

The Standard Bearer

A Reformed Semi-Monthly Magazine • October 1, 2013

CONTENTS

<i>Meditation</i>	God's People Abiding Forever REV. RODNEY MIERSMA	2
<i>Editorial</i>	Denominational Unity: In Public Worship (2) PROF. BARRETT GRITTERS	4
<i>Reformed Worldview</i>	The Reformed Worldview: Truth and Its Consequences (4) REV. STEVEN KEY	7
<i>All Around Us</i>	The PCA's Leithart Decision (2) REV. NATHAN LANGERAK	10
<i>Believing and Confessing</i>	The Holy Spirit, Our Comforter REV. RODNEY KLEYN	14
<i>Go Ye Into All the World</i>	He Must Increase, But I Must Decrease (2) REV. RICHARD SMIT	16
<i>Bring the Books...</i>	Book Review PROF. DAVID ENGELSMA	18
<i>News From Our Churches</i>	Activities MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER	22

God's People Abiding Forever

For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

Malachi 3:6

God's abiding covenant faithfulness is set forth in our text. How appropriate to remember this when we consider the fact that with this issue of the *Standard Bearer* we begin our 90th year of publication. This can only be attributed to our Lord, who is unchanging in His faithfulness to His people.

We know that time and changes are ever busy. All things have a beginning and an ending. Things grow and develop, then fade and decay as the flower in the field. The sun rises and sets; the seasons change from spring to summer to autumn to winter.

That is true also of man. One begins as a babe, matures to adulthood, then on to old age and finally death. This also happens in our spiritual life. What we love today we despise tomorrow. There is nothing abiding and stable in the creature. There is nothing among created things that man can cling to for refuge. Irresistibly he is carried on in time's streams until it bears him into

eternity's ocean. We are reminded of this when we go from volume 89 to volume 90.

The question is: Is there nothing that is abiding forever. The answer is: "I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

Indeed, we have an unchangeable God. We see that in His name. He is Jehovah, as indicated by the name LORD in all capital letters as we have it in the King James Version of our Bible. It means "I AM THAT I AM," as seen in Exodus 3:14. It reveals the essence of God. It implies, I am now, I am yesterday, I am from the extreme past to eternity, I am forever, therefore the unchangeable. His being is not subject to the changes of our nature, nor to the changes of time or that which is in time. There never was a moment when He was not. He is not a child of time. He never was young and never will grow old. There is no increase or decrease in His power or in any of His attributes. His heart is an ever-flowing and never-exhausted fountain of love. He is the one continuously living being, never beginning, always being, never ending, always abiding. He is the everlasting God. Jehovah is His name.

As He is in Himself, so He is toward His people. He has an unchangeable love to His elect people. He loved

Rev. Miersma is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

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.

Reprint Policy

Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgment is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

Editorial Policy

Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Reader Asks department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be signed. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

Editorial Office

Prof. Russell J. Dykstra
4949 Ivanrest Ave. SW
Wyoming, MI 49418
dykstra@prca.org

Business Office

Standard Bearer
Mr. Timothy Pipe
1894 Georgetown Center Dr.
Jenison, MI 49428-7137
PH: 616-457-5970
tim@rfpa.org

Church News Editor

Mr. Ben Wigger
6597 40th Ave
Hudsonville, MI 49426
benjwig@juno.com

United Kingdom Office

c/o Mrs. Alison Graham
27 Woodside Road
Ballymena, BT42 4HX
Northern Ireland
alisongraham2006@
hotmail.co.uk

Rep. of Ireland Office

c/o Rev. Martyn McGeown
Apartment 10, Block D
Ballycummin Village
Limerick, Ireland

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.

Website for RFPA: www.rfpa.org
Website for PRC: www.prca.org

them from eternity, even before the foundations of the earth were laid. He is the one sure foundation upon which the children of Jacob may build. He is the one rock to which they may cling and upon which they may dwell as their everlasting abode. Jehovah is His *covenant name*, which reveals a covenant relation. He is their everlasting Friend and Savior, and they are His friends and servants as beloved children and heirs. He reveals to His children that His love is not borne away by the streams of time, but is unchangeable and everlasting as He is Himself.

The origin of this love is not in the children of Jacob, nor from time's fountain, nor from anything that belongs to us poor creatures, but from the deep and unfathomable fountain of eternity, God Himself. We see it when He sends His Son to be born into this world and take on flesh. The greatest manifestation of this love we see when Christ suffers and dies on the cross, only to be raised again on the third day, thus lifting His children into everlasting exaltation. On and on flows His love until His purpose is accomplished in Christ and all His children have arrived in everlasting glory.

Therefore His people are an ever-abiding people. We see this first in the old dispensation. The unchangeableness of Jehovah is the key to the solution of an otherwise insoluble problem. The problem is that the children of Jacob are not consumed. All things fade and die and lose their beauty. All that is called creature passes away and is consumed. But whatever else changes, decays, and disappears, the children of Jacob abide forever.

The marvel is that there are so many reasons why they should be immediately consumed. They were not swallowed up in the oppression of a strange land under hard labor and when their children were choked to death as soon as they saw light. They passed through the Red Sea, in which their enemies perished. They went into the wilderness with no food and water and were surrounded by enemies that sought their destruction. They were not consumed by the wrath of God when they turned away from Him and sought other gods. Always there remained a remnant according to the election of grace, no matter how fiercely the fires of God's wrath burned.

This is also true in the new dispensation. The

church is not consumed by attacks from without. She is the object of envy and hatred. Scaffolds were erected to kill her children, prisons were built to swallow them up, and fires were kindled to burn them to death. The world rages in fury to destroy the church, the children of Jacob, but they are never consumed.

Nor is she consumed from within. How often does she not apostatize from the truth that is revealed in the Scriptures? How often does she not assume the aspect of Babylon? How often does she not follow after other gods of this world? How often does not the church provoke Jehovah to anger until the true people of God complain that the church is hopelessly lost? No matter how often the church of our Lord Jesus Christ passes through the fire and water, the elect according to the election of grace always remain and are never destroyed.

This is true not only for the church as a whole but for us individually as well. We look at ourselves and we see sins and transgressions, and we behold the foul fountain of our heart and mind. We see our repeated apostasy from Jehovah and our iniquities without number, which daily witness against us. Then we place this alongside of the light of God's holiness and righteousness and remember that our God is a consuming fire. Then it is a mystery that we were not long ago consumed by the fire of God's wrath. How can we possibly understand this mystery of mysteries?


The answer is that we have a sure foundation, which is the cross of Jesus Christ our Lord. At the foot of the cross we must contemplate God's everlasting love, which is unchangeable. We must remember that the love that erected that cross for His only begotten Son flows from an everlasting and unchangeable God. Then we are able to understand, in the light of Scripture, why we have not been swept away and utterly consumed. It is because we have to do with the unchangeable love of God, with a faithfulness that never departs from His promise, with an immutable purpose to bless us that will not be turned aside.

We must look at the cross, and over that cross to that love. We must look forward and notice that He who bore all our sins on the accursed tree was not consumed, but was revealed in all His power and glory in the resurrection. From that cross and resurrection we

look forward, though weak and sinful we be, yet trusting in that unchanging love, and believing that we will never be consumed.

We must cling to the Rock amid the floods of sin that may pass over our souls, in the midst of hateful enemies that may wish for and plot our destruction, and threatened by the wiles of a roaring devil. Clinging to the Rock, we believe that we shall never be consumed, and know that we shall presently pass into the darkness of death and the grave. We still cling to Him who is the immutable One, and we believe that when the earthly house of

this tabernacle shall be dissolved, we have a house with God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Finally, when the end of all things is come, when the world shall pass away and all the elements shall melt in a fervent heat, then we shall be confident that we shall not be consumed, for He is our Rock and our Security forever. Our trust is in Jehovah, the immutable Jehovah. With this truth we face the coming of the future, in which trust we begin this 90th volume. For us there is no greater comfort, joy, and strength possible. 

EDITORIAL

PROF. BARRETT GRITTERS

Denominational Unity: In Public Worship (2)

The Protestant Reformed Churches are united. In confession (doctrine). In discipline (church government). And, for the most part, we are united in worship (liturgy). It is the latter, unity in worship, that is the focus of our attention here. There is no question regarding how tight our unity is in doctrine—the confessions we hold spell that out very precisely. Nor is there question about our unity in church government—every PRC holds the Church Order as regulative and binding for her life. But how united are we in the matter of worship? We return to that question in this editorial.

Even in regard to public worship, the PRC are mostly united, even if not completely. But my hope—I believe it is also Christ's calling for us—is that we grow in our understanding of that aspect

of denominational unity so that we fully appreciate the need for it.

Doctrine, church government, and worship (liturgy)...all these, we said last time, are matters of “the churches in common.” That expression, “matters of the churches in common,” is taken from Article 30 of our Church Order and refers to business that belongs to synod, our denomination's broadest assembly. Synod decides on *doctrinal* (confessional) matters. Synod determines any changes to the Church Order. And synod decides matters of *worship* for all the churches. Determinations regarding worship are not a matter of the local consistory. We are not Congregationalists—each church doing her own thing—in worship, any more than in doctrine or church government.

