

The Standard Bearer

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Preaching in the Interest of God's Elect

"Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; but hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Savior; to Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior."

Titus 1:1-4

The apostle Paul and one of his spiritual sons, Titus, preached in many cities on the island of Crete. The fruit of their labors was that in many of the cities there was a gathering of those who were converted by the Holy Spirit to the Christian faith. However, Paul was able to stay only a short while. This left much work to be done in the continuing spiritual development of these groups. So Paul appointed Titus to stay and continue the work so that churches could be organized (1:5).

This brief letter of Paul to Titus contains a list of the

things that Paul did not have time to do. Paul asks Titus to do those things that were incomplete (wanting). This letter presents a good perspective of the work that must be done in a group of young believers so they might be organized as an instituted church of Christ.



Paul identifies himself in our text in three ways.

That about which the apostle is the most conscious is that which he states first: "a servant of God." Literally, a slave. This was the perspective of Paul, James, and Peter: Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:10; Philippians 1:1; James 1:1; II Peter 1:1. Would that be the first way I would identify myself?

A slave is one who is owned by his master and is always obliged to do only what the master desires. Paul is God's servant/slave from three perspectives: by virtue of creation, by virtue of redemption, and by virtue of his calling! The wonder of being a slave by redemption is that the very grace that redeems is also the grace that makes Paul and us willing to be slaves of the Most High God. Grace makes it our joy to belong to our faithful Savior and Lord!

As a slave of God, Paul is conscious of his dependence on his Master. He is dependent on his Master's

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constant flow of grace to desire to be in His service. He is dependent on his Master to supply him with the energy to do his calling faithfully. And he is dependent on his Master for any “success” in his work.

Second, Paul identifies himself as “an apostle of Jesus Christ.” An apostle is literally one sent out by Jesus Himself. Like the other eleven (but by special revelation, Acts 22:14, 15; Gal. 1:12ff.; II Cor. 12:1-7), Paul was called, equipped, and sent out by Jesus Himself to serve the entire church. By identifying himself this way Paul is showing the weight of this letter. It is not just friendly, fatherly advice. Rather, Christ is speaking through Paul to Titus (and to us).

Thirdly, Paul identifies himself as a preacher. To him was committed the task of preaching God’s Word (3). Paul was entrusted with this calling by nothing less than divine command. God, our Savior, commissioned him. He must obey! And when he carries out this calling of preaching, Paul (and all those so commissioned) may be assured that God will use that preaching of His Word to save and to give grace.

What was committed to Paul? God’s Word concerning the Savior. The good news of Jesus Christ, the only Savior, was spoken of in the Scriptures as Paul had them. As he was inspired to write to Timothy, those holy scriptures were able to make wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, for all Scripture is given by inspiration of God (II Tim. 3:15, 16). Further, committed to Paul was the responsibility to preach, i.e., to serve as a herald of the King, to proclaim authoritatively the gospel.



Paul has this calling for three specific purposes.

Our text expresses the first purpose as: “according to the faith of God’s elect.” The calling to preach is given “with a view to” God’s elect. God’s elect are those God chooses in eternity, giving them to and uniting them with Christ forever to save and take them to eternal glory. By saying that he preaches with a view to God’s elect, Paul is assuming the perspective God has for the preaching, namely the means of grace for God’s chosen children. Paul does not know (nor does he need to know) who are the elect in order to perform his commission. He does not have to be concerned about

identifying them. But he is to be concerned to preach so they can identify themselves as God’s elect (cf. Canons I, 12).

Paul was commissioned to preach God’s Word, and the faith of the elect hearers responds by holding it for truth, by believing it, by delighting in it. So Titus is to preach with an eye toward the elect gaining an accurate knowledge of the truth, which, in turn, will lead to their glad recognition of this redemption truth in Christ and what it means for them. Note too that it is the knowledge of the objective truth that frees the elect from errors and falsehood—from vain talkers and deceivers (11).

Second, right preaching of God’s Word is to be with a view to the elect holding the truth “which is after [according to] godliness.” Paul admonishes Titus and Timothy to reject any preaching and teaching that tends to vain curiosity (fables and commandments of men, 1:14), to foolish questions and contentions, and to striving about the laws (3:9). Positively, Titus’ preaching must have in mind that which becomes sound doctrine, namely godliness. Godliness is the conscious, reverent bowing in obedience to God in everyday life. It is living as before the face of God. It is a conscientious devotion to God. It is the fear of the Lord.

Paul instructs Titus so to preach and teach that the young Christians on the island of Crete would be instructed to live a lifestyle that flows from sound or healthy teachings (2:1). The goal of the faithful preaching must be more than giving head knowledge. In the second and third chapters of this short letter, Paul identifies what it is that constitutes godliness. It is a life that adorns the doctrine of God our Savior (2:10), that does not bring blasphemy on the Word of God (2:5), that shames their critics (2:8), and that exhibits a zeal unto good works (2:14).

Third, Paul preached, and admonishes Titus (and every minister) to preach, so that the elect might have the “hope of eternal life” (2). The elect are taught how to live “in this present world” (2:12), but also they are taught to look to eternal life. We live here, but we also long, with confident expectation and patient waiting, for the fullest development of salvation in Jesus Christ. This hope is to be a very real part of the thinking and life of the elect.

God promised eternal life “before the world began.” In eternity past, God made a promise concerning the eternity to come! This is similar to having God’s grace given to us in Christ before the world began (II Tim. 1:9). The fulfillment of God’s decree to elect unto eternal life is so certain that it can be spoken of as having been already given. Our salvation is traced to its origin in God’s eternal plan, just as in Romans 8:29, 30; I Corinthians 2:7; II Thessalonians 2:13, and elsewhere. What makes the promise of eternal life so certain is the fact that this is the promise of “God that cannot lie.” It is likely that this is added because Paul is writing to Cretans, who were known to be liars (1:12). God is faithful. He never lies, for to do so would be to deny Himself (II Tim. 2:13).

