel. Paul's specific instruction to the young man was a form of preaching.

Add to that, in the third place, Paul's command to Timothy found in II Timothy 2:2: "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same [what you heard from me] commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." All the professors and students, and anyone who goes regularly into the seminary building, will recognize that verse as the one inscribed in stone and set into the wall at the entrance of our seminary. This is our "theme verse" for the seminary. This verse is significant, for in it Paul taught Timothy that part of his duty as a preacher was to instruct other men to be preachers, that they might convey the truth to still more. It is the work of an ordained minister to prepare men to be preachers.

Why is that? It is because of what preaching is, namely, God's speech to His people. When God speaks, He reveals Himself. He gives the knowledge of Himself to His covenant people. At the same time, preaching is a means of grace. Through preaching God furnishes His people with the necessary spiritual gifts to be godly husbands

and fathers leading their families, to be covenant wives and mothers in the home, to be children who go off to school, and also the gifts to be preachers of the gospel. This is God's means, His powerful means, to teach about Himself and to equip men to serve Him in their life and especially in the church.

Seminary instruction is a form of preaching. We say that the young people, in catechism classes, are given an official kind of teaching that prepares them to make confession of faith. In the seminary, we rightly say, we are giving students an official kind of teaching, a form of preaching that is equipping them to be ministers of the gospel. That is what seminary instruction is.

Therefore, people of God, if you believe that you ought to pray for your pastor and your missionaries (and you ought to), so ought you to pray for your professors in your seminary, and for all the same reasons. Pray that the professors may be faithful in the office that God has given them to fulfill their calling; that the Spirit may continue to equip these men as He must equip your pastors and your missionaries to fulfill these duties; that they may be bold to set forth the truth, the whole counsel of God, without compromise; that they may be vigilant to guard against every new form of the lie that Satan introduces into the world and into the church; and that they, with courage, may fight the battle against every form of that lie. Pray for the professors that they may have wisdom as they deal with the students, as a minister must have wisdom in dealing with

all different sorts of members in the congregation. Pray that their lives as professors may be godly lives, that they will adorn the gospel that they preach with a life of good works. Pray for the professors.

Pray also for our students. Pray that God will use the instruction to prepare them for the gospel ministry. That is the goal. All the instruction (dogmatics, church history, Bible history, church polity, counseling, exegesis, Greek, Hebrew, and much more), every bit of the instruction, as well as all the counsel that is given to them privately in the study, all the admonitions, all of it has the goal of equipping these men to be preachers of the gospel. Seminary instruction shapes men, molding them for the work God gives them, namely that of being Reformed preachers—which is, of course, for us, to be Protestant Reformed preachers. The preaching in the seminary develops their gifts, the natural gifts that God has given them. It assists them in overcoming some of their weaknesses. It helps them to develop their strengths.

But the whole of the seminary training is not merely a matter of teaching seminarians to preach, to be able to get up and speak and use gestures and voice to communicate effectively. The whole of the seminary training is intended to develop them spiritually, in order that they may be fit heralds of the gospel and faithful shepherds in the sheepfold of Christ. Surely you can see, then, that the work of the professors in their instruction and the work of students in their learning require the blessing of God because the la-

bor is a spiritual work. It demands God's blessing.

All the professors need God's blessing to do the work God sets before them, just as your pastor needs God's blessing to do his work. A pastor must be diligent. He must be faithful to study the Word, to prepare sermons, and to speak with boldness the Word that the Spirit gives him. Paul requested that for himself in Ephesians 6:19, 20. Pray also for me, he wrote, "that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds." Then he repeats: "that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." We professors make the same request of you: Pray for us that we may speak boldly the gospel that God has entrusted to us.

It is true, however, that all the minister's labors, his careful exegesis and preparation of sermons, all the work that he does, will be of

absolutely no avail unless the Spirit prepares the hearts of the listeners in the church, gives them faith to believe the Word that he preaches, gives wisdom to the congregation to help them apply the Word to their daily lives, gives them the grace to be able to live out of the Word—unless the Spirit does all that, all the minister's labors in the study and all his dynamic preaching is of no avail. So also it is true that the professors may speak clearly and boldly the Word of God as they ought to speak, but if the Spirit does not apply that to the hearts of these young men, it is of no avail. That, therefore, is what we pray for: that the word of instruction that is given may find ready entrance into the hearts of the students, into their souls. That they will take hold of it and embrace the truth that is set before them.

By the grace of God, we note with most humble thanksgiving, the Protestant Reformed seminary, some 88 years now, has continu-

ously had sound instructors. Every last one of them faithfully set forth the truth of the Word of God, the glorious heritage of the unconditional covenant, the glorious heritage of sovereign particular grace, from Herman Hoeksema and G.M. Ophoff, to the present day. Yet we all know that there were men who sat under that instruction, graduated from the seminary, and went out into the ministry, but did not have a love for the truth they were taught. These graduates did not have an unwavering commitment to that truth and were willing to give it up. Pray, then, that the students will receive the Word and submit to the instruction. Pray that God will not only convict them of the truth but give them a love for the truth, and that they will leave the seminary in due time molded by God to be faithful preachers of the gospel. The work is a spiritual work. Pray for God's blessing on it.

... to be continued. 

REFORMED WORLDVIEW

REV. STEVEN KEY

The Reformed Worldview: Truth and Its Consequences (6)

The History of the Concept *Worldview*

In considering the light that the New Testament sheds on the concept of the Reformed, that is, Christian, worldview, one of the passages that must be taken into account is Colossians 3:1, 2: "If ye then be risen with

Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

Only in seeking the things above will we also have a proper understanding and perspective when it comes to our calling in this world.

The conditional statement "If ye then be risen with Christ" is what grammarians call a condition of fact—

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Previous article in this series: October 15, 2013, p. 32.

something we often find with conditional statements used in Scripture. The meaning is, “You are risen with Christ,” but the apostle uses a condition of fact to emphasize what follows. Being risen with Christ and seeking the things above always go hand in hand.

So we have in Colossians 3:1 an exhortation, an admonition, to bring to expression who you are—those who are risen with Christ. Live in that consciousness! Then you will live out your faith in the proper way. Then you will teach your children to live out their faith in the proper way—seeking the things above.

When you look at the first two verses of Colossians 3, you might well ask the question: “Why even consider the Reformed worldview?” It might appear that the earthly is not even to be our concern.

The contrast in verse 2—“Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth”—is so sharp that many don’t know what to do with it.

Some would downplay the contrast. Not understanding how to bring this to expression in their own lives, they take the position that Paul doesn’t mean we can’t seek the things of this earth, but rather that we must not seek them excessively. “Seek the things on earth; but more especially the things above. Do not let the things of this earth be such an object of focus that you have no time for heavenly things.”

Such is how some would interpret this text. But to do so is to make a separation between the things above and the things of this earth. Not seeing the relationship between the two, they do not understand the relationship of their own salvation to their place in this earthly realm.

But the inspired apostle does not say, “Seek the things above more than the things on the earth.” He says, “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”

Others, also failing to understand the relationship between the heavenly life that is ours and the fact that we live on the earth, have taken this text to mean that things earthly are sinful in themselves, and therefore the Christian must separate himself physically, as much as possible, from earthly things. That can come to the more extreme expression of the strict Amish, who form their own separate communities without electricity, gas-powered equipment, and the like; or that can come to expression in a lesser form by those who would view as sinful the use

of a certain product—the computer, for example—that the wicked might use for very evil purposes. The same error might come to expression by shutting oneself up in a monastery or convent, as if that particular place is holy, or by declaring that a priest cannot marry, because marriage itself detracts from a life of holiness.

