

The Standard Bearer

A Reformed Semi-Monthly Magazine • December 15, 2013

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Glory to God; Peace to Men

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

Luke 2:13, 14

Familiar and most beautiful! A song sung by a choir that was much larger than the audience.

It was one of the most marvelous revelations in this world's history. Heaven opened. The heavenly choir sang. A heavenly message was given and received.

May we receive the message of this song. May we respond by joining them in praise to our heavenly Father.



The angels are always singing praise to God. Listen to Revelation 4:11: “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” This expression of adoration is an essential part of the

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unending praise heard in glory. Listen also to Revelation 5:13: “And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”

In the above text the heavenly choir of angels sings this song with greatest joy as the most fitting accompaniment to the announcement of the birth of the Messiah and the salvation He came to accomplish.

“Glory” is what they ascribe to God. Glory is the implication and radiation of perfections. God has every perfection in Himself perfectly and infinitely. He has wisdom and holiness, truth and righteousness, love, grace, mercy and justice, and power; and He is these perfections in an infinite way.

In the incarnation the glory of every virtue of God is displayed in an unparalleled manner. While every one of God's works displays His virtues, those virtues are not seen at the level at which they are evident in Jesus' birth (which begins His work of earning salvation for those given Him of the Father). First, Jesus is “the brightness

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

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

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Subscription Price

\$21.00 per year in the US, \$35.00 elsewhere
New eSubscription: \$21
eSubscription for current hardcopy subscribers: \$10.50.

Advertising Policy

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

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of his glory, and the express image of his person" (Heb. 1:3a). And the incarnation (God coming into human flesh) displays God and His attributes in the highest way. Also God's mercy, grace, and love, along with His righteousness, justice, and holiness are manifested in Jesus' work of earning salvation, His work of "upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they" (Heb. 1:3b).

We must admit that the display of God's glory is beyond our ability to comprehend. We must be careful that we do not limit God and His glorious display to our ability to comprehend it. Remember that the glory of God surrounding the angel caused the shepherds to be "sore afraid" (Luke 2:9), and remember that the sinless angels cover themselves in a twofold manner before the thrice holy God (Is. 6:1-3). This implies that no earthly human can comprehend God's glory. We will declare it, but we cannot comprehend it.

We ought to join this heavenly choir in this song of praise to God. Be aware that everyone who celebrated the original Christmas glorified God. Mary did. Zacharias did. Also the shepherds, Simeon, and Anna. May we sing as long as we live while yet on the earth. The joy of being forgiven and of having the hope of eternal life is so very great that it more than compensates for any hurt or loss we may experience here. That is why we ought to join Paul in counting all things but loss for the excellency of knowing Jesus (Phil. 3:8).

Saved sinners have reason to rejoice in the Lord always (Phil. 4:4).



The glory of God is experienced on earth with "peace."

Since the fall of man into sin, there has been no peace. Adam experienced this lack of peace with God when angels with flaming swords drove him out of the Garden of Eden. With the fall into sin came anger, the desire for revenge, war, rumors of war, fights, and arguments. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Is. 57:20, 21).

The angels knew that the Baby lying in the cattle stall in the city of Bethlehem came to earth in order to make the experience of peace again a reality.

Peace begins in God. He is the God of peace, of undisturbed harmony, unity, and agreement (Rom. 15:33; 16:20; Phil. 4:9; I Thess. 5:23; Heb. 13:20). In God there is no conflict and no confusion. There is no disagreement among the three persons of the Godhead.

Any peace for a creature has to be of God and comes from God, for man cannot make peace. That is what is meant by the expression "the peace of God" (Phil. 4:7; Col. 3:15). Thus peace on earth is first the experience that God is at peace with us. It is to know that God is not against us, but reconciles us to Himself, thus making peace. The experience of peace is that the God of peace is for us, loving and blessing us.

The Baby born in Bethlehem is our peace. He is the Prince of peace, for He is God and man together, united inseparably. This Baby would establish peace by going to the cross to make the payment for sin, to earn forgiveness and righteousness, so that God is at peace with us. Jesus made peace by destroying sin's right to reign over us, by paying its penalty. God's raising Jesus from the dead is God's signature on the covenant of peace. Peace with God is the fruit of Jesus' work of justification.

Because God is at peace with us (and we with God) there can be peace with one another. Outside of peace with God there is jealousy, deceit, enmity, malice, and hypocrisy. When we receive the abounding, blessed, inner joy of God being at peace with us, then we express our gratitude by seeking, "if it be possible, as much as lieth in [us, to] live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18).

Peace is found only in the Baby of Bethlehem. The peace of Christmas has nothing to do with the condition of this world and of our earthly lives. This peace is far above the earthly. It is unity and agreement and harmony with God's heart. This peace guards us (our hearts and minds) as we travel through this world.



The angelic choir adds: "good will toward men."

"Good will" always refers in Scripture to God's good pleasure. God is pleased to exercise His good pleasure to men. Divine pleasure is extended, not to every human, but to the elect humans (who altogether make up

mankind). Every individual human is justly the object of God's wrath because of man's fall into sin. But it is God's "good will" to save to Himself a certain number whom He unites together. In His good will God declares to them that, though their sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool (Is. 1:18). In the Baby lying in the manger we see God's good will toward us! He has forgiven us at the greatest price to Himself!

May we then exclaim, "Glory to God." The devil and our sinful natures take glory away from God, charging God with not being good or righteous. But Christ is come and He reveals that God is glorious. And the birth of God's Son in human flesh reveals God's glorious grace and righteousness in an unprecedented way. Know the salvation and the hope He has given to us and join the angels to sing, "Glory to God!" This song will be sung into all eternity. 

EDITORIAL

PROF. BARRETT GRITTERS

"Rare As a White Crow" (2)

The terrible failure of many churches to exercise discipline is putting them on the path to becoming the false church. Scarce are the churches today that are willing to engage in this "disagreeable necessity"¹ of Christian discipline for the honor of God. The few who do carry out this biblical calling are criticized as unloving and harsh.

As with most matters of obedience to God, the obedience of carrying out discipline is costly. Besides the slander, the cost also often involves the heartbreaking putting out of members who may be family or close friends. The costs are heavy when others object to the discipline and assault the faithful elders who

carry it out, and probably assault the members who stand with them in it. So it is *not* surprising that churches fail to give diligence to this duty. It *is* surprising, and a matter for which we should thank God, when men and women are willing to pay the price.

In December 1's editorial I quoted Abraham Kuyper, who already in the late 1800s described discipline as "rare as a white crow." Two hundred years before Kuyper, discipline was already scarce in the days of à Brakel, who was so discouraged by the state of affairs that he admitted no hope of discipline being restored in the churches. à Brakel's description of matters in his day parallels a description of the situation today.

If some are concerned about sin, they may wring their hands and even complain loudly, but they almost always come short of the decisive action of discipline. Thus, the sin's leaven is spreading through the entire lump (I Cor. 5).

So if the church or churches of which I am member retain discipline, my response must be grateful thanks. "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (I Cor. 4:7).

Our duty in discipline

One of the lessons we learn from history is that churches can lose discipline, and lose it very quickly. If discipline could be almost nonexistent in the days of Abraham Kuyper and even so soon after Dordt in à Brakel's day, all Christians ought to be on notice that unless we seek the grace of God to work powerfully among us—for naturally, no one loves discipline—we may see white crows more often than Christian discipline. To *maintain* discipline in a church or denomination takes work. It takes the active participation and fervent prayers of all, la-

¹ This wording is from the Form for Excommunication.

Previous article in this series: December 1, 2013, p. 101.

boring together in the cause of God and truth.

◆ First, as *believers*, our duty is to *join or remain in a church where discipline is exercised properly*.

I start here because it is very common for people to choose a church precisely because no discipline is exercised there. The very absence of discipline explains the “success” of some churches, especially some mega-churches. People may attend these churches (official membership is often not even considered) without supervision of their doctrine or life.

Young married couples must make decisions about church membership. Which church they join will have profound results for them. It is not too strong to say that their personal spiritual safety and the safety of their marriage depend on whether the church will take supervision of them. Church membership may never be taken lightly.

So anyone considering a change in church membership will want to ask hard questions of all prospective churches, including *how* discipline takes place in the church. They will want to know whether the discipline is *Christian* discipline, because the false church has exercised discipline in the past, too, which did not honor God. Is the process of discipline spelled out in a sound church order, because also discipline must be carried out “decently and in order.” Among the many questions they ask will be whether the discipline is more than mere “termination of membership,” because Christian discipline must be a clear declaration that the impenitent sinner (if he

remains impenitent) is cut off from the kingdom of Christ “by God Himself” (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 31).

Our children and grandchildren must grow up with a keen sense that the church’s walls are a significant part of the church’s glory. Without walls, the city cannot protect her citizens.

◆ As *elders*, it is our duty to *carry out this work faithfully, fearlessly*.