The last editorial also emphasized the importance of maintaining a liberty in regard to worship *details*. In minor matters, individual consistories have the right to

determine what is most edifying for their congregation. The Church Order gives one example of that liberty when it allows variations in the manner of celebrating the Lord's Supper, as long as the main elements of the supper are preserved (see Art. 62). This liberty requires that the churches must press for liturgical *unity* (concord in fundamental matters) but not liturgical *uniformity* (identity in every detail). For example, our churches have always recognized the right of consistories to use different closing benedictions (“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God...” from II Cor. 13, or “the Lord bless thee and keep thee...” from Numbers 6), and to choose from a variety of opening and closing doxologies. Churches have been free to recite together, or hear the minister speak, the Apostles' Creed; to sing a Psalm during the offering rather than hear the organ play; to have baptism before or after the sermon;

Previous article in this series: September 15, 2013, p. 484.

and more. We must be united in the fundamental matters, but have liberty to differ in minor matters.

But here we deal with our question: which *are* the minor matters, and which are major? It must be clear, the major items include more than the *principles* of worship; for other Reformed churches share our principles, but differ significantly in practice. The major items also include more than what Dordt's Church Order prescribes; for Dordt does not designate which Psalm-book to use for singing, and we consider choosing a particular Psalm-book to be significant. What then is to be considered major (to be changed only by synodical action) and what is minor (which local consistories may determine)?

Although the churches have not answered that question, my observations (during a generation of preaching) of an increase in liturgical differences among us compel me to urge the churches: as you exercise your liberty, keep in mind the treasure of denominational unity—also in worship.



Reformed history reminds us of the importance of liturgical unity.

History. Precedents. Hold fast the traditions!

Our Dutch forefathers were convinced of the need to maintain unity in worship—in the *order* of worship. The 1574 Synod of Dordt declared: “From now on, the service...shall be opened with a standing formula, i.e., Our help stands in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.” Two things stand out in this syn-

odical decree. First, interestingly, although of less importance in these editorials, the Reformed fathers wanted worship to start with this *votum*, not with the salutation with which most PRCs begin. Second, now to the point of the editorials, it was not the local congregation but the *synod* who decided how the churches were to worship, even in this “detail” of whether “Beloved...” (the salutation) or “Our help...” (the *votum*) were the first words in the order of worship. (See sidebar for definitions of these terms.)

The early consensus of Reformation churches was that the order of worship was the business of the denomination, not the local consistory.

The history of our Presbyterian brothers is similar. When, shortly after our 1618/1619 Synod of Dordt, these brothers in the United Kingdom adopted their standards, called the “Westminster Standards,” included in these standards were not only their creeds and their “form of Church Government,” but also their “Directory for the Public Worship of God,” in which was prescribed a particular order of worship for all the churches.

It may be repeated: consensus in Reformation churches was that denominational unity included the order of worship.

When the early Dutch Reformed settled in America and established their denomination, which became the Reformed Church in America, they soon adopted a “Constitution” that included the same three elements that the Presbyterians in the UK did: their doctrinal standards,

Definitions:

Liturgy—I use the word *liturgy* in the basic sense of “worship.” In these editorials, it refers to worship itself, to the order of worship, even to the forms used for baptism and the Lord’s Supper. (I make this clear because there are different understandings of the term. Some hear the word *liturgy* and think of a very *formal and elaborate* worship; others perhaps of a worship service in which everything that is spoken, even the prayers, is predetermined; others think only of the liturgical forms themselves.)
Votum—means “vow” and refers to the confession of the *people*, “Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”

Salutation— means “greeting” or “address” and refers to God’s word to His people, “Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ.” Just that. The salutation is often wrongly mingled in our minds with the *votum*, so that we suppose “Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ, Our help is in the name of the Lord....” is one and the same. It is important to see the *votum* (our confession) as distinct from the salutation (God’s address).
Benediction—means “blessing” and refers to God’s word to His people, “Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you....” PRC worship services have benedictions at the beginning and end of each service.

their form of church government, and their liturgy. Notable here is that, even though this liturgy did not prescribe the particular order of worship, liturgy was one of the three elements constituting denominational unity; the particular order of worship among the congregations was assumed by all.

When the Christian Reformed Church was formed in 1857, all the churches worshiped in the same manner. Their worship order was what they had practiced in the Netherlands. And for sixty years there was unity, if not uniformity.

However, in 1916 (and 1916 is PRC history), the CRC's Classis Illinois observed that local congregations were adopting a variety of changes in worship, and petitioned synod to "introduce a uniform order of services." Synod 1916 appointed a committee called "Committee to Promote Unity in our Worship-services." This aptly-named committee, therefore, did not find its beginnings in a desire to create some innovative liturgy, but in changes that were being made in the churches, and synod believed that "it was a *matter of principle* that the order of worship should not be left to the discretion of the consistories" and that the "churches were to express their unity through a common order of worship..." Classis Illinois' overture initiated a sixteen-year study of the order of worship in the denomination.

This long story (to oversimplify it) concludes with our fathers' inability to declare on a uniform order of worship! Strikingly, this inability came *not* because synod concluded that every congregation should be

free to settle on their own order, but from an inability to decide *which* order was the best order. They could not see eye to eye on *which* order of worship was proper. But our fathers clearly believed that the order of worship was a significant element of denominational unity.

The sixteen-year struggle involved more than one disagreement. The major dispute related to whether the morning service would include a general, congregational confession of sin, followed by the minister's declaration of forgiveness—a declaration called an "absolution." Also, they could not come to consensus whether the summary of the law ought to precede or follow the ten commandments. The synodical row included whether there ought to be an offertory prayer, and whether a form-prayer rather than spontaneous prayer would be used after the confession of sin.

But the churches did agree: "denominational unity is expressed by unity of worship as well as by unity of doctrine and of discipline," and "the uniformity sanctioned by custom and tradition is gradually being broken." Repeatedly, especially in the early years of the study, synod conveyed to the churches sentiments like: "The regulation of public worship should not be left to the individual churches," and "Synod urges our Consistories not to make any changes in their public worship other than those included in the order adopted by Synod," and "By restricting changes to those approved by Synod, the calamity of every congregation determining its own mode of worship will be

averted, and our denominational unity in matters of worship will not be seriously impaired."

In the end (1932), because so many local consistories had already made changes, the CRC was unable to settle on a denominational liturgy, and the churches in effect all went their own way. It's probably only a little exaggeration to say that they became "liturgical Congregationalists."



The PRC are not at this point. The sky is not falling over our denomination. Although some might suppose it is falling when even the most minor changes are made, there is significant and essential unity in the denomination in liturgy. We are agreed on the centrality of preaching, the subordination of the sacraments to the Word, the need to sing Psalms. We agree that worship is to be reverent, congregational, spiritual, simple, and that no choirs or special numbers are a part of it.

But that's why this is a good time—really the best time—to remind us to value liturgical unity as we value confessional unity!

Differences exist from church to church, but we ought to be sober in our judgment of them. They do not fracture our unity, and they may not. Unity is precious!



The differences perhaps fall into three categories:

First, there are differences in the *manner* in which elements are practiced: is the Apostles' Creed recited by the congregation or read

by the minister? Does the minister pronounce the *votum* (“our help”) or does the congregation speak it in unison? Do we stand or sit to sing?

Second, there are a few differences in *order*. Examples of this include whether worship begins with the *votum* or the salutation; whether the Scripture reading follows the first Psalm or immediately precedes the sermon; and whether the offering is taken after the congregational prayer or after the sermon.

Third, there are additions or omissions of *elements* themselves. I mention the addition of reading one of our confessions article by article in connection with the church’s confession of faith; the addition of a “prayer before the sermon”; or the inclusion of the “call to worship” and the “silent prayer” as part of the worship service itself. Or, the omission of the opening doxology or the omission of the Apostles’ Creed or the reading of the law.

I must make clear here, again,

that my (and your) personal preference about any of these differences is not now the issue, even though we may all have our judgments. The issue regards whether the local church or the denomination decides on the changes.

As these differences increase (if they increase), what happens to unity? As matters stand today, what is to stop other changes? Is it time for a denominationally-adopted order of worship? Is it time for the churches in common to define what is minor and what major, where there is liberty and what may not be changed independently of the others?




We may be very thankful that consistories give conscious and serious consideration to the matter of public worship. We must pray, sing, and engage in all of our worship “with understanding,” as the apostle reminds the churches in I Corinthians 14—not an insignificant reminder in light of the Old Testa-

ment’s dire warning about the sin of drawing nigh to God with the lips (worshiping outwardly) but being distant from God in the heart! Pastors do well to teach the principles of public worship and instruct both in sermons and catechism as to the reasons for the elements of our worship and their order. Why is the law read early in the morning service? Why do the deacons receive the offerings when they do? Why are the offerings even a part of worship? What is the purpose of an opening doxology and then another doxological Psalm? If we are not instructed in these things, we risk formalism in worship.

At the same time, when consistories consider changes in worship practices, let them do so remembering our unity, with an eye—a jealous eye—on “the churches in common.” Let us not come to the point where it is impossible for us to return to a common manner of worship.

Unity in worship.

Precious unity! 

REFORMED WORLDVIEW

REV. STEVEN KEY

The Reformed Worldview: Truth and Its Consequences (4)

The History of the Concept *Worldview*

The worldview that had been embraced by the Old Testament saints, and that was unfolded in God’s revela-

tion as recorded for us in the Old Testament Scriptures, was brought into a clearer light with the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in the fullness of time.

The New Testament clearly reveals the church as the continuation and fulfillment of Old Testament Israel, the one body of Jesus Christ, the true seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16, 29). For that reason the worldview we derive

Rev. Key is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Loveland, Colorado.

Previous article in this series: August 2013, p. 446.

from the New Testament is not new. Rather, the glorious light of the gospel more clearly reveals the foundational principles already established in the Old Testament.