Right preaching keeps the hearers in mind of the promise of eternal life.




The commission to preach is given and accomplished with the assurance of blessing (4). The normal introduction of Paul’s epistles includes a blessing. So here. But here it must be connected to the commission of Paul and Titus (and every minister) to preach God’s Word. And this is an efficacious declaration. It is not a mere wish, nor is it just an offer. It is efficacious because it originates in the Father and was merited by the Lord Jesus Christ.

What is the content of this blessing? “Grace” is God’s unmerited favor—a love that pardons—that continu-

ously is given to God’s children. The salutation of grace assures Titus of God’s pardon operating as a spiritual power in his life and ministry. He may be assured that he will be carried in the performance of his work by all-sufficient grace. And this amazing grace will use even a weak means like him to accomplish God’s will in the saving of the elect.

“Mercy” is God’s earnest desire to bless His miserable but beloved children. Mercy puts action into tender compassion. The salutation of mercy assures Titus of God’s lovingkindness in his difficult labors and in every situation of life. Mercy, given as continuously as grace, will be present in every moment of Titus’ work on Crete.

“Peace” always follows grace and mercy. Peace is the consciousness given to God’s children that they are reconciled with God through Jesus. God is not at war with them. On the contrary, He is in a relationship of wonderful friendship with them. The salutation of peace assures Titus that what was broken by sin is made whole. He may perform his labors in the assurance that God is his Friend and constant Companion.

Titus and every called/sent preacher are to know that God has called and commissioned them to preach His Word as God’s servants. The God who cannot lie assures them that He will bless them with His grace, mercy, and peace. May they preach and teach so God’s elect come to a conscious faith that is evidenced in godly living and a lively hope. 

EDITORIAL

PROF. RUSSELL DYKSTRA

Rob Bell: A Consistent Heretic with Thousands of Followers

Rob Bell is a false teacher openly promoting damnable heresies. His teach-

Previous article in this series: September 1, 2011, p. 461.

ing includes the heresies of Jacob Arminius: God loves all and wants all to be saved. Jesus died for all and thus salvation is available for all. In the preaching, God offers heaven to all. All that remains is for people to

make their choice: heaven or hell.

Rob Bell goes beyond Arminius himself, drawing from the spiritual descendants of Arminius—the promoters of the social gospel. Standing with postmillennial pro-

ponents of “kingdom theology,” Bell maintains that heaven is not a place different from this earth. Believers are rather called to bring heaven to this earth.

Bell’s conclusions are consistent with his heretical theology—a heaven on earth, and each and every person determining his own destiny in the “next life.” If one lives in love and cares for the creation, the “next life” (here on earth) will be a heaven for him. If one refuses to live in love, he will live in the hell of his own making for as long as it takes for love to melt his obstinate heart. “Jesus,” found everywhere and in many religions under different names, is the life force. God is love, and love is what God is.

These damnable heresies are brought in under the cover of scattered passages of Scripture, twisted to support doctrines contrary to the whole of Scripture.

Rob Bell has thousands of followers. Many are ardent followers. They flock to the services he leads on Sunday. They purchase his books and videos. They rush to his defense in public forums.

How can it be that thousands of people follow such a man, a false prophet? No, that is not the puzzling question, for that is easily answered. People are sheep, and sheep follow. History demonstrates repeatedly that people will follow many unlikely religious leaders. Raging radicals or soothing liberals—people will follow, sometimes even to their own death.

Rob Bell has a theology that appeals to people. What Bell has done is aptly described by MSNBC

interviewer Martin Bashir, who confronted Bell with the charge that Bell amended “the gospel, the Christian message so that it is palatable to contemporary people who find... the idea of hell and heaven difficult to swallow.” Said Bashir to Bell, you have “created a Christian message that is warm, kind, and popular for contemporary culture.”

So it is no puzzle that thousands follow Rob Bell.

Rather, the question is: Why do people of *Reformed background* follow Rob Bell? How can it be that people born and raised in nominally Reformed churches are comfortable under Bell’s preaching? Is it that they cannot discern the lie? Is it that the preachers in the churches of their youth failed to give them the necessary instruction so that they would know the difference between truth and error? Or is it that they discern the lie, but they do not care, or even that they love the lie?

Probably all of these together comprise the answer.

Over the years, as Mars Hill Bible Church grew in Grandville, Michigan, drawing hundreds and then thousands weekly, it became obvious that many of these worshipers were leaving churches that still had the name Reformed written over their doors. The inescapable conclusion is that these people had a serious lack of knowledge of the Reformed (biblical) faith. The youth no longer had catechism classes; Heidelberg Catechism preaching was no more; and solid, biblical sermons were a thing of the past. Rather than biblical truths, preachers taught the heresies of a common grace, a universal love,

and a God who pleaded with people to accept the offer of salvation that Jesus had made available for all.

Increasingly, both the church pulpits and the school lecterns emphasized that the Christian’s main calling is to build the kingdom of God here on this earth. The infallibility and authority of the Bible was questioned and effectively rejected with specific decisions on evolution, women in office, and more. Preaching was whittled down to a ten or fifteen-minute sermon filled with stories and jokes, supplemented with the latest novel the minister read, or the latest movie he, or she, had seen. In a desperate attempt to “keep the youth,” the rest of the worship service was given over to entertainment—singing groups, videos, the dance, and bands. In “Reformed” churches.

Then Rob Bell comes on the scene. He puts the Bible back into the center of the worship. He opens the Bible and teaches the people from the Bible! The preaching is the center, with messages that often last forty-five minutes or more. He does not deny the historicity of the Bible narrative (publicly at least). Members of these “Reformed” churches discover—we can get preaching here!

And they came in droves.

And they sat happily under the heresies of Rob Bell.

Because they had not the knowledge, and because they had been conditioned to Bell’s lies by their former pastors and teachers.