Sermons from our pastors on Lord’s Day 31 of the Heidelberg Catechism spell out what that faithfulness and fearlessness are. Here, let me remind us that an acceptance of a nomination to serve as elder implies a willingness to engage in this “painful necessity.” Would it be helpful for a letter of nomination for elder to be “standardized,” a letter that has a careful description of the fundamental duties of the office? Included could be a reminder to re-read the Form for Installation of Elders and Deacons, to be prepared to sign with sincerity the crucial Formula of Subscription, and to read, understand, and agree to the manner in which discipline will be exercised according to the Church Order in Articles 71-80. When the council nominates men for the office of elder, they will then be sure that every nominee shows a willingness to be faithful and fearless in exercising discipline.

Elders are one of the crucial links of the chain. And every chain is only as strong as its weakest link.

◆ As *members*, it is our duty to *engage in this work actively*.

This active engagement begins

with recognizing that it is the church, and not merely the elders, that exercises discipline, and we are part of that church.

Reformed church government does not give discipline to the elders only. Part of its biblical wisdom is its teaching that discipline is the work of the entire church and all her members. Although the elders are at the forefront of discipline, they do not engage in it apart from all the members. The members must not allow them to do so. All the members in a church must see themselves to be an important link in the chain.

In I Corinthians 5 Paul calls the *church* to put out an impenitent incestuous member by the act of excommunication. In Paul’s follow-up letter he indicates that their “punishment” must have had its desired effect, because he called the church to forgive the member (II Cor. 2:6, 7). This punishment, Paul says, was inflicted by “many.” That word “many” indicates two important truths about the act of discipline. First, “many” is not a reference to many in the consistory, but to the many that comprised the congregation—the church did the discipline. The *members* of the *church* exercised discipline. Second, that it was “many” and not “all” indicates that there were some hold-outs in the congregational. Literally, Paul says “the majority,” indicating that a minority was opposed to the discipline. This was wrong on their part of course, but knowing this helps us to realize that our day is not so different: even in the apostolic age, discipline was not universally liked.

The members participate in many ways.

1) Matthew 18 teaches that discipline often *begins* outside the consistory or session, when the common members deal with each other *before* they “tell the church,” that is, the consistory.

2) After the elders are involved, they call the church to pray for the sinning member; and when his name is announced, the elders ask the members to visit and admonish the impenitent.

3) If the members find something amiss in the administration of the discipline, not only *may* they object, but objecting is their *duty*. All the members hold office—the office of believer. In that office, they have the right and duty to judge and, if necessary, to object by protest and appeal. The Church Order (Articles 77, 78) teaches that the congregation’s approval is required in both excommunication and readmittance.

4) Then (although our Church Order and Form for Excommunication do not teach this) the act of final excommunication should be considered a direct action of the whole congregation. According to I Corinthians 5:4, 5, the excommunication was to take place when the congregation was “gathered together.” The elders act; so does the congregation. Besides, Paul’s rebuke in I Corinthians 5 for failure to discipline is not a rebuke of the elders but of the whole congregation. Thus, the exhortation for us: When final excommunication takes place, members may be tempted to absent themselves from the service,

but they need to recognize that the as-yet “incurable member” is being put out of *their* body. Church membership itself carries with it the responsibility to be a *part*—an active part—of the painful putting out of the little leaven, lest *our* whole lump be leavened.

5) Finally, every member supports the discipline that has taken place by refraining from the sweet fellowship they formerly had with the now impenitent and cut-off member. Here is where members can very effectively, but wickedly, undermine the work of the church. They continue in fellowship with the impenitent. They forget or ignore the clear teaching of Jesus: “let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican” (Matt. 18:17); and of Jesus’ apostle Paul: Do “not... keep company with” those who call themselves Christians but live in impenitence (I Cor. 5:9-13); “note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed” (II Thess. 3:14).

◆ As *objects of discipline*, it is our duty to *submit to this work humbly*.

Forty years ago when I made confession of faith before the congregation, part of my solemn and public oath was that I would submit to church government and to church discipline. I did not think of it then, but should have, that I was promising something that might require of me terrible pain—to submit to the process of discipline even if it meant greatest embarrassment and shame. We need to learn the confession of Psalm 15: “LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell

in thy holy hill? He that *swaureth to his own hurt*, and changeth not” (emphasis added).

Those under discipline must not short-circuit the work. One great danger is the temptation to ask for membership papers—some might call it “resign”—before discipline can be carried out, or carried through to the end. In fact, it was of the rarity of this *final* excommunication that Kuyper was really speaking when he referred to it as “rare as a white crow.” This is a problem. Members make vows to submit to discipline, but break those vows as soon as discipline is applied: they demand their membership papers. This is a breaking of the public vow made at the time of confession of faith. We may not do that.

When, perhaps, a member does that anyway, it is our calling to treat him just as though he had been excommunicated. Had the incestuous member in Corinth left to join a church of a different denomination on the other side of town before he could be excommunicated, Paul’s instruction as to how to treat this member would not have changed. He is to be treated as though excommunicated.

Added difficulty presents itself when the excommunicated person is a family member who lives in my home—a parent or a spouse. In that case, God Himself makes it nigh to impossible for us not to have close and regular contacts with them. Then, the believing *spouse* prays that God will use her (or his) “godly conversation” to bring him (back) to Christ. And the believing *children* bear the pain of seeing the parent in

unbelief, and make the same prayer as their believing parent makes: “Father in heaven, use our witness to ‘win’ our earthly father. Preserve our family in spite of his unbelief. And do not allow his conduct to do damage in our home.” May God be merciful and give special grace to the members in these homes, not rare in the church of Christ.

Finally, we come back to our own duty as church members.

◆ *As member of Christ’s body, my duty in discipline begins with*

self-discipline. If I am easy on myself and do not engage daily in the painful work of conversion—daily mortifying my old man, crucifying my own desires, saying “no” to my sinful flesh—I will never have the strength of conviction to participate in the Christian discipline of others. “Putting my own house in order” is living in daily sorrow for and hatred of my own sin, fleeing from every temptation I face; and it is living in true joy in God through Christ,

delighting in love to live according to the will of God in all good works (see Lord’s Day 33). I must discipline myself, remembering that the one who governs his own spirit is greater than one who can conquer a great city (Prov. 16:32).

Without self-discipline, I come to ruin personally. Without Christian discipline, we come to ruin as churches. Be strong. Discipline requires strength. Strength in Christ, whose church this is. ☞

Chapter Four

Postmillennialism (26)

The Reformed (Amillennial) Critique of Postmillennialism

Introduction

Having demonstrated that none of the main passages of Scripture to which postmillennialists appeal supports the erroneous doctrine of the last things, I conclude my Reformed critique of postmillennialism by showing that the error finds no support in the Reformed confessions. In fact, the Reformed confessions expose postmillennialism as false doctrine.

The Reformed Confessions

There is absolutely nothing in the Reformed confessions that supports, or even suggests, the eschatological doctrine of a coming “golden age” for the church before

the second coming of Jesus Christ—a millennium of the earthly victory of the kingdom of Christ.

In light of the importance of such a millennium in the theology of those who advocate the theory, one would expect the creeds to reflect this importance. But there is not a word about it.

On the contrary, the Reformed creeds plainly oppose the doctrine. They oppose postmillennialism, first, in their teaching on the return of Christ. The Heidelberg Catechism directs the hope of the Reformed believer to the second, bodily coming of Jesus Christ.

What comfort is it to thee that Christ shall come again to judge the quick and the dead?

That in all my sorrows and persecutions, with uplifted head, I look for the self-same One who has before offered himself for me to the judgment of God, and removed from me all curse, to come again as Judge from heaven;

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Previous article in this series: September 1, 2013, p. 467.

who shall cast all his and my enemies into everlasting condemnation, but shall take me, with all his chosen ones, to himself, into heavenly joy and glory.¹

The blessed hope of the Christian is Christ's bodily return. It is not at all the earthly victory of the church for a thousand years, prior to Christ's coming. For postmillennialism, the blessed hope of the Christian is as much the millennium as it is the second coming of Christ, if it is not more the millennium than the second coming of Christ.

According to the Catechism, the Reformed Christian's hope is "heavenly joy and glory," not at all the earthly joys and glory of a "golden age."

In addition, the experience of the Christian, and of the true church, in all the time preceding the second coming, is "sorrows and persecutions." This contradicts postmillennialism's dream of a long time of relief, as much as millions of years, from "sorrows and persecutions" for Christians, immediately preceding Christ's coming.

Article 37 of the Belgic Confession fully agrees with the Catechism. The church has one hope: the "corporal and visible" coming of Christ from heaven. "We expect that great day with a most ardent desire.... Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Rev. 22:20."² This hope is not diluted, or misdirected, by an ardent desire for a millennium.

Like the Catechism, the Belgic Confession understands Scripture to teach that, all the while she is in the world, the true church is the object of the hatred and opposition of the world of ungodly men and women, including the false church: "the wicked, who most cruelly persecuted, oppressed, and tormented them in this world."³ Throughout history, the cause of the true church is "condemned by many judges and magistrates as heretical and impious," including ecclesiastical judges—synods and theologians.