The gospel comes into focus in the incarnate Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is especially the Epistle to the Hebrews that extols the riches of Christ's coming and His work as the fulfillment of all the types and shadows of the Old Testament. By accomplishing salvation for those given Him by the Father (John 10:14-16, 26-29; Eph. 1:3-7) through the one sacrifice of His own body, He prepared for us "a new and living way" (Heb. 10:20).

This way is *new* because it ushers us into the covenant fellowship of God Himself in a way that was closed to God's people in the Old Testament. Throughout the Old Testament the testimony to God's people was that the way into the holiest place was closed. The veil stood between them and the glory of God's fellowship in the holy of holies of the temple. But at the moment salvation was accomplished by the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the veil was torn from top to bottom to symbolize that the way into God's covenant fellowship is now open for all who are in Christ Jesus.¹

This is also the *living* way, as contrasted to the way of the law in the Old Testament, which law was "the ministration of death" or "the ministration of condemnation" (II Cor. 3:7, 9). For that law established by God through Moses could only serve to show that the way of holiness required by God, the only way into fellowship with God, was closed to our works. The law only exposed our guilt. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20).

During the Old Testament, when—according to Galatians 3:24—the law served as the schoolmaster to lead God's people to Christ, that law spelled out every detail of life, condemning everyone who failed to perform every single work of the law. If you failed in one thing, you stood condemned. And therefore everyone stood condemned! In that way the law pointed them to their need for Christ, their Messiah, who alone could perform

the whole law in perfect obedience to God, and doing so on their behalf would free them from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them (Gal. 3:13).

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe" (Rom. 3:21-22a). The law, therefore, "was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Gal. 3:24-25). The law pointed to the coming Messiah as the realization of God's covenant, the One who alone could give life to us by reconciling us unto God and establishing us as new creatures, adopted children of our heavenly Father. In that fellowship with God is life. In that fellowship with God, as partakers of His covenant life, there is also the understanding of what it is to live in the full assurance of faith.

But that also points to the distinct difference from the Old Testament, which Christ ushered in by His fulfillment of the Old Testament law and the prophets. Colossians 3:14 explains what was involved in that work of Christ by which we have been forgiven and given life in God's covenant fellowship.

He has forgiven us, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."

Those ordinances, mind you, were against us! Ordinances, as such, always are. They stand as a reminder of our failure by nature to walk in obedience to God. But from that point of view, ordinances also condemn us.

You must understand that I speak of those ordinances as understood properly in the light of Scripture. If you look at the law superficially, as did the Pharisees for example; if you do not penetrate to the spiritual essence of the law, which is our calling to love God, then you might never see any condemnation in the law. You might even be able to add ordinance upon ordinance and think you are a fine Christian because you obey them all. Then you deceive yourself, and the truth is not in you.

Every one of those ordinances of the Old Testament law, all being bathed in blood as it were, pointed to the fact that every one of us deserved to die because of our failure to obey "all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. 3:10). But Christ has now blot-

¹ The word *new* in Hebrews 10:20 is from a Greek word, *pros-phatos*, used only once in the Bible, and alludes to Christ's sacrifice as ushering in this way. For the word speaks of something *freshly killed*.

ted out the handwriting of those ordinances. He took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross.

Which means that you and I have been acquitted of our guilt and set free—free to serve the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and mind, in love—love that, as Colossians 3:14 states it, is the bond of perfectness. And to establish that truth, at the moment Christ accomplished that blotting out of those ordinances, the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom, in order that all for whom Christ died might understand that their sins were forgiven and that they were set free from all the burden and yoke of the law.

No longer in bondage, we have been given the joy of Christ's life, the freedom of living in loving fellowship with God, in His covenant! What astounding treasures are ours in Christ Jesus!

That brings to the fore a very important truth when it comes to the Reformed worldview in light of New Testament teaching. Not only is the Christian life to be one of holiness, as was emphasized in the Old Testament. But the Christian life is to be a matter of living out of biblical principles, guided by loving thankfulness for the life that God has given us in His own fellowship and divine family.

The Christian life, therefore, that life that has its focus on Christ, is a life of perfect balance, avoiding the errors that are as prevalent in our day as they were in the lifetime of the apostles.

The apostle Paul in particular had often to address in his epistles the errors that were devastating to a biblical worldview.

Those errors by which our adversary the devil would constantly attempt to knock us off the balance beam of biblical Christianity or the Reformed faith are legalism on the one hand and on the other hand—what is far more prevalent in the evangelical church world today—a form of antinomianism, with its total disregard of God's precepts and the antithesis, and with its failure to live in true thankfulness to God and to integrate biblical truth into godly living.

It is interesting, however, that in Paul's experience in the early New Testament church it was not antinomianism that brought the greatest threat to the church, but rather legalism. That legalism came to expression by either an improper application of Old Testament law or the

intrusion of new laws and ordinances that had no biblical foundation.

While there were those antinomians who lived out in its most vile form the attitude, "Let us sin that grace may abound," Paul addressed that error in Romans 6:2 when he responded, "God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" The one who is truly a partaker of Christ cannot live in sin with the attitude, "It doesn't really matter; God will save me anyway." That's impossible! The man who doesn't care how he lives is a man who has not known Christ! The man who lives in blatant disregard of God's Word is one who expresses his hatred of God!


But what we find in Paul's epistles is the need to confront the failure to live with a Christ-centered focus, which failure comes to expression in legalism. That error is addressed especially in the epistles to the churches in Galatia and in Colosse.

Legalism would rob us of the riches of Christ's work and subject us once again not merely to the Old Testament law, but to human additions to that law as well.

Among the Colossians, that legalism took the specific form of a compulsory return to the dietary laws of the Old Testament, as well as observance of certain feast days or other special days even added to those days observed in the Old Testament. Those Old Testament laws had served a good purpose in their time—even though that purpose was often subverted and corrupted by the unbelieving in Israel.

But again, those laws were just a shadow. Christ has come as the fulfillment. And because He must have the preeminence, He has abolished those ordinances that were against us.

Yet there were those in Colosse, as there are those in the church today, who would subject us to the shadows again either by restoring those Old Testament ordinances or by establishing new ordinances without any divine basis or establishment. They would subject Christ's bride to ordinances after the commandments and doctrines of men, thus bringing that glorious bride into slavery.

That legalism would rob us of the treasures of Christ by making our religion one of externals and placing the focus on what we do rather than on who we are—children of the kingdom of our Father. 

The PCA's Leithart Decision (2)

The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), host of the parasitic conditional covenant heresy known as Federal Vision (FV), recently exonerated leading FV heretic Peter Leithart.¹ Despite all the avowals to the contrary by the PCA's Standing Judicial Committee (SJC), their decision sanctioned his heretical theology as inside the bounds of the Westminster Standards and allowed him to teach that heretical theology as within the bounds of the creeds, a fact that Peter Leithart cares little about since he loathes the creeds.

Previously I noted some important features of his trial and that his exoneration is both unsurprising and unremarkable. The FV captured the city of the PCA with hardly a fight. That the FV captured the PCA is also the judgment of Lane Kiester, PCA minister, commentator, and witness against Peter Leithart:

The reason I say that the FV has won the PCA is that the PCA is now a FV-friendly denomination.... Of course, there are Presbyteries [similar to a Reformed classis] that would never allow in a FV man. But the FV doesn't need those Presbyteries. They have Pacific Northwest [Leithart's], Missouri [home of FV teacher Jeffrey Meyers], Siouxlans [where they silenced opposition to the FV], and Metro New York Presbyteries [home of Tim Keller]. That is enough space for anyone.... Those Presbyteries are absolutely safe for FV men."²

¹ This is the second article in a series reviewing the case. The first can be found in the *Standard Bearer* 89, no. 17 (June, 2013):392–96. The first article treats the basics of the case, the terminology of PCA church government that may be unfamiliar to some readers, and a general evaluation of the decision.

² <http://greenbaggins.wordpress.com/2013/08/12/how-the-fv-won-the-pca/>.

Rev. Langerak is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Crete, Illinois.

Previous article in this series: June 2013, p. 392.

Keister also gives an astute analysis of the FV's tactics in their bloodless coup that highlights both their shrewdness and their unscrupulousness.

Another critic of the FV takeover in the PCA lays his finger on a policy to make the PCA a "big tent" denomination, one that "includes the FV," the leading exponent of which is the powerful, but protean, Tim Keller.³

The deep support for Leithart's exoneration in the PCA was evident in the treatment of overtures concerning his case at this year's PCA General Assembly (GA).

There were five overtures dealing with trials of Federal Visionists [at the GA].... The Overtures Committee recommended that the moderator rule both Overture 19 and Overture 23 out of order because Standing Judicial Commission rulings are final.... Overtures 20, 21, and 22 were referred to the Standing Judicial Commission. These all requested that the General Assembly assume original jurisdiction over TE Peter Leithart.⁴

An observer in the PCA suggested that any positive ruling from the SJC on these overtures would be "a miracle."⁵

All of this is very interesting and instructive, but it is neither the heart of the matter in Peter Leithart's trial nor its most remarkable feature. What is remarkable is the candor of the defendant and his defenders—courts and prominent theologians alike—in stating their conviction of what lies at the heart of this controversy and the failure of the prosecution to deal with it.

Summarizing the words of the defense: it is about the covenant.

Leithart's covenant view comes out clearly and unmistakably for all to read in the entirety of the 722 pages of

³ <http://twoedgedsword.blogspot.in/2013/08/who-really-won-pca.html>.

⁴ <http://theaquilareport.com/actions-of-the-41st-general-assembly-of-the-pca/>.

