

The Standard Bearer

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Rise Up, My Love

My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

Song of Solomon 2:10-13

Of all the books of Scripture, none is so expressive of communion and fellowship as the Song of Solomon. Solomon, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit captures the glorious nature of the love between the bridegroom and his bride, Jesus Christ and His church. That is why Solomon's song is called the "Song of Songs."

Chapter 1 of the Song records Christ and the church expressing their love for one another. The bride says,

"Thy love is better than wine" (Song 1:2). On the other hand, the bridegroom says, "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes" (Song 1:15). Chapter 2 begins with the bