

The Standard Bearer

A Reformed Semi-Monthly Magazine • February 1, 2012

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I Can Do All Things

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Philippians 4:13

Paul had learned to be content. As Paul pens this letter to the church at Philippi, he is in prison in Rome, awaiting possible execution for the sake of the gospel. After several failed attempts and with much effort, the church at Philippi had finally managed to send a gift to him. This gives Paul great joy (v. 10). Paul's joy is not so much in that their gift filled a need in his life, but it is rather in the love that the Philippians had for him and in the work of grace that prompted this love gift.

So Paul adds that he had learned to be content in whatever state he is (v. 11). He goes on to speak of being abased and abounding, of being full and being hungry, of abounding and suffering need. Paul indicates not only that he has experienced these things but also that he has been instructed in the secret of how to be content in these circumstances.

Paul concludes this thought with the claim that he can do all things through Christ who strengthens him. Here Paul expresses the source of his ability to be content in all things. He is strengthened or empowered by Jesus Christ.

But this statement of Paul has broader application than being content in all things. He is able to do all things that God placed before him to do. He is able to do this, however, only in Christ who strengthens him.

This is no idle boast but a living reality in Paul's life.

It can and should be a living reality in our lives as well.



Paul makes a personal confession, "I can do all things."

When Paul speaks of "all things," he means all things that the Lord had put before him to do in the service of His name. The Lord had called Paul to be an apostle. As an apostle, Paul was sent to be a missionary to the Gentile world. This placed many duties upon him. He had to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the Mediterranean world. He had to direct the affairs of the newly established churches. He had not only to instruct others how to live the Christian life, but also to

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

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

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Subscription Price

\$21.00 per year in the US, \$30.00 elsewhere

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set an example, for the church and the world, of godly, Christian living.

Nor was this an easy work to do. In the previous verses Paul speaks of some difficult circumstances in which the Lord placed him. He speaks of being abased. This means he had been reduced to mean and humble circumstances. In further explanation of this, Paul speaks of being hungry and being in need or want.

These difficult circumstances were brought upon Paul by a number of different circumstances. There were the simple rigors of moving from one location to another without any regular financial support beyond what he could earn as a tent-maker. There was, besides, the constant pressure of opposition and persecution that Paul had to endure for the sake of the gospel. And there was the thorn in his flesh, of which he speaks on II Corinthians 12:7, which was some physical ailment and limitation that the Lord had given him. These all resulted in many trials and temptations for Paul, all of which he had to face in a sinful nature.

Yet Paul confesses, I can do all things. What Paul is saying is that he has the strength to do all that God calls him to do, even in the midst of all the hardship, trials, and temptations that he had to encounter.

What Paul confesses for himself is attainable for every true believer.

God has a station and calling in His church and kingdom for everyone whom He has redeemed in the blood of Jesus Christ. One's station and calling is his place of service in the church of God. One's station of service will change as one passes through life. One's station will involve duties that fall also to others. But every saint has a unique station and calling in the church determined by God according to the gifts He gives. The duties that belong to your station and calling may include being a husband or wife, a mother or father, an officebearer in the church, a teacher in the Christian school, or a young person preparing himself for future work. It may involve caring for the aged, the sick, or the poor, and using one's life's experiences to assist the widows, the depressed, or the alcoholic.

*Each child of God
must say to every calling
God gives him, "I can!"*

Nor is it easy to perform the work of one's calling. The adversity that Paul experienced in his work comes to all the saints in one form or other. Often we are to serve the Lord in sickness, in poverty, or in the face of opposition. This can make the work that the Lord has for us to do to seem overwhelming. Besides, we must do all these things while contending with our sinful nature.

We must not conclude that Paul, being an apostle, was unique in his ability to do all things. What Paul attained as an apostle is attainable to all believers. The Bible is full of examples of those who did humanly impossible things, when called by the Lord to do them. Think of Moses leading Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness. Think of Joseph serving the Lord in Egypt as a young man in the face of many obstacles and temptations. Think of Daniel and his three friends.

Think of the great deeds of service performed by the Old Testament heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11.

Each one of God's people is able to do all things that the Lord places before him. None may say, "I can't," when it comes to the calling the Lord has placed before him. None may say, "I can't be a mother to the children God gave me. I can't live with my spouse. I can't serve in the office Christ has laid upon me. I can't overcome this sin." Each child of God must say to every calling God gives him, "I can!"



We certainly cannot do these things in our own strength.

In John 15:5 Jesus said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." The meaning is very clear. Apart from Christ we are unable to perform the calling God has for us in His church and kingdom. We are able of ourselves to live outwardly moral lives. The Pharisees were an example of this. But our station and calling in the kingdom require more than morality. They require that we serve God from the principle of love. Apart from Christ, we

are not able to bring forth any true spiritual fruits in the kingdom.

Relying on our own strength we are very likely to fall into sin that brings shame to the name of the Lord and hurt to those around us. Consider Abraham, who sought by his own devices to accomplish the Lord's will concerning a son. He fell into polygamy and brought trouble to his house. Consider Jacob, who sought the birthright blessing by his own ingenuity, that caused him to take advantage of a hungry brother and deceive his father, again all to the disruption of a covenant home. Consider Peter, who in spite of the Lord's warnings, publicly denied the Lord three times when he relied on his own strength.

We can expect the same, should we rely on our own strength.

Yet in Christ who strengthens us we can do all things.

To Jesus Christ belongs all power. Just prior to His ascension into heaven the risen Lord told His disciples, "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). Jesus said this in anticipation of being seated at the right hand of God, also called the right hand of power. This power is given to Jesus by God on the basis of His perfect work of atonement on the cross, where He earned the salvation of God's people. This power was given Him so that He can bring to His people the salvation He obtained for them, empower them to live in that salvation, and preserve them from the evil one.

The power bestowed upon Christ, and this power alone, is able to make us strong to do all that God sets before us to do in the service of His name.

Paul experienced this in connection with the thorn in his flesh about which he prayed (II Cor. 12:7-10). Thinking that this thorn hindered his work, Paul prayed three times that it be removed. God's answer was that His grace was sufficient and that His strength is made perfect in Paul's weakness. In response, Paul concluded that when he was weak, he was really strong. For in the weakness of his infirmities the power of Christ came to rest upon him.

It is no less true for us. Only when the power of Christ comes to rest upon us are we strong to do all that God lays before us.



We will receive the power of Jesus Christ only when we are in Him. This is not clear from the KJV, which speaks of doing all things "through" Christ who strengthens us. Literally we read of doing all things "in" Christ who strengthens us. Only when we are *in* Christ does His power come upon us to make us strong to do all things.

Jesus made this clear in John 15:5 with a figure, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me,

and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." The branch is in the vine and the vine is in the branch with a living connection. Only then does the branch bring forth fruit. So also only those that are in Christ with a living connection receive His power to bear spiritual fruit.

This spiritual connection or union with Christ is faith. Lord's Day 7 of the Heidelberg Catechism speaks of being en-


grafted into Christ by faith. This is because faith leads us to trust in Jesus Christ and to rely upon Him in prayer for all things. Faith leads one to rely upon Jesus for forgiveness, for the courage to meet our responsibilities, for the strength to resist temptation, for peace in time of trouble, and for all things necessary to serve God.

In the way of that faith the power of Christ comes to rest upon us.

Do not rely upon yourself and your own strength. To the degree that you do that you will fail miserably, as did Peter, Abraham, Jacob, and others.

Live daily by faith in Jesus Christ.

Seeing your own weakness, turn daily to the Lord for His help.

Then you will be strong to do all things that God gives you to do as His servant. 

*The power
bestowed upon Christ,
and this power alone,
is able to make us strong
to do all that God
sets before us to do
in the service of His name.*

Two Books (2)

Last issue we commented on *Wonder & Wisdom*, a translation of the last ten chapters of Abraham Kuyper's *De Gemeene Gratie*, published to alert the public to the coming publication of the translated three-volume work.

Mention was also made at that time of *Reformed Thought: Selected Writings of William Young* (published by Reformed Heritage Books).

Dr. Young (b. 1918) is a member of the Presbyterian Reformed Church, a denomination of the 'old' Princeton Presbyterian persuasion. This is to say that Young has bound himself to the Westminster Creeds and is a strong advocate of a rigorous purity of worship practice (a subject to which a chapter of the book is devoted, "The Puritan Principle of Worship," a chapter worth reading if you would know what governs the Presbyterian brethren of this rigorous persuasion).

We alert our readers, and in particular our colleagues in the ministry, to this second book for a number of reasons.