⁵ <http://greenbaggins.wordpress.com/2013/08/12/how-the-fv-won-the-pca/>.

the record of the case.⁶ According to his own statements, his quotations of other authors for support, and the statements of the defense on his behalf, he teaches a covenant in which the “reprobate” have “union with Christ” and are “temporary members of the covenant.” In answer to the question, “do you believe that some reprobate persons can in some respects be united to Christ?” he responded, “I do.” And again, “do you believe that reprobate persons united to Christ receive and then lose saving graces?” “Yeah.” It is a covenant in which “everyone baptized is brought into the intimate circle of God’s favor.” It is a covenant in which we find the “apex of non-saving grace” (ROC 37–8, 486–87).⁷

One of the “key issues” in the covenant is whether faith is a “condition.” The covenant “hinges” on faith, which is the “personal laying hold of the benefits and the grace that’s an offer in the covenant.” In the covenant not election, the death of Christ, or the work of the Holy Spirit guarantee salvation, but “living out one’s baptism faithful to the Lord” guarantees salvation (ROC 206, 23, 28, 77). The apostasy of covenant members and their falling away from grace are virtually the chief points of his theology; and he says about apostates, with a sham humility cloaking his Pharisaical pride, that he is “at a loss” to describe the difference between “me and them” (ROC 659).

In short, his covenant is conditional and as such denies all the doctrines of grace.

I am not interested now in describing the particulars of Leithart’s man-glorifying and grace-denying covenant view, but to assert that this wicked covenant view is at the heart of the FV controversy out of which all the other issues arise.

At the trial Peter Leithart stated the centrality of this issue: “At its heart the FV is about ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church.” This seems to contradict the contention that the covenant is the heart of the issue. But it does not when one realizes that Leithart teaches that baptism joins every baptized child to the visible church and that

“without qualification or hedging, the church is the body of Christ” (ROC 280). The visible church is the body of Christ, so that baptism unites every baptized child to Christ. Leithart says, “Union with Christ is the rubric under which Reformed theology has taught the blessings of the covenant of grace come to us” (ROC 210).

The friendly courts also state that the covenant is the central issue. The court of Pacific Northwest Presbytery (PNP) defended its exoneration of Leithart on the grounds that he speaks “covenantally” and not “decretally,” as the creeds do. The PNP spoke of the Westminster Standards’ “largely decretal perspective on our salvation,” while commending Leithart’s focusing on the “relational” and “covenantal” and his approaching theological questions from a “covenantal framework” (ROC 41).

Peter Leithart and his defense were also clear on the relationship of his conditional covenant view of salvation to the decretal—biblical—doctrine of salvation in the creeds. One of the witnesses for Peter Leithart, at last seemingly tiring of the steadfast refusal of his critics to get it, said it best, there is between these two systems a “clash of paradigms” (ROC 499).

This witness for Peter Leithart spoke truth. Leithart’s covenant theology is as at enmity with the creeds—and the scriptural truth they teach—as Cain is with Abel, Esau with Jacob, Egypt with Israel, Babylon with Judah, Satan with Christ. That conditional covenant theology will not be satisfied either until it has driven the truth to exile or death.

The issue in the FV controversy is about the covenant and the relationship between the doctrines of sovereign, particular grace taught in the Reformed and Presbyterian creeds and the doctrine of the covenant. The two paradigms that are clashing in the controversy are the creedal insistence that the Bible teaches salvation rooted in God’s decree, and the conditional covenant doctrine’s assertion that salvation is controlled by the faith and faithfulness of the baptized. The controversy is between the creed’s insistence upon God’s grace and blessing for the elect only, and the conditional covenant doctrine’s insistence that elect and reprobate are members of the covenant and receive grace and blessing. The battle is another in the same war that was punctuated by previous conflicts between Augustine and Pelagius, Luther and Erasmus, Calvin and Pighius, Dordt and Arminius—a war between

⁶ The record of the case is the collection of all the documents related to his trial, including a full transcript of the trial itself. All quotes cited as ROC are from this document. The document is available at <http://pnwp.org/index.php/notices/leithart-trial>.

⁷ The last quote is from John Murray’s, *Free Offer of the Gospel*, used to defend Leithart’s teaching of general, non-saving grace in the covenant. The two errors are of a piece as the PRC has always maintained.

sovereign grace and general grace, salvation by God or man.

Recognizing this, the question is whether the doctrine of the covenant is in fact a different paradigm that clashes with the decrees, so that to teach covenantally one must contradict the decretal teaching of the creeds; to speak covenantally one must speak a different language than the creeds; to exegete the Scriptures covenantally one must have a different exegesis than the decretal; and to believe the covenant one must believe, not in sovereign, electing, irresistible, unchangeable grace, but in a non-saving, infelicitous, losable grace?

Or does the doctrine of the creeds that salvation is rooted in God's eternal decree consistently applied demand and imply the teaching of an unconditional covenant of grace, so that, even if they never so much as mentioned the word *covenant*, by teaching salvation rooted in election the creeds teach an unconditional covenant?

This is the issue as stated not by those who oppose the FV, but by the heretics and their defenders. On their own testimony, if a man or a church adopts the conditional covenant view, exonerates this view, or tolerates this view, that man or church has adopted, exonerated, or tolerates a paradigm that clashes with the creeds and their teaching of sovereign grace. By implication, too, if one teaches an unconditional covenant of sovereign grace, he alone teaches in harmony with the decretal teaching of the creeds.

It is also noteworthy that Dr. Horton, minister in the URC, professor at Westminster West, and one prosecution witness that the judges and the defense did not ridicule, gave away the whole controversy by failing to distinguish between what he holds as the Reformed view of the covenant and Peter Leithart's view. Concerning membership in the covenant, he agrees that elect and reprobate are members. On what Leithart calls the "key issue" of whether or not faith is a condition, Horton is unequivocal, "Of course we believe it is a condition" (ROC 412). On the crucial question of apostasy, Horton says, "Leithart is... right" (ROC 385). Horton concedes to the FV that in Hebrews 6:4–6 those once enlightened, tasters of the heavenly gift, and partakers of the Holy Ghost were members of the covenant who received covenant grace and the blessings of the covenant, but finally fell

away from grace, the covenant, and salvation.⁸ Horton also will not describe Leithart's doctrine of general, losable grace in the covenant as "Arminian," but tepidly speaks of it as "Lutheran."

With such prosecution witnesses the FV is safe not only in the PCA, but also in Horton's own URC. That denomination, too, should take notice of the evaluations emanating from the PCA about how the FV captured the PCA without a fight.⁹ From its beginnings, the URC has been enamored of a "big tent" and agrees with, or tolerates in the name of the big tent, the basic points of the theology of the Federal Vision: the common grace of God to all men, the promise of God to all the baptized children, the impotence of the promise to save many of those to whom God gives it in the covenant, and salvation in the covenant dependent not upon the particular grace of God, but on the condition of faith, which many vainly try to salvage with an appeal to an impotent grace. Many in the URC, too, have consoled themselves that the URC dealt with the FV by means of a study report.

The FV is the new Arminianism of the day. It is a wholesale assault on the truth of sovereign grace applied specifically to the doctrine of the covenant. It is about whether the covenant is a covenant of the sovereign, particular grace of the creeds or the general, resistible, non-saving grace of conditions.

After over thirty years of the FV controversy, beginning with the scandalous removal of Norman Shepherd from Westminster Seminary, after numerous writings and speeches in which FV men state what is at the heart of their theology, and after several trials of FV men, this can no longer be denied or ignored with any credibility.

For those Reformed believers who face this issue in their churches, they must hear the cry of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) that FV is a covenant issue. Hearing that, they must evaluate whether or not their own doctrine of the covenant is a paradigm that clashes with the creeds, or whether it is the covenant doctrine of

⁸ A fuller explanation of Horton's views on covenant apostasy can be found at <http://www.canonwired.com/resources/horton-wilson-discuss-the-federal-vision/>, which is a friendly chat between Horton and Federal Vision heretic Douglas Wilson.

⁹ For the benefit of any who care, they can be found at <http://greenbaggins.wordpress.com/2013/08/12/how-the-fv-won-the-pca/> and at <http://twoedgedsword.blogspot.in/2013/08/who-really-won-pca.html>.

the creeds and the covenant doctrine demanded by the “decretal” theology of the creeds.

To that end I recommend the study of the (Reformed) creedal doctrine of the covenant contained briefly in the Declaration of Principles.¹⁰ The Declaration of Principles came to the heart of the contemporary issue of the FV over sixty years ago.¹¹ The contention of the Declaration and of the PRC officially by means of it is that the three forms of unity teach a certain covenant doctrine and exclude another. The creeds teach a covenant doctrine in which the doctrines of sovereign grace taught clearly by Dordt—taught also in the Westminster Standards—in all five points characterize and control that covenant.

There are also reasons the FV controversy ought to be of prominent interest to the membership of the PRC.

First, it is the development of the false theology that led to the formation of the Protestant Reformed churches in 1924 and their reformation in 1953. If you want to know why 1924 and 1953 were of utmost importance, then familiarity with the FV controversy is absolutely necessary. The FV is rank heresy that boldly denies all the doctrines of grace, including election, limited atonement, and preservation of the saints, in the name of another paradigm called the conditional covenant. On the basis of a covenant doctrine that the PRC rejected in 1924 and 1953, the FV denies every doctrine that a Reformed believer holds dear as the truth of his and of his children’s salvation.