Postmillennialists object that for one thousand years, at least, and probably for millions of years, the church will rule the world, live in peace, prosperity, and power, and thus be in the position herself to condemn the cause of the world of the ungodly and the cause of the false church as heretical and impious.

¹ Heid. Cat., Q&A 52, in Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966), 323, 324.

² Belgic Confession, Art. 37, in *ibid.*, 436.

³ *Ibid.*, 435.

A second way in which the Reformed creeds repudiate the false doctrine of postmillennialism is their presentation of the kingdom of God as a spiritual and heavenly kingdom, rather than the earthly, carnal kingdom of postmillennialism.

That the kingdom of God in the world is spiritual and heavenly is the clear, conclusive teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism.

What is the second petition [of the model prayer]?

Thy kingdom come. That is: so govern us by thy Word and Spirit that we may submit ourselves unto thee always more and more; preserve and increase thy Church; destroy the works of the devil, every power that exalteth itself against thee, and all wicked devices formed against thy holy Word, until the full coming of thy kingdom, wherein thou shalt be all in all.⁴

The kingdom of God is the reign of God in Jesus Christ in the hearts and lives of elect believers: "Govern us...that we may submit ourselves unto thee always more and more." The kingdom is not the impressive, external Christian empire envisioned by Christian Reconstruction and by the culture-Calvinists, over all of society.

The kingdom comes progressively by the "Word and Spirit" of Jesus Christ. It does not come by the aggressive activity of postmillennialists to transform and dominate all spheres of human life. Neither does it come by a (spurious) common grace of God at work in the reprobate, unbelieving citizens of the kingdom of darkness.

According to the Catechism, the institutional form of the kingdom is the church: "preserve and increase thy Church." The kingdom is not a "Christianized" state; "Christianized" universities; a "Christianized" Wall Street; a "Christianized" Supreme Court; a "Christianized" Hollywood; and what not more.

Like Q&A 52 of the Catechism and Article 37 of the Belgic Confession, the Catechism, in Q&A 123, views the kingdom of God as always battling a hostile kingdom of the world of the ungodly, including the false church: "destroy the works of the devil, every power that exalteth itself against thee, and all wicked devices formed against thy holy Word."

The progressive coming of the kingdom aims at, and

⁴ Heid. Cat., Q&A 123 in *ibid.*, 352, 353.

ends in, “the full coming of thy kingdom.” This is not the millennial kingdom of postmillennialism, but the kingdom that Christ will establish perfectly in all the new creation at His coming, for only then will God be “all in all” (see I Cor. 15:23-28).

Although unfamiliar to many Reformed people, a document known as the Second Helvetic [Swiss] Confession (1566) was a prominent Reformed creed in its day. This is what the Second Helvetic confesses about the last days, the last days that postmillennialism paints in rosy, indeed golden, hues:

We...condemn Jewish dreams that there will be a golden age on earth before the Day of Judgment, and that the pious, having subdued all their godless enemies, will possess all the kingdoms of the earth. For evangelical truth in Matt., chs. 24 and 25, and Luke, ch. 18, and apostolic teaching in II Thess., ch. 2, and II Tim., chs. 3 and 4, present something quite different.⁵

⁵ The Second Helvetic Confession, 1566, in *Reformed Confessions of the 16th Century*, ed. Arthur C. Cochrane (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 245, 246.

This credal statement drives a stake through the heart of postmillennialism.

And the Second Helvetic accurately expresses Reformed thinking on the doctrine of the last things. Schaff (who gives only the Latin original of the creed) calls the Second Helvetic Confession “the most elaborate and most catholic among the Swiss confessions.” He adds that “it was adopted, or at least highly approved, by nearly all the Reformed Churches on the Continent and in England and Scotland.”⁶

Not only did the Reformed churches in Europe in 1566 have no place for the fantasies of postmillennialism but they also rejected postmillennialism as “Jewish dreams.” That is, postmillennialism is the same notion about an earthly, carnal kingdom of God that was the delusion of the Jews, according to John 6, and because of which they rejected the spiritual kingship and kingdom of Jesus Christ.

The Westminster Standards are no more supportive of postmillennialism than are the Reformed creeds. An examination of the Westminster Standards will follow.

... to be continued. 

⁶ Schaff, *Creeds*, vol. 3, 233.

Encouraging the Next Generation to Read (2)

A Twofold Urgency

Reading's Great Significance in God's Covenant

The next generation must be encouraged to read. The necessity, even urgency, of doing so is twofold. First, reading has a significant place in the covenant of grace as an instrument of God for the fulfilling of His promises.

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This is the text of the speech Rev. Huizinga gave at the annual meeting of the RFPA on September 19, 2013.

Previous article in this series: November 15, 2013, p. 88.

That reading has a significant place in God's covenant can be demonstrated from Scripture.

First of all, Exodus 24:7 (and all similar Old Testament passages): “And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient.” Throughout Israel's history as a constituted nation, the book of the covenant, which contained God's laws and promises for Israel, was read. The book of the covenant was not read by every individual but it was read to the people by Moses and the leaders after him, over and over again. Apostasy in Israel was always characterized by

the neglect of reading the book of the covenant, either because it had been lost or because it was deliberately ignored. One of the greatest reformations that ever occurred among God's covenant people, although sadly it did not last very long, took place during the reign of good king Josiah. The book of the covenant was found after having been lost, "and the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great [they had little children there, of course]: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD" (II Kings 23:2). The book of the covenant was read. When it was read Israel usually prospered. When it was neglected, invariably apostasy occurred. Clearly, reading had a significant place in God's covenant already in the Old Testament.

Second, I Timothy 4:13: "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." To the young pastor Timothy and to every pastor comes the command, "Read. Give attendance to reading." Read publicly in the worship of the church and in teaching catechism. Read privately so that you may know how to exhort and may grow in and teach doctrine. But is the inspired apostle's command to read to be understood as a command only to pastors like Timothy, or is it a command *principally* and *primarily* to pastors, but also to every child of God? Because not only the minister, but *everyone*, must know doctrine, so all ought to give attendance to reading. Read! Give attendance to reading! Reading has a significant place in God's covenant.

Third, II Timothy 4:13: "The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments." When an older, experienced minister has been thrown into prison in Rome, and has been sentenced to death and is simply awaiting the time of his departure when the Roman soldiers will take him to the execution block, he has one last request: "Timothy, when you come [and hasten lest I die before you arrive] bring me the books, especially the parchments." Bring me books! Bring me good literature to read, for I have read often and it edifies my soul as little else can. Is this the desire only of Paul and those in similar circumstances, or is this the desire of all of God's children? In God's covenant, God's people say, "Bring me

books. My soul needs books!" Reading has a significant place in God's covenant.

Fourth, Revelation 1:3: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." Blessed is he that readeth the book of Revelation publicly in worship and they who hear it. Blessed is he that readeth the book of Revelation privately. However, because Scripture is one united whole, and the book of Revelation is part of the whole, "Blessed is he that readeth" means "Blessed is he that readeth the whole Bible." By lawful extension, then, blessed is he that readeth a faithful exposition of this book to help him understand it, such as *Behold He Cometh* by Rev. Hoeksema. Blessed is he that readeth any such literature that helps him understand God's revelation. Blessed, happy, privileged is he that readeth! To be pitied is he who rejects or minimizes reading! Reading has a significant place in God's covenant.

Finally, the Bible. The aforementioned passages are all secondary. The primary proof that reading has a significant place in God's covenant is the Bible itself. In His inscrutable wisdom God determined from all eternity that He would be revealed to His people through the Bible, His *written* revelation, the entirety of which we new dispensation believers now have in our hands. And the Bible as a written revelation must be *read*. God could have revealed Himself savingly in Jesus Christ through some other means, but He determined that He would be revealed through a *written* revelation that must be *read*. That the revelation of God comes to us in a book with words that are written and must be read is *the proof* that reading has a significant place in God's covenant. And whom does this written revelation reveal but Him who is called *the Word*, and *the Alpha and Omega* (Greek letters)? The necessity and urgency of reading in the covenant is indisputable and could not be emphasized too strongly. To deny the significance of reading in the covenant is to deny Scripture as such, and thus the Word Himself! The church will let reading vanish to her peril and destruction. The divine form of revelation—which demands reading—is the incontrovertible proof that the reading of the Bible and all spiritually-edifying literature is necessary. No matter what technological developments and transformations take place in the modern world,

reading among the covenant people must not be allowed to disappear. Reading *cannot* disappear so long as Christ carries.

Why is reading so significant in the covenant? It is an instrument of God for fulfilling His promises. The covenant of grace is the relationship of friendship between the triune God and His elect people in their generations through the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ. In that covenant, God makes promises to us and our children—chiefly that He will be our God and reveal Himself to us, and that He will shower saving blessings upon us now and everlastingly in Jesus Christ. That particular promise God will sovereignly realize by His own power and grace. However, He is pleased to fulfill it by using various instruments, the chief of which is the gospel of the Scriptures *preached*, but another is the Scriptures *read*. The purpose of reading therefore is to know Jehovah and His saving works and ways. The more we know Him the more we will love Him and trust Him and hope in Him and will grow in our relationship with Him. That is our salvation! That is the fulfillment of His promise in Christ! If we love God we will not be able to keep from reading any more than the new bride can keep from reading the letters her husband sends to her from the battlefield across the sea. I must read to know my beloved! Through reading we come to know and love our faithful God as He has promised. *Reading has a significant place in the covenant of grace as an instrument of God for the fulfilling of His promises.* We must read! Our young people must read!