The shepherds were unfaithful. They did not feed the sheep. They did not heed Christ’s command to

produce sermons for the edification, exhortation, and comfort of His people (I Cor. 14:3). They turned a deaf ear to Paul's charge to Timothy: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (II Tim. 4:1-2). Rather than preach Christ crucified and that only, they came with cunning words of man's wisdom (I Cor. 2:1-5). They starved their sheep, and the sheep scattered and perished. Terrible is God's judgment against the unfaithful shepherds!

Yet, the unfaithfulness of the shepherds does not fully explain the huge following Rob Bell gained from former members of Reformed churches. No doubt, among his followers are some who were taught the truth, and heard the lie condemned. In reality, although unfaithful shepherds bear their dreadful guilt, the people are likewise to be blamed. God explained it thus to Jeremiah in the days of Israel's apostasy (Jer. 5:30-31): "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; *and my people love to have it so*" (my emphasis, RJD).

John Calvin's commentary on this is penetrating.

Doubtless, we shall find that to be ever true which is said in Deut. 13:3, that when false prophets come, it is for the purpose of trying God's people, whether they from the heart love God. It is

then his object to try our religion, whenever he gives loose reins to impostors and false prophets: for every one who truly loves God will be preserved by his Spirit from being led away by such deceivers. When, therefore, ignorant men are deluded, it is certain that they are justly punished for their neglect and contempt of God, because they have not been sufficiently attentive to his service; yea, because they have wished for impostors.

Likewise, Calvin's comments on Ezekiel 13:1-3 (a condemnation of false prophets) are insightful. After pointing out that the false prophets spoke words that were calculated to gain the favor of the people (namely, that the captives would be released in but three years, not the seventy that Jeremiah and Ezekiel prophesied), Calvin states that the people were not free from guilt. Writes Calvin,

Nor could the people object that they were deceived by those falsehoods, since they willingly and knowingly threw themselves into the snare. They were not destitute of true prophets; and God had distinguished his servants from false prophets by well-known marks, so that no one could mistake except willfully. But in the midst of light they blinded themselves, and so God suffered them to be deceived. But that was the just reward of their pride, since they could not be subject to God and his servants. Then when they sought enticements, as is evident from many passages, God also gave the reins to Satan, that there should be a lying spirit in the mouth of all the prophets.

The same emphatically applies to the thousands who follow Rob Bell in Grandville, Michigan, particularly those from a Reformed background. They had true and faithful preachers living in their land. Some of these preachers wrote books that set forth the truth clearly. They published the *Standard Bearer* twenty-one times a year in order to set forth the truth over against the lie. Worship services have been held in this area for over 85 years, in which the solid, biblical (i.e., Reformed) truth has been faithfully expounded. Everyone who drives to Mars Hill Sunday morning will bypass such a church to get to Mars Hill. Besides, the radio broadcasts the truth Sunday after Sunday.

Yes, I refer to the Protestant Reformed Churches. And I do not mean by this that the PRC is the only church that has the truth. But I do know that, by God's grace alone, these churches still proclaim that truth faithfully, boldly, and antithetically. People in Reformed churches knew that. But they did not want that truth. Some of their fathers cast out Herman Hoeksema, George M. Ophoff, and Henry Danhof and their consistories because they did not want to hear the truth. They did everything they could to snuff out the clear proclamation of God's truth.

Because they did not want the glorious, antithetical truth, God took it away from them and caused them to believe the lie. They now follow a man who is denying cardinal truths of the Christian faith, the very existence of heaven and hell, as the Bible clearly teaches it. A man


who preaches a different Jesus and whose god is love. A man leading his followers to their own destruction. What a *grief*!

God is proving them, whether they love Him from the heart. He will not allow the followers of Rob Bell to pretend that they want the Bible. Bell's teaching so obviously contradicts the Bible, that his followers are confronted with but two options: Follow Bell, or follow Jehovah, the true God. If you know some who attend Mars Hill, and have any love, any concern for their souls, you must put it as starkly as that.

Yet, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. All believers are still prone to hate God. If you believe the truth of Lord's Day 2, you will also recognize that we all are prone to follow a false prophet who gives us a god after our liking. It is not enough to have the truth preached in your church. To those who do not *love* the truth, God will send a strong delusion that they believe the lie (II Thess. 2:10, 11). And then that dreadful additional word: "That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (12).

Thanks be to God that the Spirit

did not stop there, but inspired Paul to add (13, 14): "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And finally, this exhortation to every believer (15): "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." 

GOD'S WONDERFUL WORKS

REV. JAMES LANING

The Creation and Fall of Man (3)

Man's Darkened Understanding and Dead Will

It is a common teaching that all human beings bear the image of God. Scripture, however, says that to bear God's image is to be righteous and holy, and to know God as your friend. It ought to be clear that such can be said only of the regenerated believer, who in the new man is God's child and bears His image. So how do people attempt to defend the position that all human beings bear God's image? What method do they commonly use?

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Previous article in this series: January 1, 2011, p. 155.

The erroneous "broader-narrower" distinction

One way by which many try to defend this position is by inventing a distinction between the image of God in the broader sense and in the narrower sense. Being righteous and holy and having a true knowledge of God is said by them to refer to the image of God in the narrower sense. Then they argue that the image of God can also be referred to in a broader sense. It is, they maintain, in this broader sense that every human being bears the image of God.

When asked what this broader sense is, many will refer to the fact that all human beings have a will and the ability to understand rational speech. Yet nowhere in Scripture does it say that merely having a will and an understanding means that you bear the image of God.

To bear God's image, your will has to be *alive*, and your understanding must be *enlightened*.

Is the understanding darkened or enlightened?

A child of God has what is called a true knowledge of God. That means he knows God personally and loves Him in his heart. In the Canons of Dordt we confess that Adam, as a child of God, had an understanding that was adorned with this true knowledge of God: "Man was originally formed after the image of God. His understanding was adorned with a true and saving knowledge of his Creator and of spiritual things" (Canons 3/4, 1).