Second, with the Protestant Reformed minister’s promise to refute errors, especially those rejected by the Synod of Dordt, he must refute not only the corrupt theology of Jacob Arminius, the three points, William Heyns, and Klaas Schilder, but also of Douglas Wilson, Peter Leithart, and other FV men. This applies for the confessing believer, too, who promises to reject all heresies

¹⁰ What the PRC did in the Declaration for the Reformed three forms of unity should be done with the Westminster Standards so churches that hold them as their official creeds demonstrate that the creeds teach the particularity and sovereignty of God’s grace and that this applies without doubt to the covenant, so that the only covenant doctrine allowed by the creeds is the unconditional covenant of sovereign, particular grace.

¹¹ An important study of the Declaration of Principles has recently been published: David J. Engelsma, *Battle for Sovereign Grace in the Covenant* (Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2013).

repugnant to the truth, of which the FV is an outstanding as well as a very close and threatening example.

Third, we must be interested in and knowledgeable about the FV because there is an enormous door for mission work that God has opened for us as a denomination and through our evangelism committees. This should not surprise us. It was in response to the demand of missions among the Liberated that the PRC developed the precious little document that is of supreme importance today—the Declaration of Principles.

In keeping with the conviction of the PRC as expressed in our Domestic Mission Committee Constitution that “our present duty lies primarily in the field of church extension and church reformation,” there is as great an opportunity for plain testimony to the truth of sovereign grace over against the FV’s heretical covenant doctrine as ever there was with the common grace controversy; indeed, they are of a piece, both teaching a general, impotent, resistible, non-saving grace of God cut free from the decrees.¹²

Availing ourselves of this open door, there is a massive new opportunity to use that little document that was drawn up for use by the mission committee and which all these years has formed the basis of our covenant instruction on the mission field concerning our conviction about the creedal doctrine of the covenant.

Whatever evil the Federal Vision heresy has brought, by God’s providence it has brought to the foreground again the precious truth of the covenant. So much is this the case that one observer of current developments in Reformed and Presbyterian churches spoke of a “pervasive convenantalism.”¹³ The covenant is being discussed, a fact that observer bemoaned, but for which the PRC must be thankful.

It is the truth of the unconditional covenant taught by the Reformed creeds as clearly demonstrated by the Declaration of Principles that is the current need of the hour.

The FV steams forward like a juggernaut in Reformed and Presbyterian churches.

Leithart’s exoneration has set the pattern.

There will be others, and not only in the PCA. ☞

¹² *The Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches*, 49

¹³ <http://theecclesiacalvinist.wordpress.com/2013/08/09/lets-rethink-this-covenant-issue-shall-we/>.

The Holy Spirit, Our Comforter

Lord's Day 20

Question 53. What dost thou believe concerning the Holy Ghost?

Answer. First, that He is true and co-eternal God with the Father and the Son; secondly, that He is also given me, to make me, by a true faith, partaker of Christ and all His benefits, that He may comfort me and abide with me for ever.

In this Lord's Day we have the Catechism's brief treatment of the Holy Spirit.

At first it may seem that the Reformed faith does not give enough attention to the Holy Spirit. After all, isn't He as much God as the Father and the Son? And isn't He the one who actually saves us today by giving us faith and uniting us to Christ? And hasn't He been poured out in the New Testament church in a full and unique way, a way not known during Bible times? And so, shouldn't He receive as much attention and praise as Father and Son?

While it may be true that we do not think about the Holy Spirit often enough, we must not fall into the error of overemphasizing the work of the Spirit at the expense of the gospel. This is what Pentecostalism has done, so that receiving the baptism or second blessing of the Spirit is viewed as more important than being saved through faith in the blood and righteousness of Christ, and being able to speak in tongues or perform or receive miracles is supposedly far superior to living a life of godliness and faith. This kind of emphasis on the Spirit robs ordinary Christians of comfort, and in the end is a denial of the gospel.

The primary work of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ, not to bring Himself as something extra or separate from the gospel (John 16:14). This means that whenever we hear the true gospel of salvation in Christ

alone, whenever we put our trust in Jesus as Savior, whenever we follow Him as our Lord, and whenever we worship Him in His exaltation, the Spirit is close by, doing His work in our hearts. The focus of our faith and worship is Jesus Christ, because that is the focus of the gospel in the New Testament, and of the Holy Spirit Himself. To be Spirit-led, or Spirit-filled, is to be focused in faith on Jesus Christ our Savior.

The Person of the Spirit

The first part of Answer 53 tells us who the Holy Spirit is.

The Holy Spirit is a real person, not an impersonal force of nature, or a mode of God's expression. As a person, He teaches (Luke 12:11-12), speaks (Acts 13:2), intercedes (Rom. 8:26), grieves (Eph. 4:30), knows (I Cor. 2:11), and wills (I Cor. 12:11)—all verbs with a personal subject.

The Spirit is not just any person, but He is a divine person, the third person of the Trinity, God Himself. By ascribing the divine acts of creation and resurrection to the Spirit, the Bible teaches that He is God (Gen. 1:2; Ps. 33:6-7; Rom. 8:11). The Scriptures also recognize that the Spirit possesses the unique characteristics of God: He is eternal (Heb. 9:14), omnipresent (Ps. 139:7), intrinsically holy (Ps. 51:11), and omniscient (I Cor. 2:10-11). The Spirit's name is also used interchangeably with the name of God (Acts 5:3-4; I Cor. 3:16 and 6:19), and we are baptized in the name of the Spirit along with the Father and the Son, implying an equality of power and majesty among the three (Matt. 28:19).

Rev. Kleyn is pastor of Covenant of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Spokane, Washington.

The Bible also identifies the Holy Spirit as “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom. 8:9). By His death and resurrection, Jesus Christ earned the fullness and promise of the Spirit from the Father, for His people (Acts 2:33). Today, the Spirit operates as the agent of Christ, to bring Jesus Christ and His saving work to His people.

The Work of the Spirit

When the catechism speaks of the Spirit’s work, it is very personal. But we must remember that the Spirit’s work is broader than just helping us individually. The Spirit has given us the Bible, God’s Word: “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (II Pet. 1:21). The Spirit also directs the spread of the gospel and the growth of the New Testament church (Acts 16:6-7). The Spirit guides the New Testament church through controversy and opposition into a greater understanding of truth (John 16:13). The Spirit works alongside the Word of God, written and preached, to open the hearts of the elect, and to make the call of the gospel effectual (Acts 13:48 and 16:14). All these things show us that the Spirit does not operate independent of the Word of God, or separate from the church of Christ. He saves by the gospel, and unites those whom He has saved to the body of Christ.

Nevertheless, His work is deeply personal. The Catechism puts it this way: “He is also given to me.” The Spirit is not simply an omnipresent being, from whom we cannot get away and whose power man cannot escape. Rather, the Spirit lives within us (I Cor. 6:19), making every one of God’s people to be His dwelling place, a temple of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:19). Because the Spirit dwells in my heart as a believer (Gal. 4:6), He fills my entire being and influences my entire existence. Just as blood flows from the heart through the entire body to give life, so the Spirit, by His powerful presence, shapes my character, renews my mind, and sanctifies my emotions (Gal. 5:22-23). We cannot identify the location of the Spirit, but we do experience His presence and observe the result of His work (John 3:8).

The Blessing of the Spirit

The Catechism mentions three benefits that we experience as a result of the Spirit’s work.


The first is that by a true faith the Spirit makes me a

partaker of Christ and all His benefits. That the Spirit does this “by faith” means two important things: 1) that the Holy Spirit is the author of faith, and 2) that only believers benefit from the saving work of Christ. In the act of giving us faith, the Holy Spirit unites us to Jesus Christ. We are not partakers merely of benefits, but of Christ Himself. Out of Jesus Christ flows all blessing. He is the vine and we are the branches who have been grafted into Him by faith. The blessings that come from Christ include all the blessings of salvation (regeneration, calling, faith, justification, adoption, sanctification, glorification), as well as the blessings that are specifically the work of the Spirit (membership in the church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting).

The second benefit that comes through the Spirit’s work is the comforting presence of the Spirit. In the KJV, the Spirit is referred to as the Comforter (John 14:16). Other versions of the Bible translate this word as “Helper,” “Counselor,” or “Advocate.” The Greek word is “paraclete” and refers to someone who comes along side you in your troubles to help, counsel, and comfort you. By giving this title to the Holy Spirit, Jesus was telling us that this would be the main ministry of the Holy Spirit—to help and comfort. He does this work in several ways, and usually quite indirectly, so that, again, we don’t always notice that the Spirit is doing this work. He will comfort us through the Word of God, maybe as we read it privately, or through a sermon. He may comfort us through other believers who also share the blessing of the Spirit. The Spirit does work directly on our minds, and so He will bring to our minds the truth of the Word and gospel, as we need it. He will also comfort us by assuring us that we are truly the children of God (Rom. 8:15-17). And often, through prayer, the Spirit will fill us with the peace of God that passes all understanding (Phil. 4:6-7).

The third benefit of the Spirit’s work mentioned in the Catechism is His abiding presence. Jesus’ parting promise was, “I am with you alway.” He keeps this promise today by dwelling in us by His Spirit (John 14:18). Where the Spirit is, there Christ is (Rom. 8:9-10). Where the Spirit has come in saving power, and given grace and new life, the Spirit will never leave. His work is irresistible and irreversible. “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6).

Because of this we can have confidence as we face the future. Even in death, and beyond death in glory, the

Spirit will abide with us as the personal bond that brings us into living and eternal fellowship with God. 