Reading's Disappearing Significance in the Modern World

Secondly, the necessity and even urgency of encouraging the next generation to read is the fact that the modern world is not conducive to, and even indirectly discourages, the deep thinking that reading requires. This is a world where information is increasingly communicated through bright images; stimulating, real-life pictures; and action-packed videos. If the message is communicated through words, the words are reduced to abbreviations so that the mind spends minimal time with the words, flitting around like a hummingbird from one image to the next. When information is communicated this way it makes

the human mind increasingly passive. Less discipline and effort are required. Little, if any, critical thinking, careful contemplation, reflection, and meditation are practiced. Technology is a wonderful tool. However, by its own admission, the modern world is not developing the smart man, but the Smart Phone. And as the tool gets smarter, does the mind get proportionally duller?

There was a day not so long ago when the father of a family would plan a vacation from Grand Rapids, Michigan to Yellowstone National Park by clearing off the dining table and hauling out his Rand/McNally Road Map. He would lay it out there on the table along with a piece of legal-sized paper, a pencil, and a ruler. He would look at the bottom corner of the map, where it said "One inch equals seventy-five miles." And he would map out the journey, carefully calculating for himself which route to take, and how far the family will travel each day. He would lay it all out and have it all envisioned in his mind. He did all the work. Not necessary today. If he so desires, the man can wait until the very morning of departure, grab his GPS, set as his destination the campground in Yellowstone National Park, hit "go," and it begins issuing commands: "Proceed one hundred feet and turn right. Continue on highway 1 for fifty-five miles and merge unto highway 2...." And who is doing the thinking? The GPS is terrific—an incredible tool. But as we put away our road maps, forethought, and careful thinking, is that thinking and speaking navigator who takes our hand and guides us every turn of the way unto our final destination producing among us a generation of people navigationally brain-dead?

And that is only one example. Technology is great. Yet, what is happening to the human mind?

Now consider the activity of reading the Bible and all spiritually-edifying literature. Reading demands active participation. The moment the mind enters the passive mode we are no longer reading but blankly staring at words on a page. Often we work our way to the end of a page we never actually read. Reading demands mental activity, discipline, effort, careful contemplation, meditation, and reflection. Sometimes you have to go back and read the same sentence over again in order to understand the concepts and their relationships to each other, and the relationship of the sentence to its preceding context. Reading demands deep thinking.

It is no surprise that reading, or any other spiritually edifying activity of the Christian life requires deep thinking, and the exercise of the mind. For, Romans 12:2 says, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the *renewing of your mind*....” By the renewing of your mind! The mind is not like the cottage on the lake, which has to be renovated and updated every twenty or fifty years or so. The mind has to be renovated every single day lest it decay and corrode. Every day renew your mind! Do not be conformed to this world, which conformity can be accelerated by the decaying of the mind, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. I Peter 1:13: “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober....” Gird up the loins of your mind. Think of a man in Israel with a long robe. If he had to move quickly,

he would pull up the bottom of his robe and tuck it in his girdle, lest it get caught in his sandals or in his legs. And now the apostle Peter says, “Gird up the loins of your *mind*.” We have to be sharp and active and diligent with our mind. Gird it up, so it is ready to go. The Christian life in general and reading in particular demand a sharp, regenerated mind.

It is always necessary to encourage the next generation to read, but it is especially urgent now because *the modern world in which we live is not conducive to and even indirectly discourages the deep thinking of the mind that spiritually-edifying reading requires.*

We *must* encourage the next generation to read. Next time: “What can we do?” ∞

ALL AROUND US

REV. CLAY SPRONK

That Lovely Old and Well-known Songbook

Do you belong to a church where the number of songs approved for worship is limited? Has your church used the same songbook for decades? Perhaps you think it is time for a change. You can point to the many deficiencies, real or perceived, in the approved songbook. And maybe you are a bit weary of singing the same songs over and over again. I won't say that it is impossible to revise or improve a songbook. But the article I call to your attention below demonstrates that we have far more reason to love and be thankful for our old songbook than to criticize it.

Why men have stopped singing in church.¹

It happened again yesterday. I was attending one of those hip, contemporary churches—and almost no one sang. Worshipers stood obediently as the band rocked out, the smoke machine belched and lights flashed. Lyr-

¹ The article was published on May 8, 2013. The author is David Murrow. It can be found at: <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/afewgrownmen/2013/05/why-men-have-stopped-singing-in-church/>.

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ics were projected on the screen, but almost no one sang them. A few women were trying, but I saw only one male (other than the worship leader) making the attempt.

A few months ago I blogged, “Have Christians Stopped Singing?” I did some research, and learned that congregational singing has ebbed and flowed over the centuries. It reached a high tide when I was a young man—but that tide may be going out again. And that could be bad news for men.

First, a very quick history of congregational singing.

Before the Reformation, laypersons were not allowed to sing in church. They were expected to stand mute as sacred music was performed by professionals (priests and cantors), played on complex instruments (pipe organs), and sung in an obscure language (Latin).

Reformers gave worship back to the people in the form of congregational singing. They composed simple tunes that were easy to sing, and mated them with theologically rich lyrics. Since most people were illiterate in the 16th century, singing became an effective form of catechism. Congregants learned about God as they sang about God.

A technological advance—the printing press—led to an explosion of congregational singing. The first hymnal was printed in 1532, and soon a few dozen hymns became standards across Christendom. Hymnals slowly grew over the next four centuries. By the mid 20th century every Protestant church had a hymnal of about 1,000 songs, 250 of which were regularly sung. In the church of my

youth, everyone picked up a hymnal and sang every verse of every song.

About 20 years ago a new technological advance—the computer controlled projection screen—entered America’s sanctuaries. Suddenly churches could project song lyrics for all to see. Hymnals became obsolete. No longer were Christians limited to 1,000 songs handed down by our elders.

At first, churches simply projected the songs everyone knew—hymns and a few simple praise songs that had come out of the Jesus Movement. People sang robustly.

But that began to change about ten years ago. Worship leaders realized they could project anything on that screen. So they brought in new songs each week. They drew from the radio, the Internet, and Worship conferences. Some began composing their own songs, performing them during worship, and selling them on CD after church.

In short order we went from 250 songs everyone knows to 250,000+ songs nobody knows.

Years ago, worship leaders used to prepare their flocks when introducing a new song. “We’re going to do a new song for you now,” they would say. “We’ll go through it twice, and then we invite you to join in.”

That kind of coaching is rare today. Songs get switched out so frequently that it’s impossible to learn them. People can’t sing songs they’ve never heard. And with no musical notes to follow, how is a person supposed to pick up the tune?

And so the church has returned to the 14th century. Worshippers stand mute as professional-caliber musicians play complex instruments, sung in an obscure language. Martin Luther is turning over in his grave.

What does this mean for men? On the positive side, men no longer feel pressure to sing in church. Men who are poor readers or poor singers no longer have to fumble through hymnals, sing archaic lyrics or read a musical staff.

But the negatives are huge. Men are doers, and singing was one of the things we used to *do* together in church. It was a chance to participate. Now, with congregational singing going away, and communion no longer a weekly ordinance, there’s only one avenue left for men to participate in the service—the offering. Is this really the message we want to send to men? *Sit there, be quiet, and enjoy the show. And don’t forget to give us money.*

There’s nothing wrong with professionalism and quality in church music. The problem isn’t the rock band,

or the lights, or the smoke machine. The key is *familiarity*. People enjoy singing songs they know.

How do I know? When that super-hip band performed a hymn, the crowd responded with gusto. People sang. Even the men.

I know the writer’s purpose in this article is not to make arguments in favor of adopting and keeping an old songbook for use in worship. Yet, what he says about the biblical, Reformed practice of congregational singing and about the importance of familiarity with the songs is a compelling argument for keeping and using an old songbook, like the Psalter used since 1924 in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

The article also makes a convincing case for limiting the number of songs used for worship. It is a blessing and not a burdensome rule for a congregation to be limited to under 500 songs. Everyone in the congregation is able to become familiar with that many songs. But 250,000! There is no way for anyone in the congregation to become familiar with that many songs. Even if the number were limited to a few thousand it would still be too many for everyone in the congregation to be familiar with them. Then perhaps only a few “professionals” would be able to say they are familiar with the songs. The result is, as the writer points out, not everyone sings. The writer singles out the nonparticipation of men of the congregation. But what about the children? They are part of the congregation too! Because the writer specifically mentions that he saw only the women singing it is probably safe to conclude that the children also barely participated. Familiarity with the songs of worship on the part of the men, women, and children in the congregation is a blessing enjoyed by a church with a limited number of songs approved for worship.