But after man fell into sin, the nature of man was different. Now the understanding of an unbeliever lacks this knowledge of God. An unbeliever's understanding is not enlightened, but darkened: "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph. 4:18). An understanding not adorned with the light of a true and saving knowledge of God is a *darkened* understanding.


Even unbelievers have a mind capable of understanding rational speech. That itself does not determine whether a person bears the image of God. The determining factor is whether a person has an understanding that is darkened or an understanding that is enlightened.

The devil, for example, has a darkened understanding. So a human being with a darkened understanding is like the devil, bearing his image. Only one with an enlightened understanding bears the image of the living God.

Is the will dead or alive?

Now let us turn to consider man's will. When God regenerates a person, the will of that person is changed: "He opens the closed and softens the hardened heart, and circumcises that which was uncircumcised, infuses new qualities into the will, which, though heretofore dead, He quickens" (Canons 3/4, 11). Before a person is regenerated, his heart is dead. And if his heart is dead, his will is dead. It is dead in sin, which means that it always chooses that which is evil.

So although every human being has a will, some have a will that is alive, and others have a will that is dead. The devil has a dead will, which always chooses that which is evil. So anyone with a dead, sin-enslaved will bears the image of the devil. Only one who has a will that is alive—a will that chooses that which is good—can be said to bear the image of God.

In other words, man really did die when he fell into sin. He died and lost the image of God that he once bore. Only those in Christ, who have a living will and an enlightened understanding, bear the image of God today. 

SPECIAL ARTICLE

REV. DOUGLAS KUIPER

"Grieve Not the Spirit": Sins Against the Holy Spirit (1)

Their Doctrinal Significance*

Rev. Kuiper is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin.

* *The articles appearing under this theme are the substance of a lecture given in the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church of Northern Ireland on January 12, 2011.*

The Holy Scriptures refer to various sins against the Holy Spirit. In addition to the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, more commonly known as the "unforgivable sin" (Matt. 12:31-32; Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10), we are told that Israel "vexed his (God's, DJK) holy Spirit" (Is. 63:10); that

Ananias and Sapphira lied “to the Holy Ghost” (Acts 5:3); that the Jews of Stephen’s day, as well as their fathers, did “always resist the Holy Ghost” (Acts 7:51); and that he who treads underfoot the Son of God, and counts the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, does “despite unto the Spirit of grace” (Heb. 10:29). These passages all refer to historical *instances* of sin against the Holy Spirit. Two other passages *warn* us not to sin against the Holy Spirit: “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God” (Eph. 4:30) and “Quench not the Spirit” (I Thess. 5:19).

In every instance, those who commit these sins against the Holy Spirit are those who have heard the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ alone, and who know intellectually that the Holy Spirit is Christ’s agent of salvation. That is, to commit these sins implies that one knows of the Holy Spirit.

One of these sins—the unforgivable sin—can be committed only by those who have not received the gracious, sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. We know this, because God forgives every sin of each of His children, and so preserves them from committing the unforgivable sin. Yet those who commit the unforgivable sin are in the sphere of the covenant. Jesus mentions this sin as He rebukes the unbelieving Jews; and the writer to the Hebrews mentions it, realizing that among the Jewish Christians is an unbelieving element.

Other of these sins against the Holy Spirit, only God’s children can commit. Grieving the Holy Spirit is an instance of this. The warning of Ephesians 4:30 is addressed to God’s church, and therefore to every member of the church. Also, as we shall later see, to grieve the Spirit presupposes that one has received the grace of sanctification.

There are also sins against the Holy Spirit that both God’s children and the reprobate in the sphere of the covenant can commit. An instance of this is the sin of lying to the Holy Spirit. While Ananias and Sapphira were not children of God (we read that Satan filled Ananias’ heart, Acts 5:3), this does not mean that God’s children could not lie to the Holy Spirit. Another instance is the sin of resisting and quenching the Spirit, of which not only individuals, but entire congregations could be guilty.

We examine these sins against the Holy Spirit, both to grow in our understanding of the Holy Spirit, and to learn to guard against these sins.

The church’s confession regarding the Holy Spirit

Implied in these texts is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit that all Christians confess in the ecumenical creeds, and that Reformed believers confess more specifically in the Reformed and Presbyterian creeds. These creeds do not treat the doctrine of the Holy Spirit exhaustively, but they do set forth the basic teachings of Scripture regarding the Holy Spirit.

The ecumenical creeds include the Apostles’ Creed, which simply states, “I believe in the Holy Ghost.”¹ The Nicene/Constantinopolitan Creed is more expansive: “And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spake by the prophets.” More comprehensive yet is the Athanasian Creed, which states in Articles 5-6: “For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal.” The Athanasian Creed proceeds to say that the Holy Ghost, with the Father and the Son, is uncreated, infinite, eternal, and almighty; in all respects He is equal with Father and Son. Then in Article 23: “The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.”

As to the Reformed and Presbyterian creeds, the Heidelberg Catechism teaches in question and answer 53 (Lord’s Day 20):

What dost thou believe concerning the *Holy Ghost*?

First, that He is co-eternal God with the Father and the Son. Secondly, that He is also given unto me, makes me by a true faith partaker of Christ and all His benefits, comforts me, and shall abide with me forever.

Setting forth the doctrine of the Trinity, Article 8 of the Belgic Confession teaches that the Godhead

¹ All quotations from the ecumenical creeds are taken from Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, sixth edition, volumes 2 and 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990).

consists of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, each of whom is distinct from the other in His incommunicable properties, and each of whom is co-eternal and co-essential. Then Article 11, entitled “The Holy Ghost is true and eternal God,” says:

We believe and confess also that the Holy Ghost from eternity proceeds from the Father and Son; and therefore is neither made, created, nor begotten, but only proceedeth from both; who in order is the third person of the Holy Trinity; of one and the same essence, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son; and therefore is the true and eternal God, as the Holy Scripture teaches us.