Questions for Discussion

1. Discuss the meaning of John 16:14 in relation to the Spirit's work, and in comparison to the modern teaching of Pentecostalism.
2. Give several proofs for the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Why is this important?
3. How would you reply to someone who says, "The Spirit led me to ..." do whatever?
4. What are the evidences of the Spirit's work in us? How do these work assurance?
5. What are some of the "works" of the Holy Spirit in connection with the church?

6. What does the Holy Spirit do for me personally as a believer?
7. When does the Holy Spirit give faith to the child of God, and what is the immediate result of this?
8. What are some of the blessings that come to us from Christ through the Holy Spirit?
9. How is the Spirit our "Comforter"?
10. How does Christ keep His promise to be with us till the end of the world?
11. How can we "grieve" and "quench" the Holy Spirit? (Eph. 4:30; I Thess. 5:19)

GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

REV. RICHARD SMIT

"He Must Increase, But I Must Decrease" (2)

John the Baptist understood and believed that transition was a "must." Christ "must" increase, and he "must" decrease. What does that mean?

First, the transition from John the Baptist to Jesus was necessary because that was the will of God. It was the will of God that once the forerunner's work was completed, then Christ would fulfil His earthly ministry. God's purpose was not for John to continue His ministry side-by-side with Jesus for three-and-a-half years. It was the will of God that John's work come to an end after only a few months of being a contemporary with Jesus in His ministry, and then that the attention of the people be turned towards Christ. Eventually, of course, that increase would reach its climax in the redemptive work of Christ in His death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. According to the determinate counsel and fore-

knowledge of God, the increase of Christ was necessary for God's glory and the establishment of His covenant. The counsel of God required that John be replaced by Christ.

Second, the transition was necessary because of who Christ is in His church. John the Baptist compared Jesus to a bridegroom and compared himself to just a friend of the bridegroom. In the marriage ceremony and feast, the main attraction is not the friend of the bride and groom. The main attraction is the bridegroom and the bride. Similarly, Christ is the Bridegroom of the church. All our attention must be drawn to Him. After all, why should it not be so? He is the Lord of glory and God with us, Immanuel. His glory demands our attention. Therefore, John the Baptist was humbly content to be left alone and to have Christ increase visibly in His preeminence. Moreover, John was content to be merely one who gave to Christ his rapt attention of faith and adoration.

Third, the transition was necessary for the fulfilment of the gathering of the church of Christ. If John the Baptist did not get out of the way, but joined forces with his

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

Previous article in this series: June 2013, p. 404.

jealous disciples to recapture his former popularity, John would have been interfering with the redemptive work of the Lord. If that had happened, John would have become a good candidate for a rebuke of the Lord to get out of the way. John was called to prepare the way of the Lord, not stand in it and be a roadblock to the Lord. Rather than disobey his calling, John wanted the Lord's will to be done for His covenant and kingdom, and, in effect, he wanted to be phased out.

These reasons apply to transition in the church today, especially now in foreign mission work.

Transition from the missionary to local officebearers is the will of God. Not only is this what God commands the church to do in missions according to His Word, but in the gathering of His church by His Word and Spirit, this is what He sovereignly determines for the salvation of His church. Christ wills and accomplishes the administration of the means of grace for the gathering and the preservation of His sheep in the earth. That is the way in which the King of the church works His salvation in the earth. When this transition takes place in the church institute, not only do we believe that this follows the commands of Scripture, but we also see it as the amazing fulfilment of God's promise and good pleasure in His church.

Transition is necessary because Christ is King and Bridegroom of His church. Missionaries, local preachers, elders, and deacons may not become the main attraction in a church or ever think that they might be. They are only servants to the Bridegroom, and their work is to direct the eyes and attention of the people of God to the Bridegroom. Their goal is to have Christ increase in the hearts, life, and work of the church. When the churches see the change from one officebearer to another, they see clear reminders that the Chief Officebearer of the church never changes. He is Christ: the same yesterday, today, and forever. Thereby Christ does increase in the confession, the preaching, the life, and the consciousness of His saints.

Finally, transition is necessary for the gathering of Christ's eternally chosen church by and under the means of grace. Of course, transition must be handled wisely. The apostle Paul in several places, such as I Timothy, warns the church against hasty and rash transition, because that recklessness is a threat to her salvation. How-

ever, on the other hand, we may not be slow of heart with regards to transition, because that also is a threat to the well-being of the church, locally or on the mission field, in her maintenance of the marks of a true church in obedience to Christ. Proper and timely transition is necessary in the service of Christ for the gathering and preservation of His eternally chosen church. Therefore, for the good of the church, the church in her local work or mission work must aim for and be prepared for transition.



Not only is transition a reality and a necessity, but it is also something that we should view as an encouraging blessing.

Admittedly, *calling* transition blessed is one thing, but then *believing* that it is actually blessed through the experience of a transition is quite another thing. Through transition, there is always present our old nature, which objects to the truth of Christ's increase in His church. We do not want to be overlooked, passed by, set aside, outvoted, forgotten, replaced, kept in the shadows, and put out to retirement and obscurity. We want to be noticed, patted on the back, chosen, acknowledged, remembered, and in the limelight or at least on its visible fringes. There can be a sinful reluctance to give up a God-given place and authority in the church because of a distrust towards Christ that He can actually use others to continue His work in His church militant and institute. By nature, we are proud. Do we not often want Christ to decrease and self to increase in the attention of others in the church, home, school, workplace, and other situations?

No doubt, that struggle against pride was common to God's faithful servants in the past. A missionary is not immune to such temptations to be like those jealous and upset disciples of John the Baptist, who were alarmed that their master was being replaced by Jesus of Nazareth. That illustrates the fact that we are really no different from them. It is a human impossibility to respond to this phenomenon in the Lord's work of the gathering of His church with the confession: "Christ must increase, I must decrease."

The servants of the Lord, whether in missions or in the local church, need the grace and the self-effacing Spirit of Jesus Christ for deliverance from the sin of selfishness and vainglory unto the life of humility and modesty. By the

Holy Spirit and His grace, they will rejoice that the Lord increases in His glory and preeminence in the good fruits of His work, especially in the gathering of His church. They will be submissive when the Lord shows them it is His time for transition, time for a replacement, time for another reminder that He remains the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, and time for His increase in His church.



That Christ must increase in His church is the underlying principle in the fact, the necessity, and the blessedness of transition in His church.

So may it be that Christ increases in His church, and never man. May He continue to increase in His true and faithful churches until His final and glorious appearing.



BRING THE BOOKS...

MR. CHARLES TERPSTRA

Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat, by James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013). Pp. xxviii + 455. \$30 (paper). [Reviewed by David J. Engelsma.]

In his own biography of Abraham Kuyper, which served the purpose of introducing Kuyper to “the general reader” (*Abraham Kuyper*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), Frank Vanden Berg acknowledged the fact and expressed the confidence that “the definitive biography of Dr. Abraham Kuyper must still appear, as it undoubtedly will eventually” (301).

With the publication of James D. Bratt’s *Abraham Kuyper*, the definitive biography of that great, indeed astonishing, man has appeared.

Bratt is well qualified for the demanding task. He is a highly regarded professor of history at Calvin College. Kuyper is the very atmosphere of Calvin College (that is, the Kuyper of common grace and culture; the Kuyper of particular, sovereign grace is *persona non grata* on that campus, and has been since the ouster from the Christian Reformed Church of Herman Hoeksema in 1924). Bratt has written or edited other books on Kuyper, Kuyper’s writings, and Kuyper’s influence in Calvinistic circles.

Life and Work of a Gifted, Many-Sided Man

All of this research and scholarly and literary ability, Bratt has put to use in this superb biography of one of the truly great and utterly fascinating figures in the Reformed tradition, if not in the whole of western civilization.

Prof. Engelsma is professor emeritus of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

The book is a thorough account of the life and deeds of a gifted, many-sided man. Upon getting his doctorate at Leiden University, Kuyper began his career as a pastor in the state church of the Netherlands. Within a few years, he became editor of a daily newspaper. In 1874, Kuyper resigned the ministry for full-time political activity. He founded and headed for many years an increasingly numerous and powerful political party, the Antirevolutionary Party, named as expressing rejection of the French Revolution of the 1790s. In 1880, Kuyper founded a full-fledged university, the Free University in Amsterdam. He himself was a professor in the university until 1901, when Herman Bavinck replaced him, Kuyper having become prime minister of the Netherlands.

Throughout the first half of the 1880s, Kuyper led a movement of reform within the state Reformed church. This movement culminated in a schism in 1886. Kuyper called his movement of reform, culminating in separation from the state church and in the formation of a new Reformed denomination, the “*Doleantie*.” The word described Kuyper and his cohorts as “grieving” over the apostasy of the state church, as over their inevitable separation from that apostate church.

In 1892, under Kuyper’s direction, his newly formed denomination united with the existing Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the churches formed by the reformation of 1834 (the “*Afscheiding*,” or Secession) to form the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN, which are the initial letters of the name of the denomination in Dutch).

All the while that Kuyper was active in church reformation, he was also busy in Dutch politics. Elected to

the States General in 1874, when he resigned the gospel ministry, Kuyper became prime minister of the Netherlands in 1901. Under the queen, this was the most powerful political office in the Netherlands. The victory of Kuyper and his party was possible because of Kuyper's alliance with the party of Roman Catholics. To Kuyper's chagrin, and near breakdown, he served only one term as political ruler of the Netherlands. The election of 1905 swept him and his party from power.