There are other reasons why an approved songbook is a blessing. The writer refers to the creation of “theologically rich” lyrics written during the Reformation. He may be referring to the theological soundness of the Reformation’s songs. Reformed churches understand that the content of the songs sung in worship must be in harmony with the truth of Scripture. If a congregation is open to choosing songs from a pool of 250,000 (or even just a few thousand) there is the very grave danger that some (if not many) of the songs will contain theological errors. Sadly, many churches that once sang from songbooks that included only theologi-

cally sound songs now sing many heretical songs on their projection screens (and without musical notes!). One of the obvious benefits of singing from a song book with a limited number of approved songs is that it helps to ensure that the congregation sings only the *truth*.

Another important issue is reverence. The songs must be reverent in content. Many of the new songs are not. But all of the songs in the old Psalter are reverent. Of course, that means they must be played reverently too. The writer does not mention the need for reverence, and he may not view it as important. He writes approvingly of a rock band playing a well-known song. And for him that is not a “problem” because at least the song was familiar. A rock band can lead a congregation in the singing of familiar songs. But can it do so in a reverent manner, along with flashing lights and smoke? Not in my opinion.

But my point is not to criticize contemporary worship practices. My point is that congregational singing from a familiar old songbook is a great blessing.

Does your church sing only songs that are appropriately reverent in worship? Does your church sing only songs that are faithful to Scripture in worship? Does the singing in your congregation include the voices of everyone who is able to sing? Do you even hear the beautiful sound of the children singing (as well as the men)? Can’t you hear them now:

Hallelujah, praise Jehovah,
O my soul, Jehovah praise;
I will sing the glorious praises
Of my God through all my days.

That is the beauty of a lovely old and well-known songbook! 

Stalking the Beast (1)

“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

The Lord having revealed to His church in His infallible Word the goal and purpose of Satan (the establishment of his antichristian world power, Rev. 17), it remains for the children of Issachar to stalk the false prophet as he enlists the services of the false and apostatizing churches to advance Satan’s devious cause.

Many world luminaries of our day (Tony Blair, the Clintons, John D. Rockefeller, etc.) are actively advancing this cause by promoting their Fabian, antichristian goal for the world (see May 1, 2013 issue of the *Standard Bearer*). They have discovered in the process that success will necessitate something more than coercion. Other world powers as represented in Nebuchadnezzar’s

image have relied primarily on coercion and failed miserably. Success will require enlisting the services of the church to the task of “molding the thought of the world,”¹ or, as expressed in the caption of the Fabian window: “REMOLD IT NEARER TO THE HEART’S DESIRE.”

To accomplish this the false prophet is engaged in “remolding” the biblical themes of unity and justice by means of a belief system known as communitarianism.

The Gospel According to Communitarianism

Henry Lamb, chairman of an organization called Sovereignty International and author of the book *The Rise of Global Governance*, has written extensively about communitarianism. Lamb states in part:

This is a belief system that opposes both authoritari-

Mr. Kalsbeck is a member in Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, Michigan and secretary of the RFPA.

¹ John D. Rockefeller, quoted in James W. Wardner, “Unholy Alliances: The Secret Plan and the Secret People Who Are Working to Destroy America,” 1996 (privately published).

anism and individualism, and promotes instead a social organization that is governed by policies designed by civil society to limit individual freedom as required for the benefit of the community....

For more than 200 years, all these questions were addressed by elected representatives of the community. Individual members of the community have always been free to propose projects to meet unmet community needs. Elected officials who failed to respond to the wishes of the community could always be replaced at the next election.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the environmental movement, joined by “social justice” advocates, grew impatient with the rate of change under this traditional policymaking procedure. That’s why the *President’s Council on Sustainable Development* declared, “We need a new decision process....” This new decision process is constructed on a communitarian philosophy and employs the *consensus process*.

Typically, these councils have been initiated and funded by special interest groups or by the federal government—not by the local community. These councils inevitably create a plan that incorporates the recommendations set forth in Agenda 21, the U.N.’s bible on sustainable development. These plans limit individual freedom and impose individual responsibilities in order to create a community that the vision council has determined to be in the best interest of the whole.... [Readers may have noticed how frequently the term “sustainable development” is used in our day, even in advertising. c.k.]

Communitarianism has been called “communism-lite.” Others refer to it as “sophisticated socialism.” On the ground, it appears to be academic justification for transforming the policymaking process, taking authority away from elected officials and empowering non-elected representatives of special interest groups.²

The Deception of the Gospel According to Communitarianism

By this time it should be clear that communitarianism is little more than a long, friendly-sounding term used to promote socialism under the pretense of seeking the welfare of the community and the improvement of human society.

That the false and apostatizing churches should promote this deceptive program is not difficult to understand

² Henry Lamb, “An Unseen Enemy of Freedom,” Worldnetdaily.com, September 13, 2008.

if one keeps in mind their commitment to preaching a “social gospel”: a gospel with religious overtones but which is at bottom the Fabian political idea of “social justice.” For them the primary task of the church is to alleviate human suffering. That being the case, the socialist idea of redistribution of wealth to serve the “common good” is a perfectly sensible idea. The Roman Catholic Church has long been a promoter of this program in its gospel of “liberation theology,” and today much of the Protestant church-world is not far behind. Carl Teichrib, chief editor of the publication *Forcing Change*, explains:

In today’s Christian world—and Western culture in general—there’s a myriad of changes taking place, and with it comes new language. “Social Justice” is certainly in the spotlight. Jim Wallis of Sojourners uses this term repeatedly. Brian McLaren’s book *Everything Must Change* seeks to reframe Christianity in a social justice context. The Christian Reformed Church has a social justice office, as does the Salvation Army; and the Mennonite Church USA, the United Methodist Church, the United Church of Canada, and an endless list of other denominations and church bodies speak of “social justice.” Christian universities and Bible colleges too have adopted this language.³

Sadly, many of these churches have reinterpreted Scripture to teach that economic inequality is, per se, a bad thing. While it is true that all Christians deplore unjust deeds, it isn’t necessarily unjust for some to have more than others. The Lord Himself made that clear when a certain man wanted Jesus to tell his brother to share an inheritance with him, to which Jesus answered, “Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?” (Luke 12:14).

To illustrate his point of the unbiblical nature of the social justice mantra, Mr. Teichrib uses the example of the Parable of the Good Samaritan:

(1) If the Samaritan were a supporter of the dominant theme in social justice, he would have acted with a different motive for different ends. The Samaritan would have used the occasion to lobby for social transformation. 1) The robbers were really victims of an unjust economic system, and had acted in response to the oppression of the ruling class. 2) In order to bring social justice to

³ Carl Teichrib, “The Fallacy of Social Justice: All for One and theft to All.” <http://www.worldviewweekend.com/worldview-times/article.php?articleid=6585>.

this oppressed class, and to steer them back to a caring community, equitable wealth redistribution should take place. The rich must be taxed to fund necessary social programs. A more equitable society is needed. 3) Who will pay the victim's bills? The community or the rich. 4) This tragic event, the Samaritan would tell us, is a graphic reminder of the class struggle. We are all victims of an unjust economic order. Therefore, we must be the "voice of the voiceless" and advocate for radical social change.⁴

More sadly, by preaching this gospel according to communitarianism, the false and apostatizing churches are not only rejecting Christ's purpose for His church, they are serving as agents (either wittingly, or maybe in some cases, unwittingly) to change the very purpose of the church. In so doing they are following in the footsteps of Dr. Walter Rauschenbusch.

The Tracks of Dr. Walter Rauschenbusch

Dr. Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918) is sometimes called the father of the social gospel. He was a Baptist minister, member of the Fabian Socialist Society, and professor of church history at the Rochester Theological Seminary. His goal was to indoctrinate his students in the finer points of Fabian socialism, global governance, and the social gospel, and then to send them off into the churches to preach a Jesus who had a "social passion" for society. With the ideological backing and financial support of the Rockefellers, Rauschenbusch proved quite successful in this endeavor.⁵

To advance this cause further, Walter teamed up with the Fabian Dr. Harry F. Ward (1873-1966) and started the Federal Council of Churches (later to become the National Council of Churches). According to a publication of this organization, they sought to produce "a changed attitude on the part of many church members concerning the purpose and function of the Church and Christianity."⁶ Apparently they were intent on moving the church away from preaching the gospel to using the church's message as a means to bring about global governance and social justice. In his book *Collectivism in the*

Churches, Edgar Bundy explains:

...we have seen how Dr. Walter Rauschenbusch... and the leaders of the social-action movements in the churches decided to do away with Christian individualism and turn to outright collectivism, using the church as their instrument.... Religion was only a means toward achieving socialism. And, like all other false prophets who have infiltrated religion through the centuries, used a "front" or disguise. This disguise, as we have seen, was "The Kingdom of God." The Kingdom was not pictured as a spiritual society..., but as a collectivist society which would be brought about by... eradication of poverty, redistribution of wealth...and "economic justice."⁷

The Tracks of Joseph Stalin

Interestingly, while these false ideas of Rauschenbusch and Ward (also known as the "Red Dean" for his communist beliefs) would continue to influence the mainline churches of the United States after the death of Rauschenbusch, these same ideas would be promoted by agents of the Soviet Union (U.S.S.R.).

This takes us back to the time period in the late 40s and early 50s called "the Red Scare." Shortly after World War II it became evident that our government, particularly the State Department, had been infiltrated by Communist agents of Joseph Stalin's government. The House of Representatives set up the Committee on Un-American Activities to determine who these agents were, the means they were using, and the degree of influence they had gained in the United States. Testimony before that committee in July of 1953 included the following revealing exchange between Robert Kunzig, chief council for the committee, and Manning Johnson, a former member of the Communist Party:

Kunzig: ...the name Harry Ward has appeared in so many of these various organizations and groups. It seems as if there is almost an interlacing tie-up... through various sects and denominations. Have you any comment to make on this situation?

Johnson: Yes, I have. Dr. Harry F. Ward, for many

⁴ Teichrib. Op. cit.

⁵ Brannon Howse, *Religious Trojan Horse* (Collierville, TN: Worldview Weekend Publishing, 2012), 99.

⁶ *A Yearbook of the Church and Social Service in the U.S.*, Federal Council of Churches, 1916, 23.

⁷ Edgar C. Bundy, *Collectivism in the Churches: A documented Account of the Political Activities of the Federal, National, and World Councils of Churches* (Wheaton, Illinois: Church League of America, 1957), 101.

years, has been the chief architect for Communist infiltration and subversion in the religious field.

Kunzig: ...could you give us a summary of the overall manner in which the Communists have attempted to infiltrate and poison the religious organizations of America wherever possible?

Johnson: Once the tactic of infiltrating religious organizations was set by the Kremlin, the actual mechanics of implementing the "new line" was a question of following the...church movement in Russia, where the Communists discovered that the destruction of religion could proceed much faster through infiltration of the church by Communist agents operating within the church itself.... In the earliest stages it was determined that with only small forces available it would be necessary to concentrate Communist agents in the seminaries and divinity schools. The practical conclusion drawn by the Red leaders was that these institutions would make it possible for a small Communist minority to influence the ideology of future clergymen...*the idea was to divert the emphasis of clerical thinking from the spiritual to the material* [emphasis, ck].... Instead of emphasis toward the spiritual and matters of the soul, the new and heavy emphasis was

to deal with those matters which, in the main, led toward the Communist program of "immediate demands."

...The plan was to make the seminaries the neck of a funnel through which thousands of potential clergymen would issue forth, carrying with them, in varying degrees, an ideology and slant which would aid in neutralizing the anti-Communist character of the church and also to use the clergy to spearhead important Communist projects....⁸

This antichristian corruption of the gospel and purpose of the church continues to this day. Though Rauschenbusch and Ward are long dead and buried, their ideas continue to rule in the false and apostatizing churches. Legion is their wolf-in-sheep's-clothing offspring that continue to infect the church. Issachar will do well to track down this rabid wolf pack.

... to be continued. 

⁸ Committee on Un-American Activities of the United States House of Representatives, 83rd Congress, in July, 1953, page 2278, as cited by Bert Kjos, "Treason in the Church: Trading Truth for a 'Social Gospel,'" September, 2006. <http://www.crossroad.to/articles2/006/conspiracy2>.

STRENGTH OF YOUTH

REV. MARTIN VANDER WAL

Yes!

"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat..."

Genesis 2:16.

So very many trees God planted in Paradise. So many trees with their fruit God gave to the man and the woman for food. Theirs was a delicious variety to enjoy every day. They never had to go far for their food. As soon as they were only a little hungry they might reach out with their hands to the fruit hanging right before them, and take and eat. Easily and quickly they might satisfy their hunger. They might eat as much

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as they wanted whenever they wanted. They could say "Yes" to their hunger, "Yes" to the fruit before them, and "Yes" to their God who so wonderfully provided the needs of their bodies, so they might live forever in Paradise, eating gratefully of the abundant goodness of their Maker. So might the Lord God continue forever to sustain the life He gave them.

To this plentiful provision of these trees with their fruit there was only one exception. After his Maker gave Adam every tree of the garden for food to eat, He set one tree apart by His Word. One tree God named the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Of that one tree God said "No." "Thou shalt not eat of it." God joined to that forbidden act a terrifying, sober punishment: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

Have you ever wondered why God planted that tree in the garden, why He distinguished it, and why He forbade its fruit to Adam? To answer those questions we need not only to examine the awful history that followed man's disobedience and see that all took place under God's sovereign government. We need not only to consider His purpose to exhibit the wonder of His grace shining through that horrible fall, His glorious redemption shining through sin, through the tree of the cross. All that is true: shamefully, graciously true! But we must also see a purpose right then and there, a purpose that Adam could know, and a purpose that we must know. God planted that tree, which He would name the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. From its fruit Adam was forbidden to eat, so that his obedience might be full and complete. All Adam's life and walk before God might be a wholehearted "Yes." Even in his eating of the trees of the garden, Adam might constantly say "Yes" where his God said "Yes." But full and complete obedience must also be that Adam might say "No" where his God said "No." Only one tree did God set apart. Only one "No" was there for Adam to say.

But straight to that one tree and its forbidden fruit Satan directed Eve's attention. Comparing that tree to the others, Satan worked to destroy the contrast that God established by His holy commandment. Eve followed Satan's evil comparison, regarding the tree no longer in the light of God's Word, but

in her own darkening imagination. She "saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise" (Gen. 3:6). Refusing to follow God's "No," Eve said "Yes" to Satan, and "Yes" to the fruit of the tree. So she ate, and also gave to her husband with her. Our head followed, eating with his wife. He repeated, saying "No" to God and "Yes" to Satan, and "Yes" to the fruit of the tree.

As was the crime, so was the punishment: Adam's death and the death of all in Adam. That death was spiritual death punished with physical death. That spirit-

ual death began immediately in them. No longer could they say "Yes" to God, but only "No." Adam's death was that He could only and always say "Yes" to Satan and sin. His "No" was punished with "No." His "Yes" was punished with "Yes." Hear that "No" in Adam and Eve's fleeing from God and covering their shame with fig leaves and excuses. Hear it in their son's murder of his own brother and in the denial of that crime before God. Hear their "Yes" to Satan in all the sin and wickedness of the world's rebellion against God.

But in that blackness and hopelessness of spiritual death, God worked salvation. When Adam said "No," God still said "Yes." As God promised, so He provided. He provided the seed of the woman, the seed of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David. He gave His only begotten Son to be the second Adam, a new Head for His covenant people. Wonderfully, perfectly, the Son followed the will of His Father in heaven. Wherever, whenever, and however God said "Yes," He said "Yes." Wherever, whenever, and however God said "No," He said "No." To every one of the devil's temptations He

said "No." He said "Yes" even when His Father led Him to the tree of the cross, there to lay down His life for those who always said "No." He continued to say "Yes" even when He had nothing from His God but the bitterest dregs of the cup of God's wrath to drink down.

By Jesus' suffering on that tree, His "Yes" overcame and conquered our "No." We sinners are made righteous in Christ; our stubborn refusal and hard-hearted disobedi-

ence is covered with the blood of the obedient, willing Son. On that tree He also purchased our life, the turning of our "No" into "Yes." So He works by His Spirit to renew us after His image. By that work of irresistible grace we no longer say "No" to God, but "Yes." We seek Him, to know Him and rejoice in Him as our God. We ask Him to forgive all our "No," and He tells us, "Yes, I forgive you for the sake of my Son." And when He tells us to say "No" to Satan, sin, and self, we obediently say "No." When He tells us His way, the way of faith, obedience, holiness, and righteousness, we willingly say, "Yes, that is the way for

*By Jesus' suffering
on that tree,
His "Yes"
overcame and conquered
our "No."*

me.” It becomes our heart’s delight to do the will of our Father in heaven.

Our great blessing is to say “Yes” to our God. As many as the trees in Paradise, minus one, He gives us every day so many opportunities to say “Yes.” Daily He calls us to put our trust in Him, and our blessing is to say, “Yes, I will put my trust in Thee!” Our trust is then strengthened by His constant supply of peace, hope, and joy. He feeds us, clothes us, protects, and guards us. He gives us patience in trials and gratitude in abundance. Daily He calls us to Him, to wait on Him. We say, “Yes, here I am, thy servant!” He calls us to His service and we say, “Yes, I will go.” He calls us to confess His name and His truth. We say, “Yes, I will speak.” He calls us to obey His commandments. We say, “Yes, I will go and do.”

As we seek to please our God, fulfilling our affirmations, we must beware of Satan’s attempts to draw our attention away from obedience to God. In his craft and subtlety the devil tries to turn us to disobedience. By God’s gifts of prudence and discretion we are able to see those temptations and say “No” to them. So we stand with God and His Word. Our “No” to sin and our “No” to Satan is our “Yes” to God. In the service of God, we also find sin within ourselves. Especially when God calls

us to deny ourselves and endure hardship and suffering, we find rebellion in our hearts, the word “No,” rising from the old man of sin. By God’s grace and through the promise of His Word, we are able to deny our flesh and submit to God’s will, saying “Yes” to His all-wise will.

Most wonderfully, whenever we say “Yes” to our God, we hear Him saying “Yes” to us. We hear His “Yes” as He expresses His delight in us His children. We receive grace for grace, favor for favor, heaps upon heaps. We rejoice in Him. Our desire to please Him alone grows. We become less afraid of men, no longer dependent on their vain applause and affirmation. We look forward more and more to the day of our Lord’s affirmation. Our confident hope is to hear our Lord say to us, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21, 23). We long more and more to hear from Him, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:34).

So may we train and discipline ourselves to say “Yes.” Let us turn our hearts, our minds, our eyes, our mouths, and our hands, to blessed agreement with His Word. In that turning let us rejoice to know His “Yes” in us, His mighty Word that gives us our every “Yes” to Him. 

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

MR. DON DOEZEMA

Upon This Rock (15)

Robbing Christ of His Honor (7)

Rev. Ophoff—so we noted last time—took vigorous exception to Fairbairn’s view that the expiatory sacrifice “had a meaning of its own” (that is, *apart* from its significance as a *type*), which meaning the ancient worshiper could comprehend and therefore, through it, offer acceptable service to God “whether he

might perceive or not the further respect it had to a dying Savior.” Ophoff insisted that, in order for a sacrifice to be pleasing to God, it *had to be* offered out of faith in Christ.

Ophoff went on, however, to acknowledge that there is no evidence that believers of the old covenant did in fact “associate in their minds” the sacrificial animals with a dying Savior.

A seeming contradiction: On the one hand, an expiatory sacrifice could not be pleasing to God if it were not

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Previous article in this series: October 15, 2013, p. 39.

offered out of faith in Christ; and on the other, we have no reason to think that believers in those days actually saw Christ in the slaughtered animal.

Both propositions have truth written all over them. Regarding the first, recall Calvin's assertion that the impress of the cross was on all the ceremonies of the old dispensation. "The whole law, in short," he said, "was nothing but a manifold variety of exercises in which the worshipers were led by the hand to Christ" (Calvin's *Commentaries*). And then there's this, from elsewhere in his *Commentaries*: "In short, no benefit will be found in the ancient ceremonies until they are related to Christ." And: "Let us therefore bear in mind that the Law is said to be of no use when it is Christless."

But then there are the "blunders" of the disciples of Jesus—the blunders that led Ophoff to conclude that believers in the old dispensation in fact did not associate in their minds the sacrificial victim with the promised Messiah. To what other conclusion could he come, in light of such evidence as is seen in Matthew 16? "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day" (v. 21). And the disciples' response? "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee" (v. 22).

Standing before them was the great Antitype, the One to whom the slain lambs of 4,000 years of Old Testament history had pointed—and the disciples reject out of hand any thought that He might actually be...killed.

Hardly could Jesus have been more blunt in telling His disciples what lay ahead for Him in Jerusalem. Think, for example, of Luke 9:44: "Let these sayings sink down into your ears," He said, "for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men." In the parallel passage in Mark, the instruction was more specific: "The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him: and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day" (9:31).

Crystal clear, but...but...surely Jesus means this *figuratively*, does He not? Surely any thought that the long-awaited promised Messiah, whom we believe to be the *Son of God*, can be *killed* is...unthinkable, is it not?

Thus did the disciples dismiss a literal interpretation of Jesus' words. It remained for them only to ask what it was that He *did* mean. But they didn't. Both passages (Mark

9:32 and Luke 9:45) explain why not: they were "afraid to ask him."

Jesus' response is telling. It was...silence. Jesus knew full well that His disciples did not understand what He had just told them. And He was content to let them remain in their ignorance.

Evidently, therefore, something more is involved here. Something more, that is, than the obtuseness of the disciples. That's borne out by what we read in Luke 9:45 about the inability of the disciples to grasp the plain teaching of their Master. First: "They understood not this saying." That can be simply a matter of their obtuseness. But then this: "...and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not." That's something else. Something that suggests also a *divine purpose*.

Calvin alludes to this very thing in his comments on I Peter 1:10-12. "There was difference between the Law and the Gospel," he wrote, "as if there were a *veil between them*, so that they *might not see more closely* the things that are now revealed to our eyes" (emphasis added). Then there is this insightful observation: "Indeed, it was not proper that while Christ, the Sun of righteousness, was not yet there the full light should shine as at mid-day." That, from Calvin, gets at what is really the heart of this short series. We will return to it next time. For now, suffice it to say that the shadows on the other side of the veil accomplished their purpose of leading the believers in the old dispensation to "sigh with the desire to have a closer view," which is the point of I Peter 1:10-12, but "of necessity they had to confine themselves within the prescribed limits" (Calvin's *N.T. Commentaries*).

"Prescribed limits"—that is indeed what we are dealing with here. *God's* prescription.

How then are we to understand Jesus' admonition to the travelers to Emmaus: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" Was it even *fair* to admonish them for not understanding something that was *hid* from them, as by a veil impenetrable?

Truth is, carnality cannot be excluded from any consideration of the disciples' failure to understand, even *rejection of*, the plain teaching of Jesus regarding what lay before Him in Jerusalem. "The one great, misleading prejudice of the disciples," wrote Rev. Ophoff, "had

been their belief that the path of the promised Messiah was only to be one of triumph and glory.” Glory—that is, *earthly* glory—for *Him*...and for *them*. And what is that but *carnality*? And they were slow to let that go—even *after* they received the initial testimony to His *resurrection*. When Jesus appeared to the eleven on Resurrection Sunday, He therefore “upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen” (Mark 16:14).

There you have it: foolishness, unbelief, hardness of heart—used by God to maintain “prescribed limits.” What is this but a remarkable manifestation of God’s good providence overruling human error?

So much for the *why*, that is, the divine *purpose*, of the veil between the old and the new dispensations. Perhaps it would be profitable to look briefly at the *how*. Jesus’ appearance to His disciples in the upper room on Resurrection Sunday has something to tell us about *that* too. Mark tells us only that Jesus upbraided His disciples for their unbelief and hardness of heart. Luke tells us more. The disciples, we read, were “terrified and affrighted” when Jesus appeared suddenly in their midst. After Jesus set their fears to rest, He said, “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me” (24:44). Jesus had here their *attention*. *Rapt* attention, no doubt. But something more was needed. Earlier, as we said, Jesus had been content to let them remain in their ignorance. There were, after all, the “prescribed limits.” But now it is time for Him to begin to lift the veil. We read, therefore, that “then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures” (24:45). Jesus began then actually to expound those Scriptures to which He had just referred (the law, the prophets, and the psalms). “*Thus* it is written,” Jesus said, “and *thus* it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (24:46, 47). Ah, yes, *all* the Scriptures—law, prophets, psalms—spoke of Christ. “This was all so clear to the mind of Jesus,” writes Lenski, “that He could dip into these writings at a thousand points and show how they spoke of Him.” What

the disciples heard was the gospel of salvation through the blood of the Lamb.

Can you *imagine* that? The *thrill* of it? Luke doesn’t tell us of the reaction of the disciples in the upper room on this occasion, but it must have been much like that of the two travelers to Emmaus when Jesus talked with them earlier that day. They heard the same thing from the lips of the risen Lord. “Beginning at Moses and all the prophets he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (24:27). Reflecting on that instruction after Jesus left them, the two asked each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” (24:32). Again: can you imagine the *thrill* of that? Their hearts “burned”—that is, “with the new hope and joy which the Scriptures which He opened to them and was applying to their heart, kindled in their heart” (Rev. Ophoff).

“Kindled in their heart.” How? John adds another detail to Jesus’ appearance to the eleven on the day of His resurrection. “He breathed on them,” John records, “and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost” (20:22). A symbolic act. The breathing was not necessary for the bestowal of the Spirit. Christ could have accomplished the same thing, says Calvin, “by a secret inspiration.” Jesus chose, rather to make use of this sign in order to demonstrate that the Spirit is His; that He, the Spirit, proceeds from Jesus; and that it is through the work of the Spirit in their hearts, *His* Spirit, that Jesus accomplishes the opening of their understanding.

The power of it was unmistakable. For what had always before seemed so dark to the disciples was suddenly intelligible. They must have sensed immediately that spiritual discernment had been granted to them by Him who not only spoke the word but also “reached into their minds by hidden power” (Calvin).

At long last, light!

But not yet without some lingering shadows.

As is evident from the last of the disciples’ “blunders.” Fifty days later. On the Mount of Olives. “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). For our purposes in this series, very instructive.

More on that, next time ☞

Battle for Sovereign Grace in the Covenant, The Declaration of Principles, by David J. Engelsma. Reformed Free Publishing Association, Jenison, MI. 2013. [Reviewed by Justin Smidstra.]

The *Battle for Sovereign Grace in the Covenant* is a timely publication. The book provides an examination of the controversy over the doctrine of the covenant. This treatment is merited not only by the present need to preserve the history of the schism of 1953, which becomes more distant with each passing generation, but also by the present ecclesiastical landscape, a landscape in which conditional covenant theology is rampant even within the walls of conservative Reformed churches. The *Battle for Sovereign Grace* is therefore both an important historical study and readily applicable to the lives of contemporary Reformed Christians.

The historical coverage of the book extends from the provisional adoption of the Declaration of Principles in 1950, through the tumultuous period of controversy leading up to and following the synod of 1951, and concludes with the schism of 1953 and the subsequent return of the schismatic churches to the CRC.

The commentary on this history is engaging, for the author does not simply recount these events, he analyzes them, explains their meaning for the churches, and provides insight into why they occurred. However, this book, while touching upon much of the history surrounding the schism of 1953, focuses primarily upon the document that precipitated the controversy, the Declaration of Principles. This Declaration, as the author maintains, is a landmark document in the history of Reformed Christianity. This is not because it teaches anything new. Rather, the Declaration articulates that which the PRC have always confessed, namely that the covenant is sovereignly established by God with the head of the covenant Jesus Christ and the elect seed of believers. The covenant is therefore governed by election and is dependent for its fulfillment solely on the gracious work of God. In the

course of the book, the author articulates this covenant doctrine and decisively refutes the disguised Arminianism of the view of the Liberated, which divorces the covenant from election. In reading this book, one will be impressed by how God used this controversy surrounding the Declaration and the subsequent schism to preserve the truth of the gospel of grace, as well as the seminal role that God gave to the PRC in the development of the unconditional covenant.

The author also draws out some important implications of the Declaration for Reformed churches today. First, the doctrine of the unconditional covenant is not a peculiar creation of the PRC alone; rather, it is a doctrine that necessarily arises from a consistently applied Calvinist theology. This is accomplished by proving the complete harmony of the Declaration with the confessions. For the Declaration is simply an expression of the teachings of the creeds. In this way, by illustrating the soundness of the Declaration's creedal argument on behalf of the unconditional covenant, the author demonstrates that all Reformed churches who subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity are bound to confess that the covenant is unconditional. It is a matter of creedal fidelity.

Second is the outstanding application of the Declaration to the current controversy surrounding the Federal Vision, a theology that teaches, on the basis of a conditional covenant, that God gives the covenantal promise to every baptized child and that the fulfillment of that promise depends upon the child's fulfillment of the conditions of the covenant. This latest mutation of "salvation by works" theology that now plagues numerous Reformed churches is essentially the same covenant theology that was unmasked and defeated by the PRC in the 1950s. The Declaration holds the cure, but few have sought to learn from history's light. Indeed, the *Battle for Sovereign Grace* shows that this battle is an ongoing battle between the true gospel and the false gospel, and, as members of the church militant, we are called to fight the good fight on behalf of God's truth. In this regard, this book is a very worthwhile read for all, young and old alike, who cherish the truth of the covenant and who desire to see this heritage preserved for the good of the church and the glory of God. 

Mr. Smidstra is a first-year student in the Protestant Reformed Seminary, Grandville, Michigan.

Congregation Activities

With the Word of God found in Revelation 7:9 in mind, “After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues stood before the throne and before the Lamb...,” we extend our congratulations to First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI, celebrating their anniversary as an organized congregation and holding their first worship service on December 25, 1925.

A Request Night program was held at First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI on November 10. There was a variety of singing and instrumental numbers provided by children, young people, and adults of the congregation. An offering was taken for the upcoming Young People’s Convention in California, and a light lunch was served between the program and the evening service.

Members of our churches around Chicago, IL were invited to attend a Fall Choir Concert on Friday, November 15 at the Crete, IL PRC. The occasion was the celebration of the 450th anniversary of the Heidelberg Catechism. The students from grades K-6 of the PR Christian School in Dyer, IN and also choir members from Cornerstone, Crete, and Peace PRCs presented choral selections and special numbers to commemorate the occasion.

The Covenant Ladies Circle of First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada hosted their church’s an-

nual Car Rally and Soup Supper on Remembrance Day, November 11. The car rally began around 11:30 A.M., with the soup supper following at about 4:00 P.M. The congregation of Immanuel PRC in Lacombe was also invited to join with Edmonton for the day-long event.

Mission Activities

The Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI extended a hearty welcome to Rev. Paul Raj, pastor of the Reformed Christian Church in Vellore, India and a graduate of our ARTS program in Singapore in 2004. Pastor Raj visited West Michigan from November 8-18. During that time he had the opportunity to attend worship services at Georgetown. He was able to visit catechism classes and Bible studies, as well as meet with Georgetown’s Council and their India Committee. In addition, he also gave chapel speeches in our area schools and visited our Seminary. On Sunday, November 10, Pastor Raj gave a slide-show presentation of the founding of the Reformed Church in Vellore, their mission outreach to Hindus, the struggles the Reformed faith faces in India, and the establishment of the Grace Foster Home.

Rev. J. Laning and Rev. C. Griess, on behalf of our denomination’s Foreign Mission Committee, left on November 7 for Myanmar, where they spent a week visiting with contacts and hosting a conference, with a view to fulfilling the mandate that last year’s synod gave to the FMC, in Article 33 of the 2013 Acts. Contacts from six different regions of the country, about 40 men, traveled to

meet with our emissaries and receive instruction. Plans called for the men to return home on November 16.

As most of you are no doubt aware, Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) passed through the Philippines on November 8, leaving in its wake a path of destruction, death, and misery for many. Our missionaries, Rev. D. Kleyn and Rev. R. Smit, report that the saints in Manila were not hit by the center of the storm and are doing well. Some of their contacts in other regions were hit harder with rain, winds, and then subsequent flooding. However, as I write this in mid-November, there appear to be no reports of any contacts being hurt. We are thankful to the Lord for His safekeeping of the saints there. Continue to remember all of God’s children there in your prayers.

Evangelism Activities

Our churches are known for fall lectures, particularly around Reformation Day, and this year was no exception. Some lectures have already been mentioned here. In this issue we include the remainder.

The Evangelism Committee of the Crete, IL PRC sponsored a Reformation Day Lecture on October 31. Mr. Joshua Engelsma, fourth-year student of our Seminary, currently interning at the Peace PRC in Lansing, IL, spoke on “Simon van Velzen: Watchman on the Walls of God’s Zion.”

The Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA hosted a lecture on Reformation Day, October 31. Rev. R. Hanko spoke on “Calvin’s Doctrine of the Church.”

Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada was privileged to sponsor a Reformation Day Lecture on October

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

31. Their pastor, Rev. T. Miersma, spoke on "450 Years of Comfort: The Heidelberg Catechism, a Reformation Day Celebration."

Family and friends of the Lynden, WA PRC were invited to a Reformation lecture on November 1. Rev. R. Kleyn spoke on the theme, "Martin Luther: Father of the Reformation."

The annual Fall Lecture of Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD was held on November 1. Prof. R. Dykstra spoke on the topic, "The Reformation's Zeal for Christian Schools."

The Evangelism Committee of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC sponsored a fall lecture on Friday evening, November 8. Rev. R. Van Overloop spoke on the topic, "Calamities: The Mighty God, Our Father, Has the Answers."

The Consistory of the Wingham, Ontario PRC sponsored a Reforma-

tion Day Lecture on Friday evening, November 8. Their speaker was Mr. Adrian Stoutjesdyk, of the Trinitarian Bible Society. He spoke on the history of Bible translation, making reference to the many who sacrificed their lives to bring Bibles to people in their own languages, including our English.

The Evangelism Committee of the Cornerstone PRC in Dyer, IN invited friends and family to a Fall Conference on Saturday, November 16. This conference was entitled, "Are You Ready? Preparing Ourselves for Personal Witnessing." The conference featured Rev. W. Bruinsma, Rev. Madany, and Mr. Jai Mahtani. These men led workshops on practical methods, necessary content, and overcoming hindrances in our witnessing to others.

Sister-Church Activities

This year the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore sponsored a Reformation Day Conference on October 25-26 at the Salvation Army Building in central Singapore. The theme was, "The Kingdom's Inheritance Rediscovered." Rev. A. Lanning spoke three times, each with a question and answer period following.

Minister Activities

Since our last "News," Revs. W. Langerak and G. Eriks declined the calls they received to serve as pastors of the Doon, IA PRC and the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI, respectively.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wedding Anniversary

■ In this season of thanksgiving, we give thanks to our heavenly Father that we were privileged to celebrate on August 12, 2013, the 65th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

REV. and MRS. PETER BREEN.

We thank God for giving us parents who are godly examples of love and patience and who daily continue to pray for us.

"My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck" (Proverbs 1:8, 9).

- * Rev. David Breen (in glory) and Linda
 - * Rev. Stephen and Linda Breen
 - * Dr. James and Mary Veldkamp
 - * Robert and Ruth Stacey
 - * James and Elisabeth Koerner
- 23 grandchildren
10 great grandchildren

Classis East

■ Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, January 8, 2013, at the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, MI.

Jon J. Huisken
Stated Clerk

Jenison, Michigan