That those interpretations of this text are erroneous is evident from the fact that Paul, in his first letter to Timothy, explicitly condemns the same, concluding in I Timothy 4:4-5, “For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.” Even in the last part of Colossians, chapter 2, the apostle warned the Colossians not to pay attention to those who came with their own ordinances, “Touch not; taste not; handle not.”

So the question remains: How then are we to interpret this sharp contrast between the things above and the things on earth?

To answer that question we have to remember the way God created all things.

At the beginning there was no such contrast between the things above and the things below. All earthly things were created good. John was even given to express in Revelation 4:11, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” Nothing, therefore, has to be avoided as evil in itself.

In the midst of that good creation of earthly things God placed Adam. Adam, being made out of the dust of the ground and formed body and soul with a physical and spiritual aspect to his life, was given by God the calling to exercise dominion over all earthly things. He stood in royal majesty over all that God had made, ruling and using all things to the glory of God. Adam knew God also in the things that God had made. That was man’s blessing!

But sin came and destroyed this healthy relationship between the things above and the things on earth.

It is not that those good things that God created became sinful. It is not that they lost their sacred nature and that they are no longer pleasurable to God—to use the language of Revelation 4:11.

But rather man turned his mind away from God and forsook his calling to rule over and to use all things

earthly to God's glory. He no longer sought the things of this earth for God's sake. He no longer consecrated those things to God's glory.

With his mind turned away from God, fallen man would use everything to serve self. And so he broke the God-given relationship between the things above and the things on the earth. Those good gifts of God (whether material things such as silver and gold, iron and brass, or the things formed out of the good things of God's creation as expressions of man's mind, like the buildings made by man, instruments of music, and, much later, the automobile, the computer, and so on—many things that are not themselves sinful) these all have been embraced by man for his own possession and enjoyment, and in some cases to use in wickedness.

So the things earthly have been abused and seized for an entirely different perspective and purpose than that which God ordained and to which He called man.

To seek the things above, therefore, has to do with a proper perspective of the Christian life.

The things above are all defined by what it means that Christ sits at God's right hand. The things above all are defined by the victory that is ours in the risen Savior.

Christ arose, not just from the grave, but from the earth, in His ascension. And in doing so, the Scriptures tell us (Eph. 4:8 as quoting Ps. 68), "He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

Victorious over sin and death, the devil and his hosts, Christ seized us as His own!

Having redeemed us, He led us into the treasure house of all those spiritual and heavenly blessings that are His, and that He now bestows upon us by His Holy Spirit. Wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption are ours in Him—never apart from Him. Fellowship with God in the covenant communion of His rich life and love is ours as those risen with Christ! His love has been shed abroad in our hearts!

And therefore, with the source of our life now in

heaven, our whole perspective of the things of this earth has changed.

The things above and the things of this earth are not to be separated, but rather united in such a way that the things of this earth are totally dedicated to the things above, and more particularly to Him who has reconciled all things unto Himself (Col. 1:20). The unity of the things earthly and the things heavenly has been restored in Christ Jesus our Lord.

He who became flesh and dwelt among us became the last Adam. He came as the Head of the covenant, the covenant that not only embraces the elect race, but the whole creation. The world that God loves, the entire cosmos with the elect church at its core, must be saved. That is the reason, according to John 3:17, for which God sent His Son into the world. So Romans 8:21 tells us that "the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

Which means, then, that with our minds set on things above, we must rule the things on earth as the stewards that God has made us, in the callings that God has given us.

*The things above
and the things of this earth
are not to be separated,
but rather united in such a way
that the things of this earth
are totally dedicated
to the things above....*

Our perspective of earthly things must be entirely controlled by our seeking the things above.

In our home life, in our marriages and child-rearing and the exercise of our calling as husbands or our calling as wives; in our life as an individual at work; in the handling of our finances; in our various relationships; in our use of the things of this

creation—our entire perspective must be controlled by that focus on the things above.

That is possible only by being in Christ, risen with Him who sits at God's right hand. Through His Spirit He has delivered us from sin and death, which would not only bind us to things earthly, but would also use those earthly things to consume us. In Christ we are given to see Him who came to establish the new heavens and the new earth, where all are united perfectly. It is to that

heavenly perspective that we are called as those who are “risen with Christ.”

To seek the things above, therefore, is to live, first of all, in the recognition of the spiritual tension within our own lives personally. There is no escape from that spiritual tension. Given the sinfulness of our natures, the devil and the world aggressively pressure us, attempting to remove from us a biblical, spiritual perspective. So we are naturally inclined to find our pleasures, our standards, our goals, our mind-set, our opinions, formed by an earthly perspective.

The things of this earth are very much alive in our way of thinking.

The world in the bondage of sin cannot stand it when someone thinks contrary to its accepted opinions. The world will not view things spiritually through the teachings of the Word of God.

The world would have me believe that “it’s all about me.” And so that temptation is always before us—and it takes only a mild pressure for us in weakness to conform—to think that what counts is what we have in our bank account, and what we have in our closets, and what we have in our garages, and what we have in our houses and property, and what pleasures we can find to consume our time.

But God says that what counts is those things that are above. What counts is the treasure you have in heaven. What counts is the hidden beauty of the heart, and the wisdom that seeks to look at all things in the light of the

Word and that knows how to subject us and all things to the glory of God.


God would have us realize that what counts is that we live in the consciousness of belonging to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

What counts is that we receive all earthly things as His good gifts and use them as our servants on the pathway to heaven. That is what it means, to use the language of verse 2, to “set your affection on things above.” It is to form your mind around the things above, to fix your thoughts on that which is heavenly, established by the Word of God, and not things on the earth.

This seeking is the positive expression of being risen with Christ. The new life of Christ in us now defines who we are and how we live!

Then in Colossians 3:3 the apostle makes that profound statement that is on a par with that which we read in II Peter 1:4, where the inspired apostle speaks of our being “partakers of the divine nature.” Here Paul says, “your life is hid with Christ *in* God.”

God has taken you into the fellowship of His own life! He has taken you into the covenant fellowship of His own triune Being!

That is the essence of all true religion, the heart of the Christian life. To know that your life is hid with Christ in God, to live in the consciousness of that union with the risen Christ, is the fountain of all godliness, the fountain of wisdom and therefore of a proper spiritual perspective as guided by God’s Word. 

GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

REV. WILBUR BRUINSMA

Church Extension, Church Reformation, and Domestic Missions (1)

Rev. Bruinsma is Eastern Home Missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches, stationed in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

In 1942 the first draft of the Constitution of the Mission Committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches was forged and proposed to the synod of that year. The second paragraph of the proposed pream-

ble to the constitution carefully expressed the sentiment of many in the churches at that time.

We believe that this missionary activity includes the work of church extension, and church reformation, as well as the task of carrying out the Gospel to the unchurched and heathen. Although we look forward to the time that the way will be opened for us to labor among the heathen, both here and abroad, and among the dispersed, we are convinced that our present duty still lies in the field of church extension and church reformation, wherefore we conceive of our present field to be among our Reformed brethren that are deviating from the old and beaten paths of our Reformed heritage (1942 Acts, pp. XXIV-XXV).

This draft was placed under the scrutiny of a committee of pre-advice at the synod of 1942. After some study of this proposed constitution the committee offered to synod its revision to the above paragraph:

We believe that this missionary activity includes the work of church extension, and church reformation, as well as the task of carrying out the Gospel to the unchurched and heathen. However, we are convinced that our present duty lies primarily in the field of church extension and church reformation (1942 Acts, p. 26).

The ground for this abbreviated alteration to the preamble stated, "This phraseology not only has the advantage of greater brevity, but also to our mind avoids any possibility of misunderstanding as well as unnecessary limitation." This was approved by Synod of 1942 in Article 20.

Both the initial submission of the preamble to synod and the revision of it reveal the thinking of the Protestant Reformed churches at that time.

In the first place, at that time, in the mind of many, church extension and therefore domestic mission work should focus on laboring "among our Reformed brethren that are deviating from the old and beaten paths of our Reformed heritage." In other words, they believed that their mission work consisted in laboring among members in the Christian Reformed Church in an attempt to persuade them yet of their error. This was church reformation.

In the second place, synod perceived in its wisdom that this definition of church reformation and therefore of our

mission work was an "unnecessary limitation" and was open to possible misunderstanding. Church reformation indeed consisted of the work of reforming churches, but it ought not to be limited to one denomination of churches. Church reformation is a much broader labor.

In the third place, the synod of 1942 envisioned a time when our mission work would no longer be limited to church reformation. Notice what was proposed initially to synod of 1942: "Although we look forward to the time that the way will be opened for us to labor among the heathen, *both here* and abroad, and among the dispersed, we are convinced that our *present* duty still lies in the field of church extension and church reformation" (emphases mine). Although this entire sentence was elided in the final draft of the Mission Committee Constitution, nevertheless the vision remained the same. Our fathers understood that domestic mission work certainly included (and still includes) the labor of church reformation, yet is not limited to this labor, but of necessity must be broader in its scope. They even "looked forward" to the time when the way would be opened to carry the gospel to the unchurched and heathen both in the United States and abroad. We wish to examine in a number of articles whether that time has come.

To do this we need to have a clear definition of the terms before us.

Church Extension

To extend means to enlarge in scope or to increase in size. When applied to the labors of the church, it refers to the desire of the church to enlarge its scope or increase its size by means of her witness to those outside the bounds of her institution. This does not mean, of course, that the church is numbers-orientated. Church extension is not utilitarian in its purpose but is truly concerned with the salvation of God's people. The desire of the church is that through her witness sinners might be brought to faith and repentance and might seek to join themselves with the cause of Christ in this world. Yet, it is by this means that the church is extended.

Traditionally the term "church extension" has been used to refer to two types of work in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

The first is the effort that the local congregation puts forth through various means to gain new members to its

congregation. The congregation is involved in church extension, that is, an effort to increase its size by adding members. Each individual congregation, through the preaching of the gospel and other means, such as the printed page, Internet, radio ads, sponsoring lectures, etc., publishes and declares to those in the locale of their church the good news of the gospel. The hope and desire of the members of the congregation is to call others out of darkness and into the safety and confines of the church of Christ.

That this has been the traditional use of the term “church extension” in our churches is obvious from the fact that many of our evangelism committees in the past were called church extension committees. This is also evident from the various writings of men in the *Standard Bearer* in the past, and in past decisions of synod. For example, the Domestic Mission Committee was instructed by the synod of 1964, in Article 137 (p. 34), “that as long as we have no missionary, the Mission Committee consider any request from local churches to assist them in church extension in their local areas by the supplying of pamphlets, radio broadcasting, and necessary financial aid in carrying out this work.” Although the name of these committees in our local churches has changed to Evangelism Committees, nevertheless the bulk of their labor is still in the area of church extension.

The other way the Protestant Reformed Churches have come to use the term “church extension” is one that makes it equivalent to domestic mission work. This is evident from the use of it in the Domestic Mission Committee’s constitution. Several times during the course of our history as churches, the Domestic Mission Committee has been urged by synod to be busy in church extension work (Synods of 1946 and 1970). In fact, the synod of 1946 reveals clearly that they viewed domestic mission work and church extension work as one and the same. “We strongly feel that our home mission work, i.e., church extension work, should for the present still receive all the emphasis” (Art. 75, p. 73 Acts of Synod).

But the meaning of church extension changes slightly when used in this way. The focus of church extension as a denominational mission work is not to add members to an individual congregation, but to enlarge the scope of our denomination by adding more churches. Monsma and VanDellen, in the discussion

of Article 15 in their *Church Order Commentary*, define church extension as “the organization of new Churches” (p. 71, Third Edition, 1954). Again, this does not mean that mission work is numbers-orientated. The church of Jesus Christ must faithfully follow the mandate of the Great Commission to preach the gospel to all peoples in order to save those who are lost in their sin. But the church does not do this without purpose or without a goal in mind. It is always the desire and prayer of this missionary and of those among whom he labors that God will so bless those labors to bring our mission work to fruition by the organization of a church. This is why mission work can also receive the designation church extension work.

One matter of importance, however, that the term “church extension” in itself does not address is the *means* by which the church is to be extended. What method of labor ought the church of Christ use to produce church growth? This is where our churches have joined together church extension and church reformation. Church extension is the goal of missions, and church reformation is the means we use to attain that goal. But then, we must define church reformation if we are to understand this.

Church Reformation

The task of church reformation is defined for us in its very name: it is the work of re-forming a church that has become deformed by means of doctrinal impurity. Dr. Abraham Kuyper describes this particular work of the church in *A Pamphlet on the Reformation of the Church*.

Reformation of churches implies first of all that the churches of Christ have a certain form or shape or figure which are uniquely hers as church. It implies, secondly, that this form or shape or figure can become impure by deformation or deformity. And it implies, thirdly, the obligation to restore this deformed or misfashioned or mis-formed church by reformation or renewal to the original form and good shape and normal figure which flows forth from her essence and is determined by her character.

Through the infamous ouster of 1924, the Christian Reformed Church deposed faithful pastors and office-bearers for refusing to cave in to the error of common

grace. These officebearers and their congregations immediately organized to form the Protestant Reformed Churches. At that time the Christian Reformed Church as a whole embraced doctrinal error, but there were still family members and friends, and even whole congregations, that did not fully understand the error adopted by their denomination. Out of a genuine concern for these saints and churches, the Protestant Reformed Churches believed it to be their chief task to be involved in church reformation. In the second edition of *The Protestant Reformed Churches in America: Their Origin, Early History and Doctrine* published in 1947, Rev. Herman Hoeksema calls attention to the work of church reformation that took place in the very early history of our churches.

This action [to make known their position regarding common grace—WGB] by the combined consistories was occasioned by several different invitations from different parts of the Christian Reformed Church to deliver lectures on the controversy that had led to the deposition of so many office-bearers. Requests of this nature had been received from Iowa, Wisconsin and Illinois. The consistories decided to delegate Reverend H. Hoeksema in order that he might inform those that evinced interest in the cause about the things that had taken place relative to the origin of the Protestant churches....

From that time until the present [1947—WGB] the *Protesting Christian Reformed Churches*, and after 1926 the *Protestant Reformed Churches*, have enjoyed a steady growth.

The Lord has been with them.

Always He has pointed out to them new fields of labor through the means of requests that were received from various Christian Reformed communities to lecture and to preach for them (pp. 258, 259).