First, because with the publishing of Kuyper's magisterial work on common grace there is going to be a renewed interest in 'Father Abraham' again and his entire

body of work. An examination of any number of Kuyper's theological positions is likely to be once again in vogue. This is the value of the book. The editors (Joel R. Beeke and Ray Lanning) have selected, for the first section, a number of Young's critiques of Kuyper and Kuyper's influence on twentieth-century Reformed thought.

Young has a thorough knowledge of Kuyper. His doctrinal dissertation, *Toward A Reformed Philosophy* (1952), dealt with Kuyper's influence on twentieth-century Reformed philosophy (with special focus on Herman Dooyeweerd, no less). Anyone who has made any attempt to penetrate the impenetrable 'theoretical thoughts' of Dooyewoord will understand that last comment.

Significantly, in the selections chosen, what Young has to say about Kuyper and a number of his influential views is anything but complimentary.

This is not to say Young does not have a high view of Kuyper and Kuyper's spirituality and Reformed positions in a number of areas. He does. In a brief selection entitled "Intra- and Supralapsarian Calvinism," Young rises to defend the orthodoxy of the supralapsarian perspective, of which perspective Kuyper was a representative, along with such stalwarts as Beza, Perkins, Gomarus, and Gillespie, to name a few. To

defend those of the supralapsarian persuasion against the charge of scholasticism and incipient hyper-Calvinism is a rare phenomenon these days.

But Young also lays at Kuyper's door any number of baneful developments that have arisen out of his theological positions. In particular, Young takes to task Kuyper's theory of common grace and his doctrine of presumptive regeneration. It is these two views that Young is convinced puts Kuyper at odds with historic Calvinism and makes him the father of a neo-Calvinism, which neo-Calvinism comes to expression in what Young labels as *Hyper-Covenantism*, which baneful evil Young charges Kuyper with introducing into Reformed covenantal doctrine.

Second, it is this labeling of Kuyper's covenantal view as Hyper-Covenantism that is of particular interest to us because into this camp Young puts Hoeksema, and by implication *our* PRC (in distinction from his own PRC, the Presbyterian Reformed Church).

In fact, Young goes so far as to charge Hoeksema with going further than Kuyper in developing this error.

Young states (in Chapter 10) that, in spite of Kuyper's many and great contributions to Calvinism in the Netherlands, "...[Kuyper] must be held responsible for that

Previous article in this series: January 15, 2012, p. 172.

exaggeration of the doctrine of the covenant of grace that may be termed Hyper-Covenantism.” And to that statement Young appends a footnote that reads, “It may be observed that while Hoeksema, Schilder, and Van Til have denied or at least revised Kuyper’s theory of common grace, they have carried Hyper-Covenantism *to an extreme not to be ascribed to their mentor [Kuyper]*” (emphasis ours—kk) (p. 207, ft. nt. 3).

That Hoeksema’s name is mentioned in the same breath as that of Schilder’s and Van Til’s we may find surprising enough. But that is another matter.

It is this charge that Hoeksema in his doctrine of the covenant is not only guilty of this evil of Hyper-Covenantism, but even carries it to a greater extreme than Kuyper himself that catches our attention, and to put it frankly, causes us to bristle a bit.

Well, maybe more than just a bit.

Young’s implication, of course, is that Hoeksema’s covenant view is even more out of line with historic Calvinism (and with Calvin himself) than Kuyper was with his presupposed regeneration view, to which view Hoeksema did not hold, and to which the PRC does not either, and which Dr. Young, well read and intelligent as he is, knows full well.

Why Young would put Hoeksema into this category we will point out later. At this point, all we state is that there is injustice here, and that a man of Young’s evident caliber and character and Reformed convictions should state it this way

grieves us, and does so deeply.

I will go so far as to say that, in spite of my regard for Young’s evident spiritual integrity (as gathered from our reading of his selected writings), in this instance he is guilty of a dishonesty, unwittingly perhaps, but a dishonesty nonetheless.

Why we make that charge we intend to demonstrate in due time (in our next installment).

Third, this book is important because, we are convinced, its publication will not mark the last that we hear of Hyper-Covenantism.

*Not only are
those of
Hoeksema’s persuasion
to be labeled
Hyper-Calvinists
(due to their rejection
of the well-meant
gospel offer),
but they are now
to be labeled
Hyper-Covenantists
as well.*

It is going to become part of the present covenantal controversy and conversation, and it is going to be flung our way. Not only are those of Hoeksema’s persuasion to be labeled Hyper-Calvinists (due to their rejection of the well-meant gospel offer), but they are now to be labeled Hyper-Covenantists as well.

And what this is will be defined

as Dr. William Young defines it in this book.

Why should Hoeksema and those who share his covenant view be banished to the category of Hyper-Covenantists?

The chapter entitled “Historic Calvinism and Neo-Calvinism” explains Young’s reasons why.

In brief, it is because we are of the conviction (on the basis of the Scriptures and the Reformed creeds) that children of believers are to be viewed *and addressed* as having spiritual life, rather than as those numbered amongst the unconverted dead.

The former, according to Young, is what believing parents must not do, address their children, deal with them, as if they were spiritually alive.

For such a practice Young has extremely harsh criticism, as we will see.

Rather, according to Young, it is the latter, namely, viewing one’s covenant seed as numbered with unconverted spiritually dead, that is to be honored as historic Calvinism and in line with the apostolic Scriptures.

The former covenantal view feeds deadness and apostasy.

The latter view is the antidote.

The former is a departure from Calvin and his perspective.

The latter is in line with Calvin’s view.

Indeed, is that so?

We do not deny it may be Young’s view and the view of the old Princeton Presbyterian school, but Calvin’s also and the proper historic Reformed line?

Again, something that deserves a response, however brief.

But before we do that, Young's sharp criticism of Kuyper's common grace teaching is worth noting, especially in light of the coming publication of Kuyper's *Common Grace*.

There are few of the Presbyterian and Reformed persuasion who have taken issue with Kuyper and his view of common grace and the inflated importance Kuyper gave to this 'grace.' Young is one of those few. This is not to say Young rejects the notion of a common grace altogether. He has a common grace view, and there are indications in what we have read that he views it as a preparatory grace for the conversion of God's elect. But be that as it may, what Kuyper made of common grace in his *De Gemeeme Gratie* Young does reject and criticize, especially as it has served to make the heart and soul of Christianity, as well as the working of grace, a fulfilling of the "cultural mandate." As Young properly points out, Kuyper took his theory of common grace and so inflated it that in the end "[t]he supreme importance of the salvation of sinners fades into the background, while emphasis is placed on the cultivation of the manifold spheres of human social life in this present world" (p. 207).

Young's sharpest criticism of Kuyper's common grace is found in chapter 3, a paper entitled "Historic Calvinism and New-Calvinism."

There Young asserts that, in large measure due to Kuyper's (and his followers') "...elaboration of the hitherto subordinate theme of com-

mon grace into a *locus* of systematic theology" (p. 31) and its resulting covenant with nature implications, "[t]he covenant is not to be viewed primarily as soteriological, but as cultural, Genesis 1:28 being construed as containing a 'cultural mandate' for the human race" (p. 36).

And then this:

[This] thesis.... lacks solid exegetical grounding,...and is fraught with pernicious consequences. Talk of a culture mandate should be banned from the "language of Canaan" (Christ's Church—kk).... The word "culture" is far from clear and well-defined in its meaning, and in neo-Calvinistic circles lends itself to encouraging the introduction of a humanistic attitude toward life, involving idolatry of the works of man's hand in the fine and useful arts, accompanying, under pretence of zeal for the covenant, gross neglect of the great salvation. The biblical and classical doctrine, on the contrary, is soteriological from the start to finish (pp. 36-7).

Common grace, as something that "lends itself to encouraging the introduction of a humanistic attitude toward life, involving idolatry of the works of man's hand in the fine and useful arts," to say nothing of supplanting the Reformed and biblical emphasis on particular and saving grace, which is to say gospel preaching! That is quite an indictment, one to keep in mind as Kuyper's book is introduced to the Reformed church world once again.

We can appreciate Young's criticism of Kuyper's theory of common grace. I do not know if Hoeksema could have said it any better.

However, what Young has to say about Kuyper's doctrine of presupposed regeneration is another matter. Not because Kuyper's baptismal, covenantal doctrine should not be criticized in this regard (it should be, and the PRC have done so), but because Young mentions the name Hoeksema (and by implication the PRC) in this context, and brings the same charge against us as he does against Kuyper.

Originally it was our intention to bring to our readers' attention the two books mentioned, Kuyper's translated *Wonder & Wisdom* and Young's selected writings, *Reformed Thought*, by devoting but one article to each, offering little in the way of critique. But having introduced Young and his assessment of Kuyper's and Hoeksema's covenant views, upon reflection we find ourselves constrained to respond a bit more specifically to Young's analysis and allegations.

This we intend to do in our next installment.