Chapter 2, Article 3 of the Westminster Confession of Faith states:

In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceedeth from the Father and the Son.

The Canons of Dordt repeatedly mention the Holy Spirit as the one by whom Christ saves us, but do not develop the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as such.

In these creeds, the church confesses three distinct things regarding the Holy Spirit. Each of these three things is taught in the texts that refer to the various sins against the Holy Spirit.

Truly and eternally God

These creeds teach that the Holy Spirit is truly and eternally God. The Athanasian Creed and the Reformed creeds teach this on the very surface. The Nicene Creed indicates it by saying of the Holy Ghost that He is the “Lord and Giver of life,” and that He is to be worshiped. The Apostles’ Creed teaches it by implication, leading us to confess our faith in “God the Father, Almighty,” and “in Jesus Christ,” and also “in the Holy Ghost.”

The divinity of the Holy Spirit is explicitly taught in the passage that speaks of Ananias’ lie against the Holy Spirit, Acts 5:3-4. In verse 3, Peter accuses Ananias of

lying “to the Holy Ghost,” then says in verse 4: “thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.” To lie to the Holy Spirit is to lie to God, because the Holy Spirit is God.

The Spirit’s divinity is also implied in Hebrews 10:29: “Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” Treading the Son of God underfoot, counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and doing despite unto the Spirit of grace are not three distinct sins, but three aspects of one and the same sin. This sin is at the same time sin against the Son of God, and sin against the Spirit of grace, because Son and Spirit are equal. They are equal, because they are both God.

Reformed believers must not only confess this divinity of the Spirit with their mouths, but also love it in their hearts. Being divine, the Holy Spirit is able to work the blessings of salvation in us. And being divine, He is the object of our worship.

A distinct person of the Godhead

Furthermore, these creeds teach that the Holy Spirit is a distinct person in the Godhead. Each creed does so by distinguishing the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son. And, with the exception of the Apostles’ Creed, each does so by speaking of the personal property of the Holy Spirit: He *proceeds* from Father and Son.

Exactly in that they speak of *sins against* the Holy Spirit, the passages noted at the beginning of this article teach that He is a distinct person of the Godhead. Sin is always committed against persons. My sinful treatment of an animal, or sinful use of an object, is not sin *against* that animal or object; it is sin against my neighbor (the animal’s owner), and against my Creator and Lord.

That one could lie to the Holy Spirit indicates that the Spirit is a person. We lie to people who could or do have a covenant relationship with us, and who understand our language. Such is true of rational, moral beings—humans and God.

Also, that the Holy Spirit is vexed or grieved indi-

cates that He is a person. These words are a figure of speech, by which human emotion is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. They teach that He is able to express sorrow or grief (or happiness and joy) in accordance with the way we act (sinfully or obediently). This also indicates that the Holy Spirit is conscious of Himself—something that characterizes persons.

Over against the heresies that deny such distinction of persons in the Godhead, Reformed believers must confess that the Holy Spirit is a distinct person in the Trinity. Throughout its history, the Christian church has battled the heretical idea that God is one in person as well as in being. Some have taught that the Spirit is nothing more than the power of God. Others taught that the one-person God works throughout history in such a way that in the Old Testament He showed Himself as Father; during Jesus' earthly ministry, as Son; and in the New Testament as Holy Spirit—like an actor who plays three different roles throughout the three acts of a play. Such is the heresy of Sabellianism, which Article 9 of our Belgic Confession specifically condemns.²

Do these heresies seem so remote? Remember that in denying the doctrine of the Trinity, the Unitarians, Jehovah's Witnesses, and other cults necessarily deny this doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

In order to carry out His work of saving and sanctifying us, the Holy Spirit must be a distinct person. Only as such can He speak by the prophets (I Pet. 1:11), know and make known the mind of God (I Cor. 2:10-14), and guide us into all truth, comfort us, and abide with us forever (John 14:16).

Sanctifying God's church and children

The ecumenical and Reformed creeds also teach that the Holy Spirit is involved in the work of salvation. The Nicene Creed said that He is "the Lord and Giver of Life" and that He "spoke by the prophets." And the Heidelberg Catechism teaches that He "is also given unto me, makes me by a true faith partaker of Christ and all His benefits, comforts me, and shall abide with me forever."

² For further study on this heresy, consult chapter 4 of Herman Hanko's book *Contending for the Faith: The Rise of Heresy and the Development of the Truth* (Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2010).

Specifically, the Holy Spirit sanctifies. Speaking of the division of the articles of the Apostles' Creed, the Heidelberg Catechism says that the third part consists of "God the Holy Ghost and our sanctification" (Lord's Day 8, Q&A 24). This sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit is a fundamental aspect of His making us "by a true faith partaker of Christ and all His benefits."

That He sanctifies—makes us holy—explains the first word of His name: *Holy* Spirit. Being God, He is personally holy. But the word "Holy" in His name refers especially to His work of hallowing, consecrating, bringing us into holy fellowship with the holy God.


This sanctifying work the Holy Spirit performs in the church as a whole, through the means of grace, as He calls the church unto the fellowship of God's dear Son, and makes the church Christ's one, *holy*, catholic church. In leading the church into the knowledge of the truth, in purifying her, and in working through the official preaching of the gospel, the Holy Spirit is as a fire, which we must not quench. I Thessalonians 5:19 makes this point.

The Holy Spirit also performs this sanctifying work in the individual child of God personally, by destroying sin's dominion over that one, and causing him more and more to love God's law and live according to it. God's children, in whom the Holy Spirit works, grieve the Spirit (Eph. 4:30) when they live as though they are yet ruled by sin.

A doctrine according to godliness

I Timothy 6:3 and Titus 1:1 teach that true doctrine is "according to" or "after" godliness. This means that true doctrine always leads to godliness. God desires that His people be a holy, godly people. To that end, He would have us know true doctrine.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is a specific instance of this. Our confession of the Holy Spirit as truly God, a distinct person in the Godhead, and the agent of Christ to bestow the blessings of salvation on us must manifest itself in a sanctified life in which we honor the Spirit's work in us.