This work was truly church reformation—an attempt to reform the church that had become deformed. It is little wonder, then, that the 1942 constitution of the Mission Committee would state: “we are convinced that our present duty lies primarily in the field of church extension and church reformation.”

It must be understood, however, that the labor of church reformation may not have as its object only one particular denomination. The Protestant Reformed Churches recognize this as well. In their domestic mis-

sion work, the call was answered to help churches or groups of people of various religious backgrounds. This was true in Jamaica, Northern Ireland, Loveland, and Spokane, to name a few.

Neither ought the church of Christ question the validity of church reformation when attacked for carrying on mission work in this manner. This is a legitimate and important labor of the church in domestic missions. Prof. David Engelsma, in his pamphlet *Evangelism and the Reformed Faith*, makes such a defense.

Evangelism is not limited to work done with heathen, with those who make no profession of faith in Jesus the Savior. On the contrary, it includes the work of the Church with those who profess Christianity and belong to a church, but who are either ignorant of the truth of the gospel or have departed from it. To bring the gospel to such is not “sheep-stealing,” but sheep-gathering; it is not “fishing in troubled waters,” but is fishing for men.

Prof. Engelsma in that same pamphlet quotes the Presbyterian theologian John Murray in this regard. Murray also insists that evangelism is not limited to the unsaved or those who are without God and without hope in this world. The objects of the church’s evangelism must include those who have departed from the truth and embrace error. He writes: “The evangelism that the true church of Christ undertakes must therefore contemplate the bringing of the gospel in its full import and demands to those who, though believers, are nevertheless the victims of ignorance, unfaithfulness and compromising associations” (“The Message of Evangelism,” in *Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. 1, p. 124). This, in the true sense of the word, is church reformation.

Historically the Protestant Reformed Churches have linked together church extension and church reformation. This is evident in the constitution of the Domestic Mission Committee. Because we have done so, many in our churches have assumed that church extension or domestic mission work may be accomplished *only* by means of church reformation. Certainly this has been the way we have conducted our mission work, for the most part, in the past. Today, it is difficult for many to break outside this mold in order to expand their view of missions.

But we will need to address this subject in another article. ☞

Burden


A burden is a heavy load someone places upon another for the purpose of carrying, often with painful and wearisome toil, to some destination. Only then can the burden be unloaded and the strain of bearing it relieved. Men have built ships to carry their burdens over seas (Acts 21:3), or trained mules and camels as terrestrial beasts of burden (II Kings 5:17; 8:9). But every child of God is also given burdens to carry, burdens placed upon him by the sovereign hand of our Lord. The question never is will we have a burden to carry, or how does my burden compare to someone else's, but what will I do with my burden, where and how shall I carry it? Or more importantly, what does the Lord want me to do with my burden?

Israel in Egypt was afflicted with burdens and taskmasters to see that they carried them (Ex. 1:11). After God delivered them from that burden by the hand of Moses (Ex. 2:11; 6:6), Moses himself had to be relieved of the burden of the people by appointing judges to share in judgment (Ex. 18:22). Priests had their burden, which was the ordinances of God they discharged by serving God honorably in their office and representing His people faithfully in worship (Num. 4:17). The prophets were given the burden of God's word, which was relieved of only by speaking that word to its intended audience (Hab. 1:1; Zech. 12:1), whether they be princes and kings (Ezek. 12:10), ungodly cities (Nah. 1:1), Gentile nations (Is. 15:1), or God's church (Mal. 1:1). Furthermore, the hearer could only unload that burden from the prophet by obeying God's word, or face an even greater burden of God's heavy judgments (Jer. 23:33-34; Is. 30:27).

We also have our burdens. As members of Christ by faith, we are partakers in His anointing, prophets, priests, and kings of Christ, upon whom He lays the burden of confessing His name, presenting ourselves a living sacrifice of thankfulness, and fighting against sin and Satan in this life (L.D. 12). There are the burdens of life—labor,

sorrows, sickness, aging, and death (Eccl. 2:22-23). And the greatest burden of all, which we lay upon ourselves, is sin (Is. 46:1-2). Our iniquities go over our head; as burdens they are too heavy for us to bear (Ps. 38:4). They are a weight that easily besets us (Heb. 12:1).

So what is a child of God to do? Like the beast, our inclination is often to balk and kick against our burden, or to grit our teeth and carry it ourselves. Other times we groan, wishing our burden went away, or, like the psalmist, we wish we had wings and could fly away from the burden (Ps. 55:6). But bear them we must. The Lord so commands. "Every man shall bear his own burden" (Gal. 6:5). "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me" (Matt. 11:29). And: "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me" (Mark 8:34).

There is only one appropriate destination and possible way to carry any of our burdens. Cast them upon the Lord and He shall sustain us (Ps. 55:22). We cast them upon the Lord in prayer by asking for His strength. We cast them upon the Lord when we, who are in Christ, bear one another's burdens, so fulfilling the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). As for the burdens of life, Christ reminds us that in bearing them we shall find rest for our souls, for His yoke is easy and His burden is light (Matt. 11:3). Our burdens are light because they are temporary, and they work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (II Cor. 4:17). And as for the burdens of sin, we cast them upon the Lord when we repent (Jer. 17:21), thus laying aside every weight of them (Heb. 12:1). Besides, His commandments are not the heavy burdens, grievous to be born, that the Pharisees bound upon the people and would not carry themselves (Matt. 23:4). For He has delivered us from the burden of God's wrath and the enslaving power of sin by a stretched-out arm and great judgments (Ex. 6:6). By redemption and through prayer, as He promised, He will undo every heavy burden, let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke from off our shoulder (Is. 10:27; 14:25; 58:6). And to His church He gives no other burden except, "Hold fast till I come" (Rev. 2:25). 

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Stalking the Beast (2)

“And the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment.”

I Chronicles 12:32

Berit Kjos has done the children of Issachar a great service by publishing numerous articles that expose what is going on in the apostatizing churches today. Children of Issachar would do well to read some of what she has written. Try “Real Conspiracies: Past and Present”; “Treason in the Church: Trading Truth for a ‘Social Gospel’”; and “Transforming the World by Subverting the Church” for starters. (These and a host of other worthwhile articles are available in an archive of her work at <http://www.newswithviews.com/BeritKjos/kjos>.)

In her article, “Re-Inventing the Church,” Kjos exposes methods being used by many who call themselves evangelicals, in their attempt to remold the church, as it were, to serve the advancement of the kingdom of antichrist. Modern-day Issachar should be aware of these methods and recognize them as they are currently being practiced in the false and apostatizing churches of our day lest we too be deceived.