Hoeksema's covenantal view neo-Calvinistic, and our covenantal perspective Hyper-Covenantal?

And Young's old Princeton Presbyterian view Historic-Calvinism?

Or more to the point, biblical and Apostolic?

We shall see.

Meantime, if my colleagues can find the time to read the book, in particular the chapters mentioned, and would like to offer some critique of Young's analysis and conclusions, feel free.

Room will be provided in the SB.



The Messiah and His People

Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 12

Question 31. Why is He called Christ, that is, anointed?

Answer. Because He is ordained of God the Father, and anointed with the Holy Ghost, to be our chief Prophet and Teacher, who has fully revealed to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption; and to be our only High Priest, who by the one sacrifice of His body has redeemed us, and makes continual intercession with the Father for us; and also to be our eternal King, who governs us by His Word and Spirit, and who defends and preserves us in (the enjoyment of) that salvation, He has purchased for us.

Question 32. But why art thou called a Christian?

Answer. Because I am a member of Christ by faith, and thus am partaker of His anointing; that so I may confess His name, and present myself a living sacrifice of thankfulness to Him; and also that with a free and good conscience I may fight against sin and Satan in this life, and afterwards reign with Him eternally over all creatures.

Today we use the names “Jesus” and “Christ” alongside each other and interchangeably as though it has always been that way. But this is not the case. That our Savior went by the name Jesus was of no significance to those who knew Him as a child and a young man. But one day when He stood up in their synagogue and said, “I am the Christ,” they were highly offended, to the point that they tried to kill him (Luke 4:16-29).

The Savior's Title

The name Christ is from the Greek title *Christos*, which means “The Anointed One.” The Old Testament equivalent is the word “Messiah.” After Andrew had met Jesus, he came to his brother Simon Peter and said, “We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ” (John 1:41). Whereas “Jesus” was

the personal name of the Savior, “Christ” is His official name, His title. It describes the task given to Him by God's appointment.

All throughout the Old Testament, the important ritual of anointing was used when a new priest, prophet, or king was appointed. The ritual of anointing was symbolic of God's giving His Spirit to the one who was anointed (I Sam. 10:1, 9; 16:13-14). When a person is anointed of God, he receives the *right* and the *ability* to function in a special office. The Spirit marks that person out for his work, and the Spirit qualifies him to do that work. Similar rituals today include the laying on of hands and the oath of office.

All the anointings of the Old Testament looked ahead to the coming Messiah. In Psalm 2 we read of “the LORD and his anointed” (v. 2), who is later called “the Son” (vv. 7 and 12), and that it is by God's decree that He is appointed to be King in Zion (vv. 6-7). Psalm 45:7, addressed as praise to the groom who is Christ, says, “God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” What God had

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eternally decreed and prophesied during the Old Testament took place when Jesus, after being baptized by John, heard a voice from heaven, and received the Spirit in the form of a dove (Matt. 3:16-17). After this, Jesus had the right and ability to begin His public ministry.

Three Offices

Christ, God's anointed, has three offices to perform: the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. These were the three main offices instituted by God in the Old Testament. During the Old Testament, there was no one man that occupied all three of these offices, and in fact only one man, Melchizedek, that held both the office of priest and king. That's because these three offices cover everything that Jesus came to do for us as our Savior, a saving work that no one else could accomplish. The three offices teach us that He is a complete Savior, that all we need for salvation is to be found in Him alone.

When we think of the work of a prophet, we should not think merely of someone who speaks about the future, but of one who speaks God's Word. The catechism says that Christ has "fully revealed to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption." He does this as our "chief Prophet," that is, without Him there would be no revelation of redemption. He is Prophet, not just in the words He spoke, but in His very person and work as Savior (John 1:14 and 18). In this work He does not merely show us the way to the Father, but He becomes, through the cross, the only way to the Father (John 14:6). Today, He still functions as Prophet through the office of the ministry of the Word, which is an ongoing revelation from God concerning our redemption (Rom. 1:16-17).

The office of priest in the Old Testament included three important tasks, which were all brought together on the Great Day of Atonement. At this annual feast, the highpriest would 1) make a sacrifice for the people, 2) burn incense in the most holy place, and 3) come out and raise his arms and speak a blessing over God's people. These are the same three things that Christ has done, and continues to do, for us as our Priest. In His death, by the one-time sacrifice of His body, He has paid the price of our redemption (Heb. 7:27; 9:26-28). Today He continues in heaven as our eternal Priest,

making intercession for us (Heb. 7:25; 9:24), so that we may continually receive His Spirit and blessing (John 14:16).

A king is one who is appointed by God to rule. As king, he is given authority, and has much power at his disposal. We do not wait for Jesus to become king, in some future earthly kingdom, but Jesus rules today as a universal King, with dominion over all things (Eph. 1:20-22; Heb. 1:8-9). In the cross, Jesus fought and won the battle against our enemy Satan, and so today, because Satan has no rights over us, Jesus uses His Word and Spirit to break the remaining power of sin, and to keep us in the faith (John 17:14-17).

The three offices of Christ teach us that Jesus' saving work is particular in its scope, that is, that Jesus was not appointed by God to be the Savior of every man, but that He came by God's appointment to redeem only His elect. As Prophet, though the gospel of Christ is proclaimed to all the world, Christ communicates His Word effectually only to the elect (Matt. 22:14; Acts 13:48). As Priest, Christ did not die for, nor does He pray for and bless, all men (John 10:11; 17:9). As King, though His sovereign rule extends over all things in heaven and earth, He rules all things for the sake of His church (Eph. 1:22), and the powerful rule of His grace that overcomes sin extends only to the hearts of His elect (Eph. 2:1-10; Col. 3:7-8).

Christians: Partakers of Christ's Anointing

You call yourself a Christian. What does that mean? In our day it is a title that has been devalued. Many people go under the name "Christian" who are not Christian at all. It has become the title for the religion of the Western countries. But what does it really mean to be a Christian?

First, it means that I am joined to Christ by faith. This comes as a result of the work of regeneration by the Holy Spirit in me. It is a work of grace. I don't receive a new heart because I first believed in Jesus, but the Holy Spirit creates a new heart in me, and the result is that I believe (John 3:8). This regeneration causes me to trust completely in Christ for salvation, and to follow Him willingly as a disciple. The first disciples were called "Christians" by unbelievers because they observed in them a total commitment to Jesus Christ

(Acts 11:26). They were ready even to die for Him, and they counted this a privilege (I Pet. 4:16).

Second, being a Christian means that God has anointed me to hold an office. He gives me, as a believer, the *right* and the *ability* to serve as a prophet, a priest, and a king of the Christian faith. This means that, as Christians, you and I have a job to do. God has commissioned us. We are not merely accountants, truck drivers, painters, building contractors, doctors, nurses, lawyers, students, homemakers, or whatever our occupation is, but we are officebearers. Our life in this world is not simply one of eating, drinking, working, sleeping, aging, relaxing, and in the end dying. Rather, “the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God” (Gal. 2:20), so that whatever I do, I do it for the Lord, praising Him in it and by it. Wherever I am, whatever I am doing, I am a representative of Christ, a prophet, priest, and king of His, in this world. My life has a purpose.

What does that life look like?

As a prophet, I am one who understands that the Great Commission is also my commission. I know God’s Word, and I confess His name before the world. My speech is seasoned with the Word of God. Think of what that meant for the prophets in the Old Testament. Because they were filled with the Word of God to overflowing (that’s what it means to be a prophet), they were hunted (as Elijah), persecuted (as Jeremiah), and killed. All because they were ready to speak God’s Word. Is your speech seasoned with the Word of God? A Christian’s speech will be.


As a priest, I will present my entire self a “living sacrifice” of thanksgiving to the Lord (Rom. 12:1). In a world where every man lives for himself, we will burn as candles to give glory to God. We have been saved to serve. Just as Jesus came, not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life, so the priests of God will live in this world. This will include the priestly act of intercession. Praying for others is one of the most selfless expressions of Christian living.

As a king, I will live like a soldier under the King of kings. This means that I have all the power and weaponry of the King at my disposal. There are enemies—the devil, the world, and my sinful self—and they will fight to take me down, but I as a Christian, with the

Word of God as my sword, will watch and fight. And victory is in view, for hereafter we will live and reign with Him forever.

The anointing that we receive comes to expression especially when we are with other believers. As prophets we encourage and exhort one another from Scripture. As priests we serve one another in the body of Christ. As kings we fight together against our common enemy. And all together we recognize the importance of these offices in the body, by submitting ourselves today to the “prophets, priests, and kings” that Christ has appointed in the church in the special offices of “minister, deacons, and elders.” They especially are called to serve the body.