To that end, we desire to understand better what these various sins are, that we might guard against them. Next time, God willing, we will begin this examination. 

Teach Us to Number Our Days

A couple of blocks north on our Iowa country road, nestled among cornstalk-spangled fields and soybeans aplenty, sleeps the town cemetery. I like to walk there from time to time to read the inscriptions on the headstones. Some are new, while others date back nearly a couple hundred years.

It was near harvest time last October that I saw a familiar face walking through there. It was a Christian school teacher visiting from Michigan. He came to Iowa to attend the annual Protestant Reformed Teachers' Convention. The convention met right next door to the cemetery, at Trinity Christian High School in Hull, Iowa.

"I know more people here," he said pointing to the graves, "than over there," motioning toward the school building. There was truth in what he said, for he was born in Northwest Iowa. Many people he knew as a boy were laid to rest in this burial place.

Unless the Lord hasten, so shall we all be.

No matter how many years we live, our life is extremely short. It is what the book of James calls "...a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." The Psalms declare our days are like an handbreadth, and as grass. In Job, our life is likened to a shadow that fleeth and a flower that is cut down. One generation is born and quickly dies. And so it goes, over and over again. As Solomon once said, "...for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart" (Eccl. 7:2).

Our contemplating this fact is God's way of jolting

us awake. None of us is guaranteed to be alive tomorrow. That thought is startling. We tend to get sleepy, and so we need a regular dose of cold water splashed onto our face, spiritually speaking. The Lord desires us to be sober and wise, and to make good use of our very short life.

May we pray with faith and urgency supplications such as Psalm 90:12: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Martin Luther, in his German Bible translation, aptly translated this same verse in guileless manner. It literally reads, "Teach us to consider that we must die, so that we will become wise."

We have a tendency not to think about our inevitable death. Death is ugly. It causes pain and great sorrow.

I Corinthians 15:26 says, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Thanks be to God for Christ's

work on the cross, for "Death is swallowed up in victory" (I Cor. 15:54). For His people, death is merely a passageway to glory. In order to enter God's incorruptible Kingdom, we cannot have a corruptible body.

One day my young daughter looked at me with wide, solemn eyes and said, "I don't want you to ever die." With a hug I told her I loved her, and understood how she felt. I reassured her that

we have nothing to fear in Christ. Christ brings us to Himself when we die, and that is what we long for. It is our goal.

God wants us to keep in the forefront of our minds that our life on earth is short. He desires us to grow in wisdom. I talked with her about an aged saint we once knew who has since gone on to glory. This was a man

*We tend to get sleepy,
and so we need
a regular dose of cold water
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spiritually speaking.*

Mrs. Laning is a wife and mother in Hull Protestant Reformed Church of Hull, Iowa.

who experienced much pain, sorrow, and suffering for Christ's sake. He put into practice numbering his days and growing in wisdom. When asked of his welfare, he took great pleasure in responding with a certain Dutch phrase: "*Niets te klagen.*" Translated into English this means, "Nothing to complain about." We and our children need to pray humbly for such grace. Then we will have nothing to complain about, but rather in everything we will give thanks. God's righteousness and heavenly Kingdom is ours! What more could we want?

I brought up an example to my daughter of the special-needs boy in our church. Unable to walk, or see, and with multiple physical complications, he needs complete care. He has lived beyond the doctor's expectations. His family and our congregation know that each day with him is a precious gift from the Lord. As the mother of the child once told me, "Caring for our son has been good for us. It makes us think of heaven more."

I looked at my daughter and said, "That is how all of us should view our own frail life. Each day may be our last as we trust in the Lord's complete care of us. Each day should make us think of heaven more."

Thinking upon the shortness of life and the heavenly Kingdom that is ours is not frightening. For the believer, each passing day just gets us closer to the goal. We have a young mother in our congregation with very guarded health. She has a life of being in and out of the hospital. At times she has come close to death. Yet, through her faith in Christ she confesses that her hope is on the goal. On the occasion of her birthday she said, "I am 34 years closer to living with Him. What a blessing every birthday is!"

Keeping the goal in the forefront of our mind and heart will help us make wise choices in redeeming the time and setting priorities. Our lives are busy with many responsibilities. We often jot down lists each day of the things we need to get done. This is a good idea and helps keep us organized. But may we always remember each day to ask the Lord, "What wilt Thou

have me to do today? I want my will to be submissive to Thy perfect will."


As children of God, we know this. Yet we are constantly fighting our sinful desires that want sinful, self-serving goals. Job 14:1 says, "Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble." We can so easily lose sight of the goal and waste time on fruitless endeavors. Never before have we had so much distraction at our fingertips. For many people, the same tool that is used for work is also used for play. Although the Internet and cell phones can be used to serve the right goal, they can also be used to waste much time. Far worse, they can be used to sin grievously by watching things we should never set our eyes upon.

We can search for exciting things to do or places to take our children, but a 30-minute walk through the cemetery can help get our thoughts on the right track. When we visit the graves of our loved ones, we mourn, but mourn as those with hope. Psalm 126:6 says, "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

The Lord of the harvest is coming soon. He proclaims, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25). What a blessed hope we have. What can be

more motivating than the thought of the glorious resurrection and life to come that awaits us?

"I'm probably related to most of the people in this cemetery," my teacher friend said that day with a smile. He read aloud some family names that, by God's grace, are still familiar ones in our churches: "Brummel, Kooima, Blankespoor, Kooiker." They were people who witnessed his baptism, who prayed with him, who worshiped our sovereign God with him, who loved and cared for him—precious seed.

A gentle breeze was blowing across the fields. It was harvest time, a time to pluck up that which was planted. As Solomon once said: To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven. 