A Program to Remold the Church

One place this program is set forth is in the book *Leaders on Leadership*, produced by the Barna Research Group. The founder of this group, George Barna, brought together a leadership team to write a manual intended to prepare a new brand of church leaders (“change agents”) for the task of bringing about change in the church. Kjos describes their goal to be the establishment of a reformulated church that rejects...

solid Biblical teaching and the “offense of the cross.” To win the masses “for Christ,” the church must be re-cloaked

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Previous article in this series: December 15, 2013, p. 134.

in a more permissive and appealing image. It must be marketed to the world as “a safe place,” purged of the moral standards that stirred conviction of sin and a longing to separate from the world’s immorality. So they re-imagined a feel-good church stripped of offense—one the world could love and claim as its own.¹

To help achieve this goal, Barna and his team included a chapter titled “The Leader as Change Agent.” Here they present a method called “managed change,” which trained change-agents would use in the churches. In this chapter Pastor Doug Murren, former senior pastor of Eastside Foursquare Church, presents some rather disturbing suggestions. He writes: “Effective change agents assess the chances for change by evaluating the level of dissatisfaction within the group. If dissatisfaction is strong, the potential for change exists.... To be effective, a leader must also *deliberately develop dissatisfaction* [emphasis ck].... Positive change rarely intimates ‘returning to the way it used to be.’ Most positive change I have witnessed has been about creating a better future rather than returning to a cherished past.”²

At first blush this three-step program of “assessment, dissatisfaction, and vision” for change in the churches might appear rather bland and inconsequential; in reality however, for those who push back in an effort to maintain the old paths, it can be brutal. Just ask Bill Liniewicz.

Bill Liniewicz and his family can no longer share in the fellowship at Chain of Lakes Community Bible Church in Illinois. Like other members who questioned the new church management, he has been banned from the communion table. By declining a series of “counseling” sessions and by failing to attend a “Solemn Assembly”—a special congregational meeting for the purpose of public

¹ Berit Kjos, “Re-Inventing the Church,” part 1, posted at: http://www.crossroad.to/articles2/2002/change_agent-1.htm.

² Doug Murren, “The Leader as Change Agent,” *Leaders on Leadership* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1997), 204-206.

confession, brokenness, reconciliation and healing—he supposedly proved his “unwillingness to submit” to his spiritual authorities....

For Bill, reconciliation would mean compromise, for he could neither trust the new leadership nor agree with the proposed program. And disagreement was, apparently, unacceptable to the new leadership. As Jim Van Yperen, the “intentional interim pastor,” would soon teach, “There’s not a lot of things you have permission to disagree about.”³

A Massive Movement Toward Beast Service

The case of Chain of Lakes Community Bible Church is but one example of churches and denominations that are going through this transformational process. While many other examples could be cited of those who seek to redirect the church’s purpose from the spiritual to the material (consult Brannon Howse’s book: *Religious Trojan Horse*⁴), we will focus on what may be the largest and most influential church transformational movement.

In this connection it would be difficult to overestimate the influence of Peter F. Drucker (1909-2005) as a contributor to this movement to transform the church. Drucker was an early communitarian (see SB article of Dec. 15, 2013) who shared many of the ideas of the Fabian socialists and was very much under the influence of Fabian economist John Maynard Keynes. To advance the ideas of Drucker, the Peter F. Drucker Foundation, sponsored by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, was founded in 1990 to promote the communitarian tenet that “...a healthy society requires three vital sectors: a public sector of effective governments, a private sector of effective business, and a social sector of effective community organizations.”⁵ Simply put, this would be a communitarian system...

based on “partnerships” between the public sector (government), the private sector (business) and the social sec-

tor (civil society, including churches). In other words, social sector “volunteers” would serve the government (ultimately the U.N. agenda) providing most of the “social services” needed for the global welfare state.

The catch? The private and social sectors must conform to the standards (personal, performance development, etc.) determined by the public sector (the government). Instead of owning everything, it would just control everything.⁶

Though Drucker admitted in an interview that he was “...not a born again Christian,” his communitarian ideas are having a profound impact on many churches today because his disciples are using his business model as a church growth model. Most notable and influential of Drucker’s disciples are Bill Hybels, Bob Buford, and Rick Warren. Author Chris Rosebrough sheds some interesting light on the subject:

Rick Warren, Bob Buford and Bill Hybels are the Druckerite “trinity.” All three of these men were personally mentored by the late business guru Peter Drucker and these three men more than any others are responsible for innovating the church by purposely changing congregations from a pastoral leadership model to a CEO/Innovative Change Agent leadership model. All of these innovations were strategically crafted under the careful eye of Peter Drucker. And all of these innovations were incubated, introduced and injected into the church through coordinated efforts of Drucker’s disciples through their different but intimately connected organizations: Leadership Network, the Purpose Driven Network and the Willow Creek Association.

What many people don’t realize is that the Emerging Church is a product created and promoted by the Druckerites.

...It’s time for Rick Warren, Bob Buford and Bill Hybels to do the right thing and admit they’ve endangered the body of Christ by releasing a doctrinally defective and theologically dangerous product. For the sake of the body of Christ they MUST issue a safety recall for their entire “Emerging Church” product line.⁷

³ Berit Kjos, “Re-Inventing the Church,” part 2, posted at: <http://www.crossroad.to/articles2/2002/change>.

⁴ Brannon Howse, *Religious Trojan Horse* (Collier, TN; Worldview Weekend Publishing, 2012).

⁵ Emerging Partnerships: New Ways in a New World: A Symposium organized by the Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management, sponsored by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, December 1996, ii, posted at: <http://www.leadertoleader.org/forms/partners.pdf>.

⁶ Berit Kjos, “Real Conspiracies: Transforming the World by Subverting the Church,” posted at: <http://www.crossroad.to/articles2/006/conspiracy>.

⁷ Chris Rosebrough, “The Druckerites Must Issue a Safety

But, alas, even if Rosebrough's plea for a "recall" were heeded today, it would be much too late. If Warren's claim in a 2008 interview is true, much of the church-world has already been infected with this "doctrinally defective and theologically dangerous product." In that interview Warren said, "We've trained now almost 500,000 church leaders around the world in 162 countries. I've been training leaders for twenty-eight years, business leaders, government leaders, church leaders."⁸

An Emerging False Church

And what are these church leaders being taught? A brief look in bullet-form at the Emerging Church's "product line," as provided by one who has left the Emergent Church, is instructive. (For a more complete exposure to the Emergent Church, see Rev. K. Koole's *Standard Bearer* editorials in volume 83, pp. 52, 76, and 100.)

- A highly ambiguous handling of truth;
- A desire to be so inclusive and tolerant that there is virtually no sense of biblical discernment in terms of recognizing and labeling false beliefs, practices, or lifestyles;
- A quasi-universalistic view of salvation;
- A lack of a proper appreciation for biblical authority over and against personal experience or revelation;
- Openness to pagan religious practices like Hindu yoga and incorporating them into the Christian life and worship;
- Openly questioning the relevance of key historical biblical doctrines such as the trinity;
- An uncritically open embrace of the Catholic and Orthodox churches;
- An unbridled cynicism towards conservative evangelicalism and fundamentalism;
- A reading of Scripture that is heavily prejudiced towards a social gospel understanding;
- Little or no talk of evangelism or saving lost souls.⁹

Recall for Their 'Emerging Church' Product Line," posted at: <http://www.extremetheology.com/2010/02/the-druckerites-must-issue-a-safety-recall-of-their-emergent-church-product-line.html>.

⁸ Jake Tapper, "Rick Warren Takes On His Critics: I'm a Big Target," ABC News, August 15, 2008, posted at: <http://www.abcnews.com/politicalpunch/2008/08/rick-warren-tak>.

⁹ Brannon Howse, *Religious Trojan Horse* (Collier, TN; Worldview Weekend Publishing, 2012) 222.