Questions for Discussion

1. What does the name “Christ” mean?
2. What does Jesus say about Himself in Luke 18-21, and why did this make the people of Galilee so angry?
3. What did God teach through the special offices of the Old Testament?
4. What is a prophet? What can we learn from the Old Testament about this office?
5. How is Christ our Prophet? Where does Christ function as Prophet today?
6. What is the Christian’s duty as a prophet?
7. What is a priest? What does the Old Testament teach us about the function of a priest?
8. What does Jesus do for us as our Priest? How does He function as our Priest today?
9. What is a king’s main task? What does Christ do as our King?
10. Who are the enemies of the kingdom of Christ? How do we fight against them?
11. How do the three offices of Christ reflect that God’s grace is particular?
12. What is a Christian, and do you live/look like a Christian?
13. How can I use my “office” as prophet, priest, and king for the advantage of others? 

Boys, Young Men, and Men

“I write unto you, young men...”

Where are you, boys? Are you turning into young men?

Where are you, young men? Are you turning into men?

What kind of question is that? Is not this a matter of nature? Do not boys just grow up into young men, and young men into men?

No, they do not. Men appear taller, bigger, older than their younger counterparts. But watch and listen. Listening to their language and watching their actions will convince you that inside the skin of many grown men are only boys. They are more interested in games of every kind than in reality. They are more interested in playing than in working.

Sin has deeply affected the process of growing and maturing. Many men rebel openly against the requirements the Lord has laid upon them. They forsake their homes and families in favor of “the guys” or their “buddies.” They break their marriage and baptism vows because they simply feel the need to shed their responsibilities. Or, as they explain it, they cannot handle the pressures on them. Or they want less boredom and more excitement.

Has sin affected your understanding of proper growth and maturity? Has this sinful way of thinking seeped into your mind? Beware!

What do you think? What do you young men think about your future? What are your goals? To be a godly man? In the church? In your home? Is your goal to be a responsible leader in your home, to the wife and children that the Lord may be pleased to give you? Is your goal to be an established, mature leader in the church,

using your strength and abilities for the care of your home and your church?

Or is your goal just to be the best on your sports team? Is it to get the highest score or to the highest level on the latest video game? Is your goal to have the most friends or to be the one most talked about? The pursuit of these things, making them goals, is harmful and dangerous. They are a form of idolatry, making a servant a lord. What are they worth in the Lord’s sight? What will they be worth in a few years? It is amazing that the things young people treasure so much become so useless in a few short years. Sadly, you will hear some men boasting, ten years later, of what they did in junior high or high school.

You young men have the ability to establish a goal, even a goal that is some ways off. You have the ability to turn your strength and your abilities to the pursuit of that goal. And you have the ability to keep pressing on toward that goal without distractions getting in your way. The right abilities are there. But keep them from wrong, unworthy goals.

Look at Ecclesiastes 11:9: “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes.” You boys and young men are called to cherish your youth. Play! Play at recess and play in your extra time. Do things that are fun, exciting, and enjoyable! Enjoy hobbies, and develop the skills and talents that are used in them. Wrestle, and kick the ball around. Enjoy the speed and coordination of the young bodies that the Lord has given you.

But remember, the Word of God continues. “But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.” “All these things” are not an end in themselves. They are preparation for growing up. They are servants, not lords; means, not ends. Look for a good judgment from God: keep the things of

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your youth as servants and as mere means. You must be able to leave them behind when God, by your maturity, will require it. You must know the judgment of God on them, should you drag them with you into your adulthood: “For childhood and youth are vanity” (Eccl. 11:10). There will come a time to leave your play and those freedoms of youth behind. When that time comes, do not leave them behind with sadness and reluctance. Above all, do not secretly hope for a return of those days, looking for some way to get them back! Why desire vanity? Take to heart the Word of God in I Corinthians 13:11: “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”

Those things of youth you must leave behind. But remember, you are also exchanging them for what is far better and far more glorifying to God, a life lived according to your proper, God-given maturity, using fully the gifts He has given you.

Use your strength of youth to prepare for manhood.

How do you prepare?

First, keep your heart and mind properly directed. You can think back to when you were a small boy. What did you want to be? Aside from being a fireman, police officer, or doctor, you wanted to be grown up, like your dad. You even played at grown up things. Keep that as your goal and priority. Especially over your play and recreation.

Then, in a more practical way, make sure that even your play and recreation do not become more important to you than your work and your responsibilities. Why do you have recess? Why do you have summer? Their purpose is to reinvigorate you for your work, the duties that the Lord has given you. If you can keep that purpose in mind, and even be thankful for your play because it serves that purpose, then you are on the right track.

Second, apply yourself with diligence to your work and your responsibilities! The first step to being a proper man is that you apply yourself with your strength and diligence to your work and your responsibilities.

Turn more and more from the things that will not matter in ten years, to the things that will. In those things that will matter invest the strength and abilities the Lord has given to you. In these actions you will be leading yourself. You are learning at the same time what it means to be a leader in your church, and in your future home. You will also become more confident in your exercise of the abilities the Lord has given you. You are testing them and proving them, those abilities that will be so valuable to you later on.

Third, direct yourself in your heart and soul. Here self-knowledge is important. Do you know who you are? Who are you inside of yourself? What are the directions and affections of your heart? You must be able to see inside of yourself.

To see inside yourself requires the light of God’s Word. Proverbs is a wonderful book to provide this light. It talks about the way of the righteous, the way of the wise, and also the way of a fool. There is light there to guide you in your outward life. But there is far more given in the Word of God. There is light to shine within. See

inside yourself with that light. What ways of folly and foolishness are in your heart? What ways of wisdom and righteousness are there?

That kind of knowledge also requires action. Those foolish ways in you, that you see in the light of Scripture—turn your heart away from them. Find them abhorrent and loathsome. The ways of righteousness and wisdom shown in God’s Word—turn your heart to them. Find them lovely and delightful.

Train your heart in this way, always away from foolishness and toward wisdom, always away from sin and toward righteousness. You also learn to confront yourself, to rebuke yourself, and to train yourself in the way of righteousness.


In this way you will be as a ship that has a rudder and a compass, equipped to be steered and directed toward an end and a goal. You will be able to keep yourself *well* in the way of righteousness, steering a direct course to the kingdom of heaven. You will not be as on a raft,

*Turn more and more
from the things
that will not matter
in ten years,
to the things that will.*

drifting here and there, unsure of your direction and course, and unable to steer, the helpless victim of whatever wind or current that comes along.

Keeping to these ways will help you to become a man of strength, of resolve, and of steadfast direction. You will be equipped to lead and guide yourself in a way that is pleasing to the Lord. You will live out of a heart that is consecrated to Him. But you will also be able to exercise solid leadership in your home. Your wife and your children will be able to place their confidence in

you, the man of the house. You will also be able to be a strong leader in the church of Jesus Christ. You will be inoculated against the vain desire to please men. You will be guarded against fleeing from the first sign of trouble. With strength you will be able to lead the church in the truth, in right worship, and in a life consecrated to God.

The strength of youth...for the strength of men, godly men! 

WHEN THOU SITTEST IN THINE HOUSE

REV. ARIE DEN HARTOG

Raising Our Covenant Daughters

It cannot be overemphasized that our covenant children must be raised in a way that is antithetic to the philosophy of the world. This is as true for our daughters as it is for our sons. We need to warn our daughters continually about the ungodly philosophy, lifestyle, behavior, and even dress of the world. The truth and reality of the covenant is maintained in our home and our churches when our daughters are raised to be spiritually separate from the ungodly world in which we live, and radically different in the whole of their thinking, conversation, and behavior. The world lives at enmity against God under the inspiration of the Evil One. It flaunts a lifestyle contrary to all the commandments of God, to all that is holy and beautiful before God. This world is not improving, contrary to what many imagine. The modern world has more and more power to influence our covenant children in the philosophy it promotes in its schools and every sphere of our society. This philosophy is strongly promoted by the prominent and popular women leaders of our

day, many advocating radical feminist ideals, promising to liberate the women of our day from what they characterize as some sort of evil bondage and suppression. The power of the media and advertising, Facebook and texting and social media, and every new electronic invention is being used for promoting the philosophy of our times. Love for the covenant of God and love for the beautiful covenant young daughters He has given us must motivate us to warn them continually as they are growing up in our homes.

Having said all of this however, it must also be emphasized that the instruction of our covenant daughters, as of our sons, must be centrally positive. The antithesis cannot be maintained unless our children know the blessed and glorious thesis of being sons and daughters of the covenant who were saved from this ungodly world by the wonderful grace and love of God. Our children must be constantly encouraged by the rewards promised for godly covenant living and the great significance of the lives of God's people in the sphere of His covenant.