Throughout his career, Kuyper published. In addition to editing a daily newspaper, *De Standaard* (English: *The Standard*), which included regular writing for the paper, and writing weekly meditations for another paper, *De Heraut* (English: *The Herald*), Kuyper wrote books. Indeed, this amazingly gifted and disciplined man single-handedly produced a library of books—devotional, doctrinal, expository (of Scripture), historical, political, social, philosophical. Much of the library is soundly Reformed theology and biblical exposition. It repays the Reformed minister his labor to learn the Dutch language simply that he is able to read Kuyper's theological writings.

On his vacations, for relaxation Kuyper climbed nearly all of the highest mountains in Europe.

This daunting man, his volcanic energy, and all his manifold activities, Bratt has captured in a “full-scale, well-rounded account of his entire life” (xiv). A particular virtue of the biography is that the author, convinced that “good biography is contextual,” provides “as much context as I feasibly can” (xxi). Bratt sets Kuyper in his time, not only in the Netherlands, but also in Europe, indeed in the entire world, including South Africa when the Boer War was raging; examines Kuyper and his thinking in light of his tradition; and relates Kuyper's actions to his theological and political thinking.

Good, but not Nice

Regarding Kuyper's person, Bratt paints the portrait of Kuyper (as Cromwell once advised an artist, about himself—Cromwell) “warts and all” (xxiii). Although Bratt clearly is favorably impressed by Kuyper and equally clearly approves the Kuyper of culture and politics, that is, the Kuyper of common grace (the Kuyper of particular grace, not so much), the biography is not a hagiography.

Bratt's judgment of Kuyper as a person is that Kuyper was “a great man but not a nice one” (xxii). The main criticism by Kuyper's contemporaries, echoed by Bratt, was that Kuyper sought power and in the seeking of power treated rivals roughly. A long-time friend and ally, Alexander F. de Savornin Lohman, who fell out with Kuyper politically, and suffered for it, charged against Kuyper that “your rhetoric and maneuvers show you to be a true disciple of Robespierre” (232). Bratt observes that “there could be no greater insult in the Groenian heritage [the reference is to Groen van Prinsterer, whose torch Kuyper was carrying both in church and state]” than this lumping of Kuyper with the ruthless French revolutionary (232). Kuyper purged Lohman from his professorship at the Free University, completely regardless of former close personal friendship and common membership in the church. With almost amusing aplomb, Kuyper then “formally inquired of Lohman whether he held any grievance against [Kuyper] that might preclude their taking the Lord's Supper” (236).

While noting opposite virtues in Kuyper, Bratt agrees with the judgment by Kuyper's contemporaries: “ambitious, who sought power”; “drove them [collaborators and disciples] away when they stepped up as equals” (xxii).

I frankly confess that the Kuyper of political maneuvers and power and of the forming of worldly culture is little more attractive to me than any other politician or philosopher.

Reformed Theologian and Churchman

But the Kuyper of Reformed theology, church reformation, and biblical exposition is not only attractive, but also an important part of my (Reformed) tradition.

The profound theoretician of the presumptuous, impossible “Christianizing” of worldly culture pales in comparison with the writer of the meditation in the *Heraut* on the occasion of the death of Kuyper's godly, beloved wife at the young age of fifty-seven.

There you stood with a broken heart by the deathbed. There lay your deceased, lifeless, inanimate, for all the world as if she had been *swallowed up* by death. Swallowed up—a hard word. Devoured, as if by a beast of prey. All at once, gone: the look of the eye, the sweet words... everything, clean gone.... [Yet] God's Word, without in any way discounting the harshness of that reality, turns it

around for you [believers in Jesus Christ]. Totally...[For the faithful, the moment of death means that] what is mortal is swallowed up by life (282).

With the significant exception of his novel theory of common grace, Kuyper powerfully confessed, explained, and defended Reformed orthodoxy on behalf of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands and to the ends of the earth. His book on particular grace, rare and controversial in his day, as also in ours, is a clear and compelling blast of the trumpet concerning salvation by sovereign grace to the glory of God.

It is a sad commentary on contemporary Reformed theologians, as well as a warning concerning the inevitable, evil consequences of Kuyper's invention of a common grace of God, that most Reformed theologians show themselves ignorant, or ignoring, of Kuyper's work on particular grace, whereas they fall over themselves, and each other, to recommend, praise, use, and develop his works on common grace.

Despite his fatal compromising of the truth by his theory of common grace, Kuyper made the antithesis a reality in the thinking and life of Reformed Christians in a time of unholy ecumenicity and illicit friendships both in church and in society. Bratt does justice to Kuyper's emphasis on the antithesis. Kuyper virtually introduced the concept into the thinking and practice of the Dutch Reformed churches and believers of his day.

Kuyper led a movement of church reformation that split the state church in 1886, his "*Doleantie*." Noteworthy about this reformation was Kuyper's stress on right church government and church order. Basic to his doctrine of the church was the autonomy of the local congregation. Kuyper vigorously opposed the hierarchical power of classes and synods. He became vitriolic in his condemnation of the "administrative apparatus of synodical and classical boards" (152).

Details of the unfolding of the split in the state church are fascinating. On the morning of January 6, 1886, Kuyper himself and several, carefully selected, close allies broke into a strategic church building in Amsterdam. The carpenter in the group sawed through a panel in the locked council room door to gain access to that center of church power and storehouse of vital records, which was why Kuyper had included a carpenter (and his saw!) in

the group. Thereafter, at Kuyper's direction, club-carrying students of the Free University guarded the premises against the armies of the state church.

Of this work of church reformation, Bratt writes that "his [Kuyper's] church reform proved to be the greatest disappointment of his life" (150). Only a relatively few churches and members of the churches joined the *Doleantie* and the new Reformed denomination formed by that reform of the state church.

Critique of Common Grace

The Protestant Reformed reader of the biography will be, and every Reformed reader ought to be, especially interested in Bratt's treatment of Kuyper's doctrine of common grace.

Bratt recognizes the prominent place of common grace in Kuyper's political and cultural thinking and actions. Although he is by no means a critic of Kuyperian common grace (and this is understatement), James Bratt is a rare Christian Reformed appraiser of the theory. The typical Christian Reformed presentation of Kuyperian common grace is that that sacred cow was birthed on Mt. Sinai, if not on Mt. Zion, by the Holy Spirit generating the doctrine from the inspired mind of Abraham Kuyper, out of the purest theological and religious motives, having its ancestry in the Reformed tradition in an unbroken line of holy, formidable, theological bulls going back to Calvin himself.

Bratt is an honest historian. Kuyper emphasized and developed his theory of common grace precisely at that time in his life and career when he was engaged in obtaining political power. He very much needed a doctrine of common grace to ground his political alliance with the Roman Catholics and with other non-Reformed, even non-Christian, cohorts. "Faith-based politics requires some common ground with people of fundamentally different convictions" (197, 198).

So far from being a prominent doctrine in Calvin and in the Reformed tradition, Kuyperian common grace was "a dramatic new line in Reformed theology." Although Kuyper claimed to find the "seed" of common grace "in some words of Calvin," the "'manifestation' [of a doctrine of common grace] he [Kuyper] elaborated much further than any predecessor had ever tried. It was the linchpin to his theology of culture, and the subject to which he

turned his attention after long struggles over the church” (192, 193).

According to Bratt, the doctrine of common grace was one of “two key theological *innovations*” on the part of Kuyper (194; the emphasis is mine—DJE).

Rightly, Bratt exposes Kuyper’s optimistic prophecy of “greater glories to come in the twentieth century” by virtue of the wonder-working power of common grace in nations and societies. “Bitterly ironic as those predictions seem today,” writes Bratt (199). The horrors of WW I and WW II, of Nazi Germany, and of the totalitarian regimes of Stalin and Mao did not betoken an advance in the Christianizing of the world by any grace of God. Nor, for that matter, did the Netherlands become more Christian, or even more moral, in the past century. Let the devotee of common grace take a leisurely stroll through Amsterdam, the center of Kuyper’s culture-forming project.

On the contrary, as one staring himself blind at the developments in nations and societies through the spectacles of a common grace of God never sees, the twentieth century and now the beginning of the twenty-first century, with its cold-blooded murder of millions of unborn, partially born, and newly born and with its precipitous descent into the deepest depths of the degradation of sodomy and lesbianism, show the judgment of God upon the nations and societies—a judgment of righteous wrath, the very opposite of Kuyper’s common grace.

Kuyper’s “reading of history owed more to Hegel than to Scripture” (200).

Another application of common grace, by Kuyper himself and by his culture-Calvinist, common grace disciples, concerns brilliant pagan and antichristian thinkers. Kuyper viewed them as beneficiaries of common grace and their theories as the product of God’s common grace. Bratt quotes Kuyper:

The names of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle have constantly been honored by Christian thinkers.... [It is an] undeniable fact that...Kant and Darwin shone [as] stars of the first magnitude, geniuses of the highest degree, who uttered the most profound thoughts even though they were not confessing Christians (201, 202).

Inevitably, the effect of this estimation of heathen thinkers was the acceptance of their unbelieving theories

into Reformed thought and theology, to the undermining and corrupting of biblical, Reformed truth.

At a time when one Reformed church and one Reformed school after another, enthusiasts for common grace, all, are abandoning the biblical doctrine of creation for Darwinian evolutionary theory, it is especially Kuyper’s positive estimation of Darwin and many of Darwin’s basic doctrines that begs for attention. Under the influence of his own theory of common grace, Kuyper

did not insist on literalistic readings of the relevant biblical passages, nor quail at the prospect of a very old earth and resort to fantasies [*sic*] about Flood geology. More controversially, then and now, he did not balk at the transmutation of species or at the “spontaneous unfolding of the species in organic life from the cytochrome or nuclear cell.”

Bratt continues: “Kuyper accorded Darwinian science considerable merit in its own right” (284, 285).

Bratt is obviously delighted with Kuyper’s high regard for Darwin and with Kuyper’s concessions to evolutionary theory.


But those in Reformed churches at the beginning of the twenty-first century who are having the Scripture-denying and gospel-destroying implications of these concessions to Darwin shoved in their faces and who are, therefore, troubled by the acceptance and teaching of basic elements of evolutionary theory in their circles, especially in their nominally Christian schools, must locate the origins of the heresies in Abraham Kuyper and the theory of a common grace of God.

Kuyper and the PRC

Nevertheless, this is not to deny the significant debt of the Protestant Reformed Churches to Abraham Kuyper—the Abraham Kuyper of the particular, sovereign grace of God in Jesus Christ; of the antithesis; and of soundly Reformed theology and church order.

We may not write Kuyper off, because of our rejection of his theory of common grace, root and branch.

The biography of Kuyper, therefore, claims our interest.

About this, and more raised by Bratt’s excellent biography, I will have more to say in an expanded version of this review in a forthcoming issue of the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*. 

Congregational Activities

Considering again the Word of God in I Corinthians 12, this time in verse 14, "For the body is not one member, but many," we extend our congratulations to Calvary PRC in Hull, IA, celebrating the anniversary of their organization as a congregation on October 11, 2007.

On Friday evening, August 23, everyone in the congregation of First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI was invited to come out and enjoy some softball at nearby Township Park. Supper started at 6:15 around a main course of hot dogs. Participants were encouraged to bring balls, bats, gloves, and a dish to pass for supper.

The Young Adults of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA were invited to attend an end of summer outing on Saturday, August 24. The young adults planned a train ride on the Metro Link from San Bernardino to the Tyson Street Beach and Park in Oceanside. Instead of fighting traffic, the young adults could relax and enjoy the company of the others making the trip. The train left the station at 7:30 A.M., so a reminder was issued to be there early. If that was too early, there was always the option of driving down by yourself and meeting the others in Oceanside.

As many of our readers already know, next year's Young People's Convention is scheduled to take

place at the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA, and, wasting no time, the 2014 Convention Activities Committee of Hope invited their congregation to join them on August 31 to try out the proposed convention games at church. Game participants had to be high school age and above. So beware that the games at next year's convention might be dominated by the young people from Hope. They will have had a year of practice.

The Council of the Edgerton, MN PRC called their congregation to a Congregational Meeting on August 27 to consider several proposals. One major proposal was to replace their church furnaces. Others were to replace their northeast entry door and the basement carpeting, along with other renovations in the basement. These proposals originated with Edgerton's insurance company, requiring them to have their furnaces in an enclosed room, rather than in an open hallway. The Council also brought a proposal to begin their evening service at 5:00, effective October 6. All of these proposals were approved.

Young People's Activities

As noted above, next year's Young People's Convention will be hosted by the Hope congregation in Redlands, CA. It is safe to say that this fact will add to the convention's cost for our young people. Airline tickets to California cost more than bus tickets to Illinois. So young people's fundraisers should be more numerous in the next year.

On Labor Day, September 2, the Young People of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI invited their congregation to join them for their annual Labor Day Breakfast at nearby Hope PR Christian School.

Denomination Activities

The PR Theological School began another year of instruction on September 3. This year there are eleven students enrolled at seminary. There is one fourth-year student, Joshua Engelsma, who is presently serving his internship at Peace PRC in Lansing, IL, and will return to the seminary for his last semester in January 2014, D.V. There is one third-year student, Ryan Barnhill. There are no second-year students, but nine first-year students, the largest class ever entering the seminary: Matthew De Boer, Brian Feenstra, Joseph Holstege, Jonathan Langerak, Aaron Lim (of our sister church in Singapore), David Noorman, Nathan Price, Stephan Regnerus, and Justin Smidstra. We are thankful for every student and for every class, but this first-year class is an answer to our prayers for new students in a remarkable way, and we give God thanks for these young men. Our professors are excited to begin the new year too. Prof. Gritters will be taking a partial sabbatical this year. In addition to teaching two classes, he will be studying and writing in some subjects related to his course work in Practical Theology.

The Seminary invited all those

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

interested and who could attend to select classes this coming semester: Prof. Dykstra's Church History class, a class in which he will teach about the Reformation period; Prof. Cammenga's New Testament History class, a class in which he treats New Testament History from the inter-testamental period up to the Passion Week; and Prof. Cammenga's Reformed Dogmatics class, which will focus this semester on Ecclesiology, the study of the doctrine of the church.


After months of planning, preparation, and hard work by many, the newly re-designed PRC website (prca.org) is up and running, complete with new logo and all new lay-

out. It launched quietly on July 17 and is being updated and tweaked daily. Some aspects of the new site are still being worked on, but all the previous material is there. Registration is now required for access to the church bulletin section of the site, but all other parts are open access. If you haven't yet visited the new site, do so today.

Minister Activities

With thankfulness to our heavenly Father for providing another pastor in our churches, we can report that Candidate Erik Guichelaar accepted the call extended to him from the Randolph, WI PRC to become their next

pastor. This means, of course, that Erik declined the call to become the next pastor of the Doon, IA PRC. The Lord willing, Pastor-elect Guichelaar will be examined at the meeting of Classis West on October 9 in Loveland, CO. The Lord willing, he will then be ordained and installed as pastor of Randolph, in their sanctuary, during the morning worship service of October 13, with Prof. Cammenga leading the service. The Guichelaar family plans to move to Randolph near the end of September.

The Faith PRC in Jenison, MI called Rev. C. Griess to be their next under-shepherd. 

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Congratulations

■ The Loveland PRC Council and congregation take this opportunity for a special recognition of

PROFESSOR DAVID J. ENGELSMA

for 50 years of dedicated labors within our denomination. Prof. Engelsma was ordained into the office of the ministry the first week of October, 1963. At the same time, he was installed as the pastor of Loveland PRC and preached his first sermon on October 6, 1963. Prof. Engelsma served as Loveland's pastor for 11 years, after which he served as pastor in the South Holland PRC for 14 years, followed by 20 years as Professor of Theology in our seminary. This brings us to 2013, and Prof. Engelsma will preach in Loveland on September 29, God willing, only one week shy of the 50-year anniversary. Prof. Engelsma has been a great blessing to our denomination and for God's children around the world through his preaching, teaching, and writing. It is our prayer that the Lord will continue to bless Prof. Engelsma in the years to come, as He continues to use him in the proclamation of His Word. We close with the words of Ephesians 4:11-12: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

Rev. Steven Key, President
Robert Van Uffelen, Clerk

Wedding Anniversary

■ On September 27, 2013, our dear parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents,

LARRY and TILLIE NELSON,

celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. We give thanks for the gift of God-fearing parents and their love for Him, and for their love and care for us and for one another. We are thankful that God has preserved and sustained them in all things by His grace and mercy. We pray that the Lord may continue to bless them throughout this life to the glory of His Name. "For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death" (Psalm 48:14).

❖ Rick and Sharon Tolsma

Evan and Kim Bleyenbergh
Ben, Dean

Joe and Jennifer Schimmel
Mason, Sydnie, Lucy, Jolee
Everett and Michelle Langerak
Myron, Martin, Evelyn, Will

Matt and Stephanie Dykstra
Levi, Samuel, Aubrey

❖ Dan Lanting/Diana Todd

Henry and Melissa Huisken
Aaron and Jennifer Lanting
Aandon, Addison, Aliyah,
Aubrey

Keith Lanting

❖ Steve Nelson

Loveland, CO

OUR ONLY *Comfort*

Heidelberg Catechism 450 Years

**Sponsored by the
Protestant Reformed
Theological Seminary**

*Hosted by
Hudsonville Protestant
Reformed Church*

**October 17–19, 2013
ouronlycomfort.org**

What is thy only comfort in life and in death?

The answer to this question has been music to the ears of Christians throughout the world for more than 400 years. That I belong to Jesus...who with His precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins..., who makes all things subservient to my salvation..., and who makes me sincerely willing and able to live unto Him. That's Lord's Day 1. A stirring introduction to the Heidelberg Catechism! But, more than that, a grand theme that is woven throughout the whole of this precious creed.

This year marks the 450th anniversary of the first publication of the Heidelberg Catechism, a creed that arose out of the Protestant Reformation in Germany during the sixteenth century. An anniversary, it is, that ought not to pass unnoticed—especially by those heirs of the Great Reformation who still today profit from Heidelberg Catechism preaching...every Sunday.

The Protestant Reformed Seminary is pleased to sponsor this special conference on the Heidelberg Catechism, commemorating its 450th "birthday."

Subscription Rate Increase

■ Subscription rates for international subscribers will be increased from \$30 to \$35.00 effective October 1.

Time change

■ Effective October 6, the evening service at Edgerton PRC will be at 5:00 P.M.

THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM: "CHRISTIANIZING THE WORLD?"

A lecture by Prof. David J. Engelsma
emeritus Professor of the Theological School of The Protestant Reformed Churches

What is the kingdom-calling of the Reformed Christian? Is he to flee the world? Or, is there a positive kingdom-calling given with, and empowered by, salvation by the particular; saving grace of God in Jesus Christ?

October 4, 2013 at 7:30 p.m.

Westminster Seminary California
1725 Bear Valley Pkwy, Escondido, CA

Presented by Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Redlands CA

www.hopeprc.org