Clearly, in their "product line" the truth of the antithesis (the spiritual separation of the church from the world, II Cor. 6:14-18) and the distinction between the true and false church is intentionally blurred, if not completely smothered. In place of the antithesis we find a blatant attempt to merge the church and the world. Crystal clear this becomes from a cursory examination of the introduction to their "An Evangelical Manifesto":

As an open declaration, An Evangelical Manifesto addresses not only Evangelicals and other Christians but other American citizens and people of other faiths in America, including those who say they have no faith. It therefore stands as an example of how different faith communities may address each other in public life, without any compromise of their own faith but with a clear commitment to the common good of the societies in which we all live together.¹⁰

The Un-Reformation Movement

At the Pew Forum in 2005, prominent evangelical Rick Warren expressed his vision of what needs to happen to bring evangelicals and other Christians together again.

You know, 500 years ago, the first Reformation with Luther and then Calvin, was about beliefs. I think a new Reformation is going to be about behavior. The first Reformation was about creeds (doctrine); I think this one will be about deeds. I think the first one was about what the church believes; I think this one will be about what the church does. The first Reformation actually split Christianity into dozens and then hundreds of different segments. I think this one is actually going to bring them together.¹¹

Apparently Warren and his like-minded evangelicals are pushing for that second reformation: one in which all Christianity abandons the distinctive doctrinal roots of the sixteenth-century Reformation and pursues instead the Fabian socialist goal of "social justice and the common good." Furthermore, Warren's great un-reformation will open the way for the false church to address the broader


¹⁰ <http://www.anevangelicalmanifesto.com/>.

¹¹ Michael Cromartie, moderator for the Pew Forum, Key West, Florida, May 23, 2005, posted at: <http://www.pewforum.org/2005/05/23/myths-of-the-modern-megachurch>.

issue in the Manifesto, namely, bringing together different faiths and even “those who say they have no faith.”

In their view, instead of Jesus being “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6)..., the way is communitarianism, the truth is their manifesto, and the life amounts to an earthly kingdom. Thus, they are sacrificing the biblical

truths of justice and unity for the false prophet’s lies of social justice, a social gospel, and a false unity. Willing accomplices they are of the false prophet who even now is deceiving the nations.

Issachar beware! 

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

MR. DON DOEZEMA

Upon This Rock (16)

Robbing Christ of His Honor (8)

“**L**ord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

That was the question of the Eleven with which we concluded our previous article in this series.

We might, on first thought, be surprised by that question. After all, had not Christ “breathed on them” and said to them “Receive ye the Holy Ghost” (John 20:22)? Had He not “opened their understanding” that they might “understand the scriptures” (Luke 24:45)? And had He not “expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27)? In light of that, I say, we might wonder how it could be possible that they *still* have not abandoned their notion that Christ’s kingdom is somehow earthly in its manifestation and political in its nature.

F.F. Bruce, in his commentary on the book of Acts, says concerning their question, that it “appears to have been the last flicker of their burning expectation of an imminent political theocracy with themselves as its chief executives.” Perhaps so—if the emphasis is on “last flicker.” For the truth is, I think, that very little remained of the carnality that had characterized the thinking of the disciples for the duration of Christ’s public ministry. Earlier, in their vying amongst themselves for positions of prominence in Christ’s kingdom, they had simply as-

sumed the ‘imminence’ of that ‘political theocracy.’ Clearly, that is no longer the case. But they do still wonder about that kingdom. They did not doubt for a moment that Christ was indeed King. But, not yet reckoning with an *ascension* of their Lord, they imagined a rule of the risen Christ confined somehow to this *earth*. And, thinking still in terms of the type, they imagined a restoration of the theocracy, under the Kingship of Israel’s Messiah. Hence their question: “Lord, wilt thou at this time...?”

It’s in that light that, on second thought, we ought to find the disciples’ question not at all surprising. We find in it, in fact, confirmation of what we have learned thus far in our searching of the Scriptures in this series. What did the prophets of old understand of the wonder of salvation? Exactly as much as the Holy Spirit revealed to them. No more, no less. There were the “prescribed limits” of which Calvin spoke, the “veil” between the Law and the Gospel that kept the saints of old from seeing “more closely the things that are revealed to our eyes.”

And all according to a divinely prescribed method of instruction—the method of a gradual unfolding of the truth. Like a bud. Embosomed in the bud, from the very beginning, were all the truths of the economy of redemption. *One* truth, really—existing first in a lower, then in higher stages of development. A truth not fully revealed until the fullness of time, when the gospel was brought into full view. It is the prerogative of the church of the new dispensation to behold the truth in full bloom.

The disciples lived in the time of transition. They were

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Previous article in this series: December 15, 2013, p. 139.

born into the old. Before their very eyes the dimness of the shadows of the old dispensation was being lifted. Yes, *being* lifted. Though the types of the old dispensation were indeed brushed aside in one sweep, as it were, with the death of Christ, the lifting of the shadows was a *process*, not an *event*. At the moment that Christ breathed on the disciples on Easter evening, there was a definite advance in the Spirit's work. Through the *Spirit* they came to understand the cross and resurrection. But their knowledge of the work of Christ was not yet complete. Nor could it be. For the Spirit would not apply to them the truth of the *ascension* until Christ *ascended* and received all power in earth and in heaven.

That explains the Mount of Olives. Notice, if you will, what the question of the disciples was *not*. It was not, "What about the *cross*?" Though Pentecost would surely give them *deeper insights* into that question, the cross was no longer a *problem* for them. The Spirit of Christ, breathed on them, had taken care of *that*, forty days earlier. But the *kingdom*—that remained a problem.

The disciples had not gone with Jesus to the Mount of Olives that day to bid farewell to their Master. In fact, they would very likely have found any thought of His *leaving* them to be unsettling. How could they do *without* Him? And, for that matter, what must they, in light of their new knowledge of His death and resurrection, do *with* Him—that is, with, as they mistakenly imagined, His continued presence among them?

Then, there on the Mount, they heard Him speak of their being soon "endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49), when they would be "baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts 1:6). Ah, yes, power from on high. What could *that* mean? Understandably (not surprisingly) their minds revert to the *type*. Understandable because for all the years of its existence the people of Israel had been bound to the types—prominent among which was the nation itself. And its kings. Having been conditioned, so to speak, to the types for hundreds

of years, it was difficult for the Jews to comprehend that those types were *only* shadows, shadows that had no special significance in and of themselves. Hence the disciples' question: "Lord, wilt thou at this time [that is, at the time of the gift of the Spirit] restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Self-aggrandizement? Desire for positions of prominence in a political theocracy? Hardly a flicker of that remained. A fruit of the "opening" of their understanding by Jesus must have been that they understood, better than they ever had before, that they were being privileged to behold the types of 4,000 years of Old Testament

history find their fulfillment in Christ. The *cross*? They could see it now in light of the Old Testament Scriptures that were opened up to them by their Lord. But the *kingdom*—that was the one 'piece of the puzzle' that did not yet fit. It did not fit because Jesus had not yet *addressed* it. And He had not addressed it because it had everything to do with His *ascension*—which the disciples would witness momentarily. What, then, was

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their question? Though it was expressed in the language of the type, which was all that they were capable of at the moment, it amounted to a request: "Lord, help us understand the kingdom." They were, like the prophets of old, searching (cf. I Pet. 1:10, 11). Calvin says concerning them (the prophets) that, "though of necessity they had to confine themselves within the prescribed limits, yet it was no superstition to sigh with the desire to have a closer view." That's what the disciples were doing here: sighing for a closer view.