Consider some of the beautiful statements in Scripture that speak of the blessed hope and glory particularly of the daughters of the covenant. In Psalm 144 the daughters of the covenant are compared to polished

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Previous article in this series: December 15, 2011, p. 132.

cornerstones of the palace of the king. The reference is to the palace of King Jesus, the Lord of lords and the King of glory. In the Psalter these words are versified, “whose daughters fair a queenly race are like the cornerstones that grace the palace of a king.” Proverbs 31 defines for us a truly virtuous woman. She is said to be extremely rare among the women of the world. She should in fact be greatly cherished and treasured for what God made her to be. She is described as being truly intelligent, having understanding far greater than those priding themselves in knowledge and understanding in the world. She is said to be wise and highly gifted. She truly knows what is right and good. She is very busy and industrious. She is most beneficial to her God-given husband in supporting and serving him in marriage and in his daily occupation. She is a great blessing to the covenant children born from her womb and nurtured on her lap, taught the truth and ways of the Lord from childhood on. She blesses those children with tender affection and great godly concern. She exercises great influence on her children in the formative years of their lives. She is the great role model for them in her own behavior, which will be the pattern for how they must live also in years to come.

Recently conducted studies and surveys have indicated the powerful influence of a good mother. She will affect the psychological well-being and personal stability of her children. She is a great inspiration and motivator for future success of these children in school and in their earthly careers and calling. She will be a pattern for the future to help her children to make good choices for life partners and to be able to establish lasting and strong loving marriages and homes of their own.

The godly mother has potential far greater than the humanistic mothers of the world. She is a great influence in the spiritual development and future role of her children in the church and kingdom of Christ. She is declared by God Himself to be worthy of praise and the source of great blessing. By her service to her own

children, she wins their love and respect and praise, which will be one of the greatest joys for her in her own life, when her children are out of the home and living on their own. Her husband, if he is godly, knows her great worth and honors her in love for what she has done and does.

In I Peter 3 the apostle warns wives about the vanity of the world and all their self adornment and self promotion. Then he speaks of the true adornment

and beauty of the daughters of the covenant. This beauty and glory is not physical and outward and sensual. Such beauty is of little lasting significance. It is soon gone, when women grow older and find themselves little regarded after they have lost the imagined eternal youthfulness they had pursued. The true beauty for godly women is the inner spiritual beauty of the heart. This is a beauty that is precious in God’s sight. It is the true beauty of holiness and of the fear of

God. This beauty is possessed by those whom God has chosen and redeemed in Christ and sanctified by His Spirit and made glorious in His own sight. They are those who live out of faith in Jesus Christ. Their strength and joy and hope is in Him and in His approval on their lives.

There are certain definite virtues of life and behavior spoken of in connection with the true beauty and real significance of godly women. The beautiful young girls of the covenant must be trained in such a way that these virtues grow and increase in them and prepare them for true Christian living.

Godly modesty is one of these great virtues. This modesty is the opposite of the pride and scandalously immoral behavior of the women of the world. The world glorifies women who are attractive in face and body and shape and dress and who are able to excite the sinful passions of men. This is all considered to be a great source of pleasure and entertainment in the world. Very young girls are taught the world’s philosophy on this. They are learning to refine this as a kind of science in their lives. Millions of dollars are spent on this by the world. Most movies of the world have sexual attraction

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and depraved lust as their main themes. These are promoted as though they are the greatest excitement imaginable and something to be pursued by all. Glossy magazines displaying popular women on their front pages promote this. The songs and dances of the world are all about this. Diets and exercise are promoted and popular for these reasons.

But our beloved covenant young daughters must be taught from childhood about the true beauty of godly virtues, and the inner spiritual beauty of the heart. They must be taught that there is no greater joy and blessing and fulfillment than in serving God in His church and kingdom and in a life devoted to His glory. Modesty, the fear of God, godly humility, holiness before God, love for God and true love for the neighbor, meekness and kindness, care and compassion for others, faithfulness and steadfastness in the principles of God's Word no matter what the personal cost to oneself—these are glorious virtues in the sight of God.

The virtuous woman is the one who has great wisdom, usually taught to her by her godly mother and father in the days of her childhood. She has a wisdom that far excels the boasted wisdom and knowledge of this world. This wisdom has great practical benefit for her in her own personal life to bring the assurance of the favor and blessing of God and peace and joy and satisfaction to her. This wisdom will enable her to seek sincerely the salvation and true good of others whom she serves.

The inspired apostle Paul summarizes the instruction that must be given to the younger women in the church when he advises pastor Timothy how these members of the church must be instructed in the truth. "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some are already turned aside after Satan" (1 Tim. 5:14).

If God's covenant is to continue in our generations, in our homes and families, our daughters must be trained in the way of the covenant. They must be taught how to be faithful wives and mothers, how to build spiritually strong and beautiful homes, and to raise a new generation of God-fearing members of the church of the Lord.

Our daughters must be taught to be "keepers of the


home." They are to be guardians of the home, keeping it from the evil influences of the world and its destruction by the devil. They must be devoted to creating a spiritual atmosphere in the home with godly order and discipline. Our daughters must be trained to work diligently in making their homes a happy and wonderful place to live, a healthy environment for the raising of children, and a pleasant place for exercising Christian hospitality to those that in the providence of the Lord might enter the home and be invited to experience its blessedness. This calling requires the godly virtues of humility and self-sacrifice.

One author that I have often read in the course of my pastoral ministry put it well when he made a list of what is required for being a godly mother in a Christian home. Consider this list. The godly mother in the covenant home must be a child psychologist and a gifted educator of children, a highly qualified nurse and a medical practitioner, a home economist, an interior decorator, an expert dietician, and a gifted artist who is willing to share her God-given talents to train others in the finer things of life. More things I am sure could rightly be added to this long list. All these are practical gifts, virtues that will bring greater benefits to others as well. Well-trained godly daughters will grow up to be of greater and more lasting significance than the women of the world who might excel even to the point of becoming CEOs in the rich and powerful corporations of the world, or popular politicians, making decisions about world affairs and the course of the nations of the world.

God does not intend that all young women marry. He does not give children to all. Many of the same virtues, gifts, and training of young women mentioned above will also equip those who in the providence of the Lord remain single all their life and those who do not receive children. Consider how many single women are mentioned in the Bible and praised for their role in the church and kingdom of God. Think of Mary and Martha and all the other devoted women who served the Lord during His earthly ministry. Some of these were married, some were single all their life long. Think of Dorcas, who lived in Joppa. She is said to have been "a woman full of good works and almsdeeds." Think of Lydia in Philippi, whose heart the Lord opened.

She was one of the first converts in Philippi. After her conversion she opened her home to serve the newly formed church in Philippi. Think of Priscilla, who was prominent in service of the Lord in several churches. Think of Phebe, whom Paul calls “our sister in the Lord and servant of the church” (see Rom. 16). Read the last chapter of the book of Romans and pay attention to the many women listed there and the greetings and the praise addressed to them. Not all of these were married. A number were single. They were dearly loved

by the apostle of the Lord and highly respected in the church.

What is most significant about all of those mentioned above is the fact that all of them, by the grace of God in their lives, loved the Lord, His truth, and also His church. They made the care of the church and her members the central focus of their lives and were ready to serve her with great zeal, self-sacrifice, and devotion. What great service they accomplished for the glory of God and the great benefit of His beloved church. 

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

MR. DON DOEZEMA

Upon This Rock (5)

This Thing Is from Me

This thing is *from me* (I Kings 12:24). So said the Lord through the prophet Shemaiah concerning the division of the kingdom. And then, through the prophet Hosea, these words: “They have set up kings, but *not by me*: they have made princes, and *I knew it not*” (Hosea 8:4).

A contradiction, it would appear: God did it...and God did not do it. The two prophets, however, though they speak concerning the same history, view it from different perspectives—God’s and man’s. Shemaiah makes clear that God ruled the defection of Jeroboam and the ten tribes by His own secret counsel. He had in fact announced to Jeroboam, “Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee” (I Kings 11:31). “This thing is from me.” However, neither Jeroboam nor the people of Israel rebelled against Rehoboam in obedience to God. The ten tribes knew full well that in separating themselves from the house of David they were rebelling against the revealed will of God for them. “They have set up kings,

but not by me.” Never could the ten tribes attribute their secession to God’s decree. Says Calvin, “God so works, that this pretext does not yet excuse the ungodly, since they aim at something else, rather than to execute his purpose.”

“This thing is from me.” True, that was, of the secession of the ten tribes at the beginning of their history as a separate kingdom. True, also, at the end of their history when they were destroyed by the Assyrians, the rod of God’s anger. The loss of the ten tribes was *of the Lord*.