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Neither Calendar nor Clock: Perspectives on the Belhar Confession, by Piet J. Naude. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010. 255 pages. \$25.00. Soft cover. ISBN 9780802862594. Reviewed by Mark H. Hoeksema.

This book deals with a subject unfamiliar to most of us in the Protestant Reformed Churches. Its setting is in South Africa, located on the other side of the world from us, and in a theological context that few understand. More specifically, its subject matter concerns the issue of apartheid, the centuries-long discrimination against native Africans both by the civil authorities and by the church, which was historically Dutch. The mention of apartheid, as well as of the Dutch (Afrikaans) colonization and domination of South Africa, may help to refresh the memories both of those who are old enough to remember the struggle against apartheid, and of those who have studied history in school. The addition of the name Nelson Mandela will serve to clarify the historical setting of this book, and will also shed light on the author's perspective.

Piet J. Naude is professor of ethics and director of the Business School at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. The book purports to be the only up-to-date English-language book on the Belhar Confession, which it probably is. The book also describes itself as showing how this brief (five articles) African confession "powerfully articulates the gospel for the universal church today."

It does no such thing, for several reasons.

First, its origin and authorship are not universal. It was drafted under the auspices of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church, and was accepted by its synod in 1982 in a place called Belhar. Hence its name. This narrow beginning stands in sharp contrast to a confession such as the Canons of Dordrecht, the origins of which involved representatives from many Reformation churches.

Mr. Hoeksema is a member of Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

Second, the issue addressed by the Belhar Confession is at best regional, although Naude is at great pains in his commentary to make it a matter of universal social justice. This does not change the fact that the issue is apartheid, which has very little relevance to the church universal.

Third, the acceptance of Belhar is anything but universal, as the author himself admits. The Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa has adopted it, as well as a Protestant denomination in Belgium. The Reformed Church in America (RCA) has adopted it provisionally. Perhaps this is due, at least in part, to the fact that apartheid effectively no longer exists, so that this confession is no longer necessary.

Fourth, this confession does not articulate the gospel, at least not the gospel of the Scriptures. As explicated by Naude, it does a pretty fair job of describing the social gospel. The author writes in terms of "restorative justice" and "economic justice"; he promotes feminism and acceptance of those with AIDS; and he argues that the visible church needs to adopt this confession.

The first part of the book contains the confession, with commentary by the author. The rest of the book is nothing else than an apologetic for the validity and acceptance of Belhar. It is interesting to note that Naude quite convincingly grounds the theology of the confession in Abraham Kuyper's common grace. He also relies heavily on the writings of Karl Barth, obscure and convoluted as they are. I am reminded here of a comment made by my late grandfather, Herman Hoeksema, to the effect that he was not sure if Barth himself understood his own writing. How true!

For those who are interested in learning more about South African history and obtaining a clearer picture of an unfamiliar church and its theology, there is value in reading this book. Naude does a creditable and well-documented job of defending and promoting Belhar from a very liberal perspective.

However, in general the book is of little value to those who hold to the true Reformed faith because of its wide divergence from the biblical content of the gospel. Not recommended. ☹

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NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER

Young People's Activities

The young people and congregation of the Randolph, WI PRC hosted the 70th annual Young People's Convention on August 8-12 at the Green Lake Conference Center in Green Lake, WI. Plans for this year's convention began already three years ago and Randolph deserves all our thanks for a job well done. We may be wrong about this, but we think that this was the first convention hosted by the Randolph congregation. The theme of this year's convention was, "Lessons from the Life of Joseph," with the theme text, "But God meant it unto good," from Genesis 50:20. Rev. D. Holstege spoke Monday night on "The Purpose of Suffering"; Rev. A. Brummel spoke on Wednesday evening on "The Power of Sanctification"; and Rev. S. Key provided the final speech Thursday morning on "The Privilege of Serving." From what we heard, this year's convention went very well, with 377 young people present. We are thankful for the godly attitude and

conduct of the young people, which was noticed and appreciated by the employees at the camp.

We add our prayers for God's rich blessings on our young people as they seek to grow spiritually by fleeing temptation, forgiving others, and living holy lives of service to God, as did Joseph, by the power of God's grace and Spirit.

The Sunday evening before the annual convention, the young people, along with the older members of many of our PR churches, had the opportunity to gather together for pre-convention singspirations. One was hosted by the Randolph, WI PRC; another took place at the Crete, IL PRC; and yet another at Fairhaven Ministries in Hudsonville, MI. Taking into account the time zones in which each singspiration took place, and the time each started, we see that all were singing praises to God at the same time. So even though the young people attending the convention were not together until Monday, they were already together spiritually by way of song on Sunday night.

The Young Adults and Young People's Societies of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada were involved in a fundraiser on August

13 at South Side Dodge Chrysler Jeep in Red Deer. There was a car-washing/car-bashing/ and barbecue from 10:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M.

Christianity on Campus, a Bible study group meeting at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, MI during the school year, had a kickoff meeting/mixer at Grace PRC in Standale, MI on Saturday, August 20. The event included a burger fry, as well as volleyball, bean bag toss, and other activities.

The young adults and young people of Immanuel PRC in Lacombe and First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada were invited to gather together for a group hike in Jasper National Park on Monday, August 1. August 1 was a civic holiday, Heritage Day, in Canada.

The Young People's Activity Committee of the Calvary PRC in Hull, IA hosted a canoeing outing for their church's young people on August 20.

Congregation Activities

A new Bible study has been formed this year for the special-needs members of our churches in West Michigan. The Bible study

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

will meet, D.V., at Faith PRC in Jenison, MI on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month. It began already on September 8. The Bible study will include a Bible story, singing, and a time of fellowship. Each special-needs member will be assisted by a PR friend/helper. Snacks will be provided. This Bible study is sponsored by members of Faith PRC and will look at Old Testament saints from Adam and Eve, to Joseph, David, and Daniel.

On Friday evening, August 5, our churches in NW Iowa, Minnesota, and South Dakota got together for a "Celebration of the Psalms Singspiration." As the name implies, there was lots of good singing, in addition to various special numbers provided by the different congregations.

The Christian Fellowship Society of the Hull, IA PRC held their summer picnic on August 10 at the Boyden Centennial Park in Hull. The menu included pizza and pop, and activities centered on a splash

pad for the kids, and some sand volleyball for the grown-ups.

The girls of Life Group, of the Hudsonville, MI PRC, held their final meeting of the summer on August 9. At that meeting an older member of their congregation came and spoke about her personal experience with an eating disorder. She told the girls how God had used that difficult trial for her good and His glory. Moms were especially encouraged to join the meeting, as well as any other members of the congregation who wanted to listen to the guest speaker.

The members of the Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD once again sponsored a booth at the Sioux Empire Fair on August 9-14.

The Ladies Summer Reading Club of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA met in early August to discuss drama and entertainment, using four pamphlets: "The Christian and the Film Arts" (Prof. Hanko), "The Christian and Entertainment" (Rev. Dale Kuiper), "The Evil of Drama" (Rev. Smit), and "The Movie" (Rev.

R. Veldman). If you are interested in reading these as well, the first three can be found at www.prca.org.

Sister-Church Activities

In our last "News," we wrote about Rev. and Mrs. Bleyenbergh spending time in Northern Ireland filling the pulpits of the Covenant PRC and the Limerick Reformed Fellowship, while their pastors spent time in the United States. What we failed to tell you was that while in Limerick, Rev. Bleyenbergh also had opportunity to present a lecture on August 15 entitled "Proper Sabbath Observance."

Minister Activities

Candidate Nathan Decker has accepted the call extended to him from the Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI to serve as their next pastor.

Candidate Brian Huizinga has accepted the call extended to him from the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA to serve as their next pastor.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wedding Anniversary

■ On July 21, 2011, our parents and grandparents,

MR. and MRS. WILLIAM SMIT,

celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. We express our thanksgiving to our heavenly Father for the many undeserved blessings that He has given to them and to us through them, especially the example of a faithful, Christ-centered life-long marriage.

May the Lord's abundant blessings continue to rest upon them from above for Christ's sake alone. "Except Jehovah build the house, they labor in vain that build it" (Psalm 127:1a).

❖ Peter and Linda Smit

William, David, Lanae, Lorraine, Suzanna, Dirk

❖ Fred and Cathy Hanko

Troy and Mandy VandenBosch, Kyle, Brent, Eric

❖ Dorothy VanKoughnett

❖ Rev. Richard and Tricia Smit

John, Rebekah, Jay, Irene, Rosalyn, Seth, Carl, Ryan

❖ William and Faith Smit

Peter, Anne

Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada

Lecture

■ Please reserve Friday, October 28 for a Reformation Day lecture by Prof. Dykstra entitled "False Prophets and the Certain End of the World: What the Reformation Can Teach Us."

The lecture will be held at the Protestant Reformed Church of Crete at 7 P.M.

Bound Volumes

■ With the September 15th issue of the *Standard Bearer*, volume 87 is finished. If you would like your own issues bound, please deliver them to the **RFPA office** before the end of October. For additional orders, call Paula at (616) 457-5970

Standard Bearer
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Jenison, MI 49428-7137

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PERIODICAL
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MICHIGAN

1611-2011
CELEBRATING THE
400TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE KING JAMES VERSION

A Conference Presented by:
**PROTESTANT REFORMED
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**
on:
October 7 and 8, 2011
at:
Hull Protestant Reformed Church
1006 Hayes Ave.
Hull, IA 51239

Schedule:
October 7 at 7:30 P.M.
**Restoring the Bible to the Believer:
The Reformation's Concern
Over Bible Translation**
Prof. Russell Dykstra,
Professor of Church History and N.T. Studies,
Theological School of the PRCA

October 8, 9:00 A.M.
**'Ere Many Years,
the Boy that Driveth the Plow...':
The History of the King James Version**
Prof. Ronald Cammenga,
Professor of Dogmatics and O.T. Studies
Theological School of the PRCA

October 8, 11:00 A.M.
**Should the KJV be Replaced?:
A Critical Assessment of the KJV
and of Some More Recent
Bible Translations**
Prof. Barrett Gritters,
Professor of Practical Theology and N.T. Studies
Theological School of the PRCA

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Ladies Society of Hudsonville PRC wish to express their heartfelt sympathy to fellow member Mrs. Bernie Bruining in the death of Grace's beloved sister,

MRS. LOUWINA HUTTINGA.

May Grace and her family find comfort in the words of the psalmist, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.... Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me" (Psalm 23: 1, 4).

Pat Lanning, Secretary

Resolution of Sympathy

■ Southeast PRC Council expresses Christian sympathy to Rev. and Vel Kuiper in the passing away of their sister-in-law,

MRS. TRUDY (HENRY) KUIPER;

to Dan and Judy Schimmel in the death of their mother,

MRS. GRACE(GIB) SCHIMMEL;

and to Rich, Bernie, and Henrietta Kamminga on the passing away of their sister,

MRS. NORMA (JAY) BOONE.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever" (Psalm 23:6).

Rev. W. Langerak, President
Ed Ophoff, Assist. Clerk

Wedding Anniversary

■ With humble thanksgiving to God, we rejoice with our parents,

JIM and KATHY VANDER KOLK,

as they celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary September 24, 2011. We are thankful for their godly example and instruction. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless and keep them.

"Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations" (Deuteronomy 7:9).

❖ Michael and Monica VanderKolk
James and Ella

❖ Clinton and Renae VanderKolk
Benjamin, Austin, and Paige

❖ Jordan and Rachelle VanderKolk
Carter, Elsie, and Mallory

❖ Travis and Kate VanderKolk
Mason, Sophie, Oliver, and Charlotte

❖ Lenora VanderKolk

❖ Loren VanderKolk

Grand Rapids, Michigan