And they were given it. After telling them simply that it was not for them "to know the times or the seasons," Jesus explained that the power of which He had spoken will enable them to be His witnesses, not only in Jerusalem but to "the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The implication was that the kingdom in which they will serve is essentially *spiritual*, and that the task for which they will be equipped by the Holy Spirit is far superior to that of any holder of

mere political office. And as for Christ's rule? Hardly would it be limited to a restored kingdom of Israel. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18).

And with that, Jesus was "taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9).

Few words, it seems, had been spoken. But little needed to be said. Jesus told them enough so that they could know that, with His ascension, He would begin to exercise all power in heaven and in earth, and that from heaven He would send His Spirit, by whom He would be present with them more effectually than He had ever been when they still had His bodily presence. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20). They had not 'lost' their Master.

Like that night forty days earlier when Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," the disciples here on the Mount of Olives must have sensed again that spiritual discernment had just been given them by Him who not only spoke the word but also "reached into their minds with a hidden power" (Calvin).

The disciples must have watched with wide-eyed wonder as Jesus ascended heavenward. They must have strained to follow that cloud with their eyes as it gradually faded from view. And then there stood by them two angels in white apparel (Acts 1:10).

"Ye men of Galilee," they asked, "why stand ye gazing up into heaven"—a question intended perhaps, as Calvin suggests, "to recall the disciples from desiring the bodily presence of Christ." And then, from the angels, there's this added detail concerning the astounding truth of the ascension: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Now they have it all. And that they 'got it' is evident from this, that they "returned to Jerusalem with *great joy*" (Luke 24:52).

A most remarkable transformation! These were the same men who, when Jesus predicted impending death, tried to persuade Him that He must surely be *mistaken*. These were the same men who, when Jesus surrendered to the mob in the Garden, *forsook Him and fled*. And these were the same men who, after Jesus was dead, considered all to be *over*, the cause to be *lost*.

And now? Now, though Jesus has left them for what they know will be the last time, they *rejoice*. They return to Jerusalem "not bereaved," says Lenski, "but enriched."

Not yet did they *preach*. For that they must wait to be endued with power from on high. But while they waited, they *praised* (Luke 24:53), for already they had a song in their hearts.

And all this, by the power of the Spirit.

But...what about those other days? Think Matthew 16:22: "And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." Jesus' stern rebuke of Peter on that occasion exposed the disciples' thinking for the carnality that it surely was. "Thou art an offense unto me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matt. 16:23). Thou *savorest* the things that be of men—that was the disciples' problem at that time. They were so carried away by earthly, carnal views of the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom, and they were so convinced that their view was correct, that they were unable, then, to fit into their scheme of things what Jesus declared to be the divinely appointed way.

What do you think, was that carnality in the thinking of the disciples the kind of "robbing Christ of His honor" of which Calvin spoke?

Decidedly not. That's because, with respect to the disciples, and, by extension, with respect to all of the *believers* in the old dispensation, there was more there than *carnality*. Did they connect the promise of a Messiah with the shedding of the blood of sacrificial animals? That is, did they see the Messiah *in the lamb*? No. The disciples made it clear, in fact, that they did not *want* that. Nevertheless, as Rev. Ophoff put it, the view "that the expectation of the disciples of the Lord was indicative of sheer carnality is wrong. The disciples—all of them—were, as to the heart of their disposition, true believers. What they yearned for in the final instance was not the earthly but God."

Which was the point of this article. Carnality—yes. But, at the same time, "prescribed limits" to their understanding. And then this, a yearning that was not, in the final instance, for the earthly, but for God.

At the risk of belaboring what might appear to be the obvious, I'd like to return briefly, next time, to the "veil" of which Calvin spoke and the "hiding" of Luke 9:45. It remains also, still, to identify the "robbing Christ of His honor" in the old dispensation. Which should bring this series to its conclusion.

... to be contined. 

Scottish BRF Conference, Summer 2014

What are the ingredients for a great holiday or a blessed vacation? This summer's British Reformed Fellowship (BRF) Family Conference in Scotland has them all (Saturday, 26 July-Saturday, 2 August, 2014)!

Great Venue

Most people, undoubtedly, reckon that the venue is important. Gartmore House, a magnificent eighteenth-century mansion, surely fits the bill. Situated in 75 acres of private land with some lovely walks, Gartmore possesses its own sports facility, ideal for badminton, soccer, etc., for younger or more athletic people, and enjoys views stretching 25 miles to Stirling Castle and the Wallace Monument, commemorating a thirteenth-century Scottish hero.

All the rooms are en-suite; i.e., there is a bathroom within each bedroom. The price covers full board and the food is excellent. My wife, Mary, and I know, for we had three meals when we visited Gartmore. Designated areas of the mansion have free wifi, for those who "need" twenty-four hour Internet access.



Gartmore House

Rev. Stewart is pastor of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland.

Beautiful Sights

Gartmore House is in the south of the Scottish Highlands, the most mountainous region of the British Isles, and just a few miles from Loch Lomond and other attractive lakes. An ideal site for some relaxation.

The First BRF day-trip is to Edinburgh, with its historic castle dominating the skyline. Beneath this royal fortress, dating back to the twelfth century, are the Princess Street Gardens and the Royal Mile. Besides the many shops, Edinburgh is also famous for its Reformation history, especially the home (now a museum) and church (St. Giles) of John Knox, Scotland's greatest Reformer.

St. Andrews, the home of golf and an ancient political, ecclesiastical, and educational centre of Scotland, is the destination of the second day-trip. The key Reformation sights of this lovely old coastal town will be explained to us by a Scottish Christian guide, including the castle where John Knox was called to the ministry, preached his first sermon, was bombarded by cannonade, and was abducted by the French.

Godly Company

Most of us best enjoy a great holiday venue and beautiful sights in the company of friends and family. Join Reformed believers from England, Wales, the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Scotland, various parts of Europe, Canada, the US, Singapore, and other places, D.V., at this conference.

Many godly friendships have been established over the years between saints, young and old, from near and far. For many, the fellowship is one of the greatest blessings of the BRF conferences, and a week every two years is hardly long enough!

Rich Teaching

This is something that most holidays do not have: profound Bible teaching by two theological professors (Profs. Engelsma and Hanko) on a vital subject: "Be Ye

Holy: The Reformed Doctrine of Sanctification,” with questions allowed and encouraged. The six speeches will address such issues as sanctification as God’s work, our calling to be holy, the role of the law, antinomianism, victorious holiness, etc. Prepare to learn and be challenged spiritually!

So come along to what promises to be, by God’s grace, an edifying and wonderful conference with fellow saints, in a great venue in “bonnie” Scotland next summer!

Very Reasonable Cost

But what about the bottom line? While travel can be expensive and depends largely on one’s distance from Scotland, the BRF has done its best to negotiate good prices for the venue, and it is charging conferees as little as possible while yet seeking to cover its costs.

Adults in the mansion pay just £330 each, with discounts for younger people: £250 (age 12-16), £165 (5-11), £80 (1-4), free (under 1). Mrs. Kristin Crossett is taking care of the bookings in UK pounds sterling (prinskr@gmail.com). Mrs. Cyndi Kalsbeek (our North American Booking Secretary) will give the prices in US dollars (these days £1 is the equivalent of about \$1.63), and convey the money to the BRF (0-144 Begole St. SW,

Grand Rapids, MI 49534, USA; 616-724-4290; ckalsbeek@yahoo.com).

Recently, we were delighted to be informed not only that we shall almost certainly have the conference centre wholly or almost exclusively to ourselves, but also that we will be granted the dormitories (also en-suite) for the week. With the dormitories costing roughly one third less and the same age discounts applying, this is an option that will especially appeal to students or those on a tighter budget.

For more information, check out the BRF website (www.britishreformedfellowship.org.uk), which includes links to a special conference website and the booking form, both in US and UK versions. We hope to see you in Scotland this summer! 🌊



Gartmore House

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER

Congregation Activities

The Activities Committee of the Providence PRC in Hudsonville, MI had a fun night planned for their congregation on Saturday, November 23. Plans called for Providence to meet that night at the gym of Hope PR Christian School for a pizza dinner, followed with the playing of a fun game called 9 square in the air. Volleyball was also available to play. Members of

Providence were also encouraged to bring board games as well, for those desiring a somewhat less active evening, following dinner.

Members of the PR churches around the Chicago, IL area who were of retirement age or older were invited to a night of fellowship and Christian sing-a-long on Sunday evening, December 13, at the Crete, IL PRC. In addition to the singing and fellowship, a light dinner was also served.

The month of December sees many of our congregations holding their annual Congregational Meetings for the important work of electing men to the office of elder

and deacon, and for approving annual operating budgets. In addition, some congregations may also face important proposals regarding major expenditures and improvements. Such was the case for the First PRC of Holland, MI, who approved a proposal to allow their Council to spend a certain amount to investigate possible plan alternatives to expanding their church building. The Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI passed a proposal at their annual Congregational Meeting to replace a large air conditioning and heating unit. The congregation of the Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI did not approve a proposal from their

Mr. Wigger is an elder in the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

Council that would have started the process of a future addition to their sanctuary.

This Christmas season the deacons of the Byron Center, MI PRC encouraged their congregation to take part in their annual food drive. The deacons planned to collect food and gift cards during the month of December for distribution to the needy in January.

Since our last News, several of our churches have had opportunity to enjoy Christmas concerts given by their choirs. The choir of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI presented their annual Christmas concert on Sunday evening, December 8. In addition to the choir, special numbers, including an accordion solo by Gerry Dykstra, a violin solo by Abigail Miedema, and a duet by Matt and Brianna Fisher, were given. The audience also had the opportunity to join the choir in some numbers. Members of area PR churches in west Michigan were also invited to join the choir of the Hudsonville, MI PRC on Sunday evening, December 8, as they sang praise to our great God. On Sunday evening, December 15, the choir of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI presented their annual Christmas program. Friends of Faith were extended an invitation to join them in singing joyful praise to our heavenly Father. And the choir of the Loveland, CO PRC presented their Christmas program on Sunday evening, December 15. Certainly an enjoyable way to bring the Lord's Day to a fitting close.

Sister-Church Activities

Each December, when the schools in Singapore have a break from regular classes, the members of the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church host their annual Vacation Bible School. This year's Vacation Bible School was held from December 3-6 at the Fairy Point Chalet in eastern Singapore. VBS consists mainly of four Bible lessons, some craft time one afternoon, games, and an outing the last day. One item that especially caught our eye was the video provided on the "Stories from Singapore" blog, of the children reciting I Corinthians 13 together in English and then in Chinese. On the last day, the group took a chartered bus to the sea aquarium on Sentosa Island. In the evening they had a dessert party, including roasting marshmallows.

Rev. M. McGeown, missionary pastor to the Limerick Reformed Fellowship, Limerick, Republic of Ireland, a mission field of the Covenant PRC in Ballymena, Northern Ireland, gave a lecture in South Wales on December 12 at the Round Chapel in Port Talbot. Pastor McGeown spoke on "Eternal Life in Heaven."

Young People's Activities

If you were a supporter of the Young People of the Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI, then you had to make plans to eat at least one of your meals on November 20 at the Rainbow Grill restaurant in Hudsonville, MI. That day, from 6:30 A.M. until 10 P.M., the Rainbow Grill donated 10 percent of the


day's proceeds to the young people of Southeast to defray the costs of this year's convention.

Along those same lines, the Young People of First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI invited all their supporters to a nearby Culver's restaurant on December 11. Ten percent of all sales from 5-8 P.M. went toward First's Young People's Convention Fund.

The Young People of the Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI organized a fund-raiser for December 4. Family and friends of the young people were encouraged to order Jet's Pizza any time that day. When an order was called in, and a mention was made that one was a supporter of Trinity's young people, fifteen percent of the sale amount went to them for this year's convention expense.

School Activities

The Student Council of Covenant Christian High School this Christmas season again sponsored their Gift Certificate Drive (Nov. 25-Dec. 19) to help those who have need in our area PR churches. To participate, one could simply send money or gift certificates/cards to area gas stations, grocery stores, etc. to Covenant in care of the Student Council.

The Foundation of Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, MI sponsored an "Evening of Praise" at Grandville High School on Saturday, November 30. Certainly God was praised through the gift of music with instruments and voice, including a new Children's String Group. 

ANNOUNCEMENTS

the Standard Bearer DIGITAL INDEX VOLUMES 1-89

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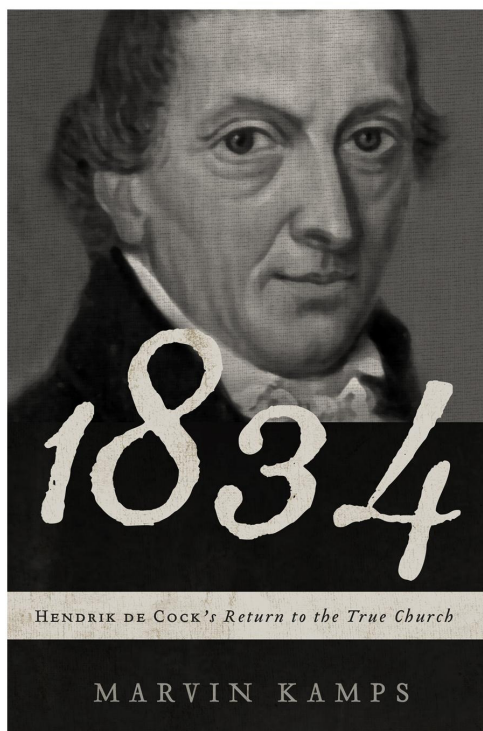
■ Classis West is scheduled to convene on Wednesday, March 5, 2014, at the Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD. All material to be included in the agenda must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than Monday, February 3. Delegates who will need lodging or transportation to and from the Sioux Falls airport can inform Rev. Brummel, a.brummel@prca.org, of their need.

Rev. Douglas Kuiper, Stated Clerk

Seminary

■ All students enrolled in the Protestant Reformed Seminary who will be in need of financial assistance for the coming school year are asked to contact the Student Aid Committee secretary, Mr. Bill VanOverloop (phone: 616-669-1504). This contact should be made before the next scheduled meeting, February 20, 2014, D.V.

Student Aid Committee
Bill VanOverloop, Secretary



COMING SOON!

New author: MARVIN KAMPS

A gripping account of one man's struggle against a spiritually desolate state church, this book witnesses to the sole authority of sacred scripture and the binding authority of the Reformed creeds.

Learn how, by God's grace, Hendrik de Cock led his congregation out of the perverse wilderness of the state Reformed Church of the Netherlands, returning to the biblical worship of God as set forth in the Reformed creeds.

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