But how can that be? Did not God have better things in mind for Israel? Did the striking prophecy of Balaam, who was given a glimpse of Israel’s future, come to nothing? “How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river’s side.... God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn: he shall eat up the nations his enemies...” (Num. 24:3-9). And this: “Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!” (Num. 23:23). And: “God is not a man, that he should

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Previous article in this series: January 15, 2012, p. 188.

lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? ... He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel; the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them" (Num. 23:19-21).

Yes, God indeed did, and does, have something better in mind for Israel.

But who *is* Israel? That is the question.

Surely the twelve tribes in the desert, the people who inherited the land of Canaan, the people of the northern and the southern kingdoms, the people who were exiled in Babylon—these were Jacob and Israel. They were God's special people in the old dispensation.

But what an imperfect manifestation they were of the true Israel of God! The chaff with the wheat. "The glory of the remnant according to the election," writes Herman Hoeksema, "shrouded in the shame of reprobate Israel according to the flesh." That was the Israel that Balaam saw before him in the plains of Moab. But then, for just a moment, the range of his vision extended beyond the earthly manifestation of the Israel of God. God gave him to see Israel in its real nature. Not, in the final analysis, the kingdom of David and Solomon—though the vision of Balaam was in a sense realized in the golden age of Israel under those two great types of Christ. But that typical realization was both imperfect and short-lived. Nor, for that matter, can Balaam's eulogy be applied to the church in the new dispensation, as to her physical, earthly manifestation. Poverty and persecution are the true church's lot. What Balaam was given to see was the church as to its *spiritual* character. A spiritual kingdom with Christ at its head, gaining a spiritual victory with spiritual power against spiritual enemies. This is the Israel of God. Ultimately, the church triumphant. But the church as she always is, essentially and spiritually.

"The shout of a king is among them." Again, typically, David. But in fulfillment, Christ. By Him Israel gains the victory. For by Him they are redeemed from sin and delivered from the power of death. By Him they overcome the world. By Him the Israel of God has the victory already now and is assured of the final victory at Christ's return in judgment. No iniquity in

Jacob. No perverseness in Israel. Because God sees them as they are in Christ.

Israel's very history, in fact, demonstrates that. Jacob, loved; Esau, hated...before they were born (Rom. 9:11-13). Egypt, given for Israel's ransom (Is. 43:3). Israel, chosen by God to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth (Deut. 7:6)—to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises (Rom. 9:4). Defection from David/Christ—annihilation (II Kings 17:22, 23). The natural seed of Abraham as the sand of the sea...a remnant saved (Is. 10:22). Ninevites, repentance, salvation (Matt. 12:41). The whole of Israel's history, like one grand mural with this theme: salvation...by grace (Rom. 9).

In the clearer light of the new dispensation, we can understand that. Did Old Testament Israel have any sense of it?

What stood on the foreground in the old dispensation was an earthly kingdom. The favor of God was reflected in Israel's political independence and in her material prosperity. And her battles were fought with spears and swords. True, the people of Israel did learn repeatedly, by experience, that the outcome of the battle was not decided by numbers or weaponry, but by faith. Joshua, Gideon, Samson, Jonathan, David, and many others would have testified to that. But did they understand that the salvation of the "house of Jacob" (cf. Luke 1:32, 33) never hinged on the outcome of the nation's wars against her enemies?

In large part they did not. The Jews of Jesus' day looked for, and wanted, an earthly Messiah. Even Jesus' disciples, up until the time of the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost, were unable to rise above the typical. They clung tenaciously to the notion that redemption must somehow be tied to the earthly commonwealth. "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" they ask Jesus just prior to His ascension.

No wonder, then, that Jonah was unsettled by the conversion of the Ninevites and feared that all would

*"The shout of a king
is among them."*

be lost if Israel were to be swallowed up by the world powers of his day. He did not understand that the Israelitish state was but a shadow of the heavenly. As he saw it, were the northern kingdom to perish, God's covenant with Abraham, at least with respect to ten of the twelve tribes of Israel, would come to nothing.

But such was not the case. Why not? How is it to be explained that the promise of God to Abraham did not fail, either in whole or in part, when He "removed Israel out of his sight" (II Kings 17:23), or when He later rejected the Jewish nation. The explanation is not to be found only in this, that God's promise to Abraham (that his seed would be as the sand of the seashore) was realized in the coming in of the Gentiles—as if this were an alternative plan made necessary when those with whom God had originally established His covenant proved unworthy. Nor is the explanation simply this, that the promise of God to Abraham was not limited to his natural children but included also believing Gentiles; for then it would appear that the promise failed with respect at least to part of those who were included in His covenant. Of critical importance here is this, that, as Hoeksema put it, "the Jews as such *never were the seed of Abraham*."

Certainly it is true that during the old dispensation the true seed of Abraham were to be found almost exclusively among Abraham's natural descendants. But Scripture never equates the two, as if "seed of Abraham" and "Jew" were one and the same. Of whom, in reality, was Abraham father? Scripture is clear. "Of all them that believe" (Rom. 4:11). Paul drives the point home: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; ... but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly" (Rom. 2:28, 29). And to whom was the promise made? "To Abraham and his seed" (Gal. 3:16). And the inspired apostle adds, "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ." Those only, therefore, who are *in Christ* are, with Him, heirs of the promise: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29).


"Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (Gal. 3:7). Christ said the same. "I know that ye are Abraham's seed," He declared to the unbelieving Jews with reference to their natural descent (John 8:37). But, He added, "If

ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" (John 8:39).

In studying the history of Israel, therefore, we must be careful to distinguish, as it were, between Israel and Israel—that is, between natural and spiritual Israel. The former lived, as we say, in the "sphere of the covenant." But God's love, God's promises, God's compassion, God's covenant—always these were and are particular (i.e., to the elect only). Isaiah could cry, "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved" (cf. Rom. 9:27). Does this mean that "the word of God [i.e., His promise to Abraham's seed] hath taken none effect" (Rom. 9:6)? No, for "they are not all Israel that are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children" (Rom. 9:6, 7). The truth is that "*all* [not part of] *Israel* shall be saved" (Rom. 11:26).

Israel as a nation served as a type. And it is in the nature of a type that it fails. It must disappear and leave the heirs of the promise longing for a "better country, that is, an heavenly" (Heb. 11:16). The Israel of the old dispensation, as a type, found its fulfillment spiritually in the Israel of the new. No longer is there a physical aspect to the battle of the church. For the church is no longer a nation among nations, but the gathering of those that are called out of every nation. And the battle of the church, the battle between light and darkness, cannot be waged with physical weapons of any kind, for "we wrestle not against flesh and blood..." (Eph. 6:12). It is fought with the "whole armor of God" (Eph. 6:11). The strength of the combatants is faith. Their only weapon is the Word of God. And the battle is the Lord's. "The shout of a King is among them."

Already they are "more than conquerors" (Rom. 8:37), for their Lord is raised from the dead, exalted in the highest glory, and given all power in heaven and in earth (Matt. 28:18). Not yet, however, does the beauty of their inheritance shine forth in all its glory. For that, the church awaits the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then will be the final fulfillment of the Old Testament type of Israel and Canaan. Then will the tabernacle of God be with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God (Rev. 21:3).

Next time: Israel's treacherous sister. 

Invitation to the 2012 BRF Conference!

Theme and Speeches

"Ye shall be witnesses unto me," declared the risen Lord to His eleven disciples, just moments before He ascended into heaven. According to Christ's command, prophecy, and promise, His gospel, church, and kingdom have spread from Jerusalem to Judaea to Samaria and "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Today, the Christian church is "more global" than ever before, but the church's official work in its missionary labours and the believer's personal witness are as necessary as they have ever been. But what must we say as Christ's witnesses? How must we witness? Where and when? We need direction from the Word of God, plus wisdom and courage!

To help us in this vital calling—whether in far-off climes or in our own families or neighbourhoods—the 2012 British Reformed Fellowship (BRF) Family Holiday Conference at Lorne House, N. Ireland (28 July – 4 August) has chosen as its theme "Ye Shall Be My Witnesses." Profs. David Engelsma and Herman Hanko are to develop this subject in the six main speeches:

1. The Divine Calling to Witness
2. The Content of the Witness
3. The Official Witness of the Church
4. The Personal Witness by the Word
5. The Personal Witness of a Godly Life
6. The Manner of a Christian Witness

Also, Rev. Martyn McGeown of the Limerick Reformed Fellowship (LRF) in the Republic of Ireland is to give a special lecture on missionary work.

Fellowship and CPRC Building

Lord willing, saints shall be present from all parts of the British Isles: England, Wales, Scotland, Republic of Ireland, and Northern Ireland; plus friends from

various parts of continental Europe and further afield, including brethren from the Protestant Reformed Churches in the US and Canada. Do come and join us! In short, members of Christ's one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church shall come from near and far, and from north, south, east, and west, to learn about witnessing and to enjoy fellowship with each other and with the triune God, for "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

On the Lord's Day during the conference (29 July), we plan to hold two services, one at the conference centre and the other at the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church (CPRC) in Ballymena. This way, we provide Sunday worship services for members of the CPRC who are not at the conference and are unable



Lorne House

to journey to Lorne House, and also for those at the conference who do not fancy the hour and a half round trip to Ballymena. Also, this arrangement will enable those from the British Isles or Europe or the rest of the world who would like to see the new CPRC building to do so—provided they have rented a vehicle or can get a lift/ride with someone to one or both of the services in Ballymena!

Venue and Activities

Lorne House is a beautiful old building with lots of

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

character—complete with a solarium and free wireless Internet access!—set in a 20-acre estate just 5-10 minutes' walk from Belfast Lough with beautiful coastal walks both east and west. These will make for excellent strolls after, say, evening lectures! The grounds of Lorne include a campsite (where some have already told us that they will be staying in tents for the week of the conference), a games room, woods, two fine children's



Play park

play parks, a stream (where some can go on the river run), an archery range, and a bungee trampoline. These last three activities are instructor-led and paid for at the conference.

For those who would like to spend some of their free time off-site, a train station is nearby, with frequent service to Belfast (the capital of Northern Ireland) just eight miles to the west, and Bangor (a seaside resort)

only five miles to the east.

The BRF is arranging two day trips. One is to the new Titanic museum, which will open in the spring of 2012 in time for the centenary of the launch and sinking of the famous Belfast-made RMS Titanic, the largest passenger steamship in the world at the time. As the Titanic T-shirt says, "It was all right when it left here!" The captain rammed it at full speed into a large iceberg on its maiden voyage to New York!

The second trip is along the east Antrim coast—one of Rev. Slopsema's favourite scenic drives. This will include the impressive Carrickfergus Castle, built by the Normans in the twelfth century, plus a lighthouse, walled garden, harbour, waterfall, etc. (D.V.).

Cost and Booking Forms

The cost for one week full board is as low as the BRF can make it, while retaining the hope of breaking even, for we are going to one of the most reasonably-priced conference centres in the British Isles, and the BRF keeps its running expenses as low as possible.

Booking forms are on the BRF website (www.britishreformedfellowship.org.uk), and those in North America who are interested in attending should contact Mrs. Cyndi Kalsbeek (ckalsbeek@yahoo.com). Those elsewhere should communicate with Mary Stewart (angusmarystewart@tiscali.co.uk).

We hope to see many of you at the 12th Biennial BRF Conference in Northern Ireland! ☺

BRING THE BOOKS...

MR. CHARLES TERPSTRA

The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church, Volume 7: Our Own Time, by Hughes Oliphant Old. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. Pp. Xx + 714. Paper. ISBN 978-0-8028-1771-6. [Reviewed by Angus Stewart.]

Seven Monumental Volumes

"A work of supererogation"—that is how one min-

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

ister describes reading all seven volumes of Hughes Oliphant Old's *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church* (1998-2010). I couldn't disagree more!

Having read every page of all seven volumes and having eagerly waited for them to come off the press, I can say that I have found Old's history of preaching to be a delight, not a drudgery, never mind above the call of duty. It is not an exaggeration to say that Old's magisterial multi-volume work is far and away the best in its area. The author's grasp of and love for his subject, his comprehensive sweep of preaching in various countries and "schools," his

lively prose and his personal knowledge of some of the ministers all make for fascinating reading.

Contents

The same engaging style and verve displayed throughout Old's monumental series characterizes his seventh and final volume entitled *Our Own Time*. Seven of the twelve chapters deal with preaching in the United States: "mainline" liberals (ch. 1), Arminian Billy Graham (ch. 2), Presbyterians (ch. 3), Roman Catholics (ch. 6), "Black Preaching" (ch. 8), Charismatics (ch. 9), and megachurch preachers (ch. 11). Old's global interest comes out in his treatment of Protestant preaching in sub-Saharan Africa (ch. 4); Roman Catholic Liberation preaching in Latin America (ch. 5); Eastern Orthodox preaching in Romania in connection with its 1989 revolution (ch. 7); as well as preaching in the British Isles (ch. 10) and East Asia (ch. 12). Thus Old manages to include South America (and Central America), Africa, Europe (the British Isles and Romania) and Asia, as well as North America. Only the continent of Australia goes untreated. As well as requiring reading a lot of sermons and a judicious selection and arrangement of his material, all this calls for a 'feel' for various countries and the history of their churches, preaching, and preachers on five of the world's six continents (not including Antarctica). No mean task!

So who, besides Billy Graham mentioned earlier, are some of the better known preachers included in Old's seventh volume? Sinclair B. Ferguson, a Scottish Presbyterian in S. Carolina; Archbishop Peter Akinola of Nigeria, a leader of the Southern Anglicans against the liberal, pro-homosexual, white Anglicans of the Western world; Martin Luther King, Jr., the African-American civil rights leader; Oral Roberts, the charismatic televangelist; evangelical John Stott of the Church of England; California megachurch pastor, author, and radio preacher Chuck Swindoll; and "Watchman Nee," author of allegorical devotional works.

In late 2007, I e-mailed Hughes Oliphant Old to see if he would be interested in treating Herman Hoeksema in volume 7. After mentioning that he had "heard of Hoeksema" and stating that "a few years ago I would have been pleased to have received his sermons," Mr. Old very graciously declined my offer to send him Hoeksema's

Righteous By Faith Alone and *Behold He Cometh!* in light of his failing eyesight and his approaching publisher's deadline. One wonders how Hoeksema would have looked among the extremely variegated preachers in Old's final volume, many of whom are heretical!

Heretical Preachers

Sadly, in keeping with the rampant apostasy in the church world of our day, volume 7, aptly entitled *Our Own Time*, covers what can only be described, in the light of the Reformed confessions, as various false gospels and false gospellers in false churches (*Belgic Confession* 29; *Westminster Confession* 25:4-6). As well as Eastern Orthodoxy, Romanism, and Liberation theology, we receive an unhealthy dose of liberal Protestantism, defending sodomy and the murder of unborn babies, and pleading for the "social gospel" of big (civil) government, the nanny state. Riddled as they are with higher criticism of God's Word, often enslaved to existentialism and trained in liberal seminaries, it is no wonder that the "mainline" preachers degenerated into parroting left-wing "causes." Left-wing ideology is also preached by some of the black American ministers and the East Asians that Old mentions. Old also throws into the mix Arminians, a woman preacher, and the folly of the Charismatics, with their "healings."

Old has an appropriately-titled section on "Sister" Aimee Semple McPherson: "Preaching as Entertainment." In keeping with her scandals (her mysterious disappearance in 1926 and her disastrous third marriage while her husband was living) and bizarre services of healing and receiving the Holy Spirit are her flamboyant preaching techniques and aids. Her sermons were "enlivened" with fire alarms, fog horns, police sirens, skits, bands, and the dramatic use of lighting. In one sermon, a camel from a local zoo was brought into her Los Angeles church. On occasion, Sister Aimee made her pulpit entrance on a white motorcycle. "As Charlie Chaplin is supposed to have said, she was a superb actress, as good as any Hollywood ever produced" (p. 403)!

Old's Fatal Flaw

The most chilling part of Old's seventh volume comes in his discussion of John MacArthur's sermons on Christ's exorcising demons:

I really do not believe in Satan, demonic spirits, and demon possession. Maybe I ought to, but I don't. I am willing to agree that I may have been too strongly influenced by the intellectual world in which I was brought up to fully grasp the full teaching of Scripture, but that is the way it is (p. 556).


How awful! Also deeply disturbing is Old's related statement: "I have to admit that the caveats of the Enlightenment still obscure my thoughts from time to time. I suppose I am troubled by a shadow of doubt, but then the same would be true of many in my congregation" (p. 556). So this is in his church too!

This is the huge flaw in Old's thinking: unbelief in the inerrant, holy Scriptures, which goes hand in hand with the dark doubts of the "Enlightenment." Think it through: If there is no Satan, then what of the Fall in Genesis 3 and the many references to him and his fallen angels throughout the Bible? And what of our Saviour's temptation in the wilderness and the cross as His victory over Satan? If the Lord Jesus wrongly reckoned that He was tempted by the devil those forty days, that He drove out demons, and that He defeated Satan by His death, can He really be the incarnate Son of God?

One can appreciate much in Old's learned and persuasive series. He wants to recover expository preach-

ing. He wants the historic church's theology taught from the pulpit. He wants preaching to be viewed as worship and done to the glory of God. All true and well said. But there is a huge "But!" The only thing that can truly support all this is God-breathed Scripture, so that "all" of it is "profitable for doctrine" (II Tim. 3:16) to equip the man of God (v. 17), who is solemnly charged to "preach the word" (4:2).

Along with Old's rejection of Scripture's infallibility (John 10:35) and acceptance of higher criticism comes his false charity towards the various false gospels and false churches. There is a logic to all this. Not accepting the Bible's teaching on the devil ("I really do not believe in Satan"), how can Old believe its testimony that the evil one sends forth false teachers (II Cor. 11:13-14) who preach "another gospel" of "another Jesus" through "another spirit" (vv. 3-4) and so establish and maintain "synagogues of Satan" (Rev. 2:9; 3:9)?

Not Old, but the Reformed creeds and the Reformed tradition point the way to the faithful reading and preaching of the Scriptures as worship in true Christian churches in our own time and until the Lord Jesus returns. For Old (learned and eloquent as he is) and his magisterial series (with its fascinating description of the preaching of both true and false churches) can take us only so far. 

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER

Minister Activities

Rev. Garret Eriks, pastor of the Hudsonville, MI PRC, declined the call he had received from the Edgerton, MN PRC.

Seminarian Vernon Ibe's internship among the members of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI, came to an end at the close of 2011. Grace was very thankful to God for giving them the privilege of getting

Mr. Wigger is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

to know Vernon, his wife, Melody, and their son, MJ, and for the way He used them to minister to their congregation. We add our prayer to theirs when we ask our Lord to continue to bless his remaining preparation for the ministry of the Word and sacraments in the Philippines.

A Farewell Program for the Ibe family was held at Grace on Sunday evening, January 1, with time afterwards for a personal good-bye from the congregation over coffee and cookies.

Sister-Church Activities

Prof. Russell Dykstra, along with his wife, Carol, traveled to Singapore and the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church on Wednesday, December 28, to give the congregation preaching supply for four Sundays in January. Along the way there were several delays, so instead of arriving in 25 hours, the Dykstras arrived in 50 hours—with no luggage. Nevertheless, there were many saints from the CERC at the airport to give them a warm welcome. Hopefully the Dykstras

will return in late January with no delays, to begin seminary classes at the end of the month. Prof. Herman Hanko just completed a six-week stay in Singapore. He, his wife, and his sister returned home to west Michigan the same week the Dykstras left. On the way home the Hankos stopped off to spend Christmas in the Philippines with their son-in-law and daughter, Rev. Daniel and Sharon Kleyn, and the congregation of the Berean PRC in Manila. Prof. Hanko informed us that the congregation in Singapore is doing well, and while they have passed through a rather difficult time during the past weeks, that difficulty has served to strengthen the bonds between them as a congregation. Prof. Hanko also writes, "And so we bid you farewell. I recall that I said to you—it must have been at least three years ago—that we would likely not see you again until we meet in heaven, but the Lord sent us back more than once and showed us how little we know of what He has in store for us. But we both are now reasonably certain that this is indeed the last time, for the trip is really getting too much for two old people over 80 years old. We shall have to wait to see you again until those of you who can come to the States to see us, or we shall have to wait till we all meet in glory to be with Christ." Prof. Hanko also urges us to pray for the saints there, especially for the young people in their zeal. The need for solid ongoing preaching is great. "And may our sister-church relationship flourish and enrich both the CERC and our churches."

Rev. Angus Stewart, pastor of the Covenant PRC, our sister church in Ballymena, NI, presented a public lecture at their church on December 30 on the subject, "Scripture Alone." Rev. Stewart answered three questions at that lecture. What does this great Reformed slogan mean? How does this powerful truth preserve Christ's church and followers from errors old and new? And, How does Scripture alone relate to the church's preaching and confessions?

Mission Activities

The week before Christmas our denomination's missionaries to the Philippines, Rev. Daniel Kleyn and Rev. Richard Smit, visited contacts we have in Negros Occidental. Our churches have been in touch with some of these men for many years (since the late 1990s). Various delegations visited them while the Philippines was being investigated by our churches as a possible mission field. Contact had been maintained ever since, also through occasional visits and conferences. Our missionaries flew out of Manila on Tuesday, December 20. After landing in Bacolod City they drove down to Inayauan.

On Wednesday a conference was held in the church building of the Reformed Free Church in Inayauan. Rev. Smit spoke on "Saving Faith," and later in the morning Rev. Kleyn spoke on "God's Counsel." There were 35 adults who attended the conference, indicating to our missionaries that there is significant interest in the Reformed faith in this part of Negros Occidental. After lunch there was a time for questions and answers, which lasted a couple of


hours. Many good questions were asked regarding the speeches, as well as on various other subjects. Our two missionaries are very thankful for the opportunity they had to meet these men, to get to know them, and to get a sense of their sincere interest in the truth. Revs. Kleyn and Smit arrived home again late Thursday afternoon, thankful for safe travels and for the blessed work the Lord gives them to do.

Young People's Activities

The Young People's Society of Hope PRC in Redlands, CA invited their congregation to join them for a singspiration after their evening worship service on Sunday, December 25, to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

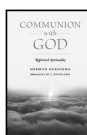
The Young People's activity committee of Calvary PRC in Hull, IA hosted a Minute to Win It competition on Monday, January 2, at Trinity High School. This was a parents vs. kids competition.

The young people of First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI hosted an Open Gym/Pizza Social at Eastside Christian School on December 27. All west Michigan PRYP society members were invited to join First for a night of fun and fellowship.

The Edgerton, MN Young People's Society invited the young people and congregations of Hull, Calvary, Doon, and Heritage for a Christmas singspiration on December 25. Edgerton PRC also requested a special number from the young people of Hull, Calvary, and Doon. 

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Join the Book Club. **FREE!** Receive the newest book



Join the RFPA Book Club and receive a FREE copy of our newest release, *Communion with God* (\$28.95). A biblical, doctrinal, and Christ-centered devotional, this book expresses the knowing, desiring, feeling, and acting of the faith of the heart that is near to God. Offer valid through 2/28/2012.

Sign up now at www.rfpa.org.

Book Club Terms and Benefits:

- 35% discount for members in the United States, 30% discount for international members on all RFPA publications
- FREE shipping on all orders
- FREE membership. Members may cancel their membership at any time.
- Visit www.rfpa.org for more information.

Wedding Anniversary

It is with praise and thankfulness to our heavenly Father that we can announce and celebrate the 60th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents:

HENK and KORIE NIEUWENKAMP,

who were united in marriage on the 30th of January, 1952.

God has truly blessed us in the love, care, and instruction provided by godly parents as these. They have touched the hearts of many fellow saints in our churches, and our prayers are that God grants them many more years in our midst. "For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).

- * Henry & Karen Nieuwenkamp
 - * Albert & Maryse Nieuwenkamp
 - * Korien Sampson
- grandchildren & great grandchildren
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Teacher Needed

The Protestant Reformed Christian School of Dyer, IN is accepting applications for a lower grade teaching position for the 2012/2013 school year. Interested applicants can send a letter of inquiry and resume to the school. If you have questions regarding the position, contact Ryan VanOverloop at 219-558-2660 (school) or 219-374-6547 (home), or Education Committee chairman Phil Kooiker at (708) 429-7890.

Classis

Classis West of the PRC will convene on Wednesday, March 7, 2012, 8:30 A.M., at the Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, CA. All material for the agenda of this meeting must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than Monday, February 6. Delegates should be aware that an officebearers' conference on the subject "Herman Bavinck: The Theologian" is being planned for Tuesday, March 6. All delegates must inform Hope's Clerk, Mr. Peter Smit, of the details of their travel arrangements and lodging needs. Mr. Smit can be contacted at (909) 797-7933, or clerk@hopeprc.org.

Rev. Douglas Kuiper,
Stated Clerk

Seminary

All students enrolled in the Protestant Reformed Seminary who will be in need of financial assistance for the coming school year are asked to contact the Student Aid Committee secretary, Mr. Stefan Engelsma (Phone: 616-662-9363). This contact should be made before the next scheduled meeting, February 20, 2012, at 7 P.M. at Kaptein, Dykstra & Associates in Grandville, D.V.

Student Aid Committee
Stefan Engelsma, Secretary

Notice!

Due to an increase in postal rates, an international *Standard Bearer* subscription will now be \$30.00 and a new first-time international subscription will be \$15.00, effective immediately.

Reformed Witness Hour February 2012

Date	Topic	Text
February 5	"Hope for Those Who Are Empty"	Ruth 2:18-23
February 12	"Seeking Rest in Marriage"	Ruth 3:1-10
February 19	"The Conversion of Ruth"	Ruth 3:11-18
February 26	"Boaz: A Willing Redeemer"	Ruth 4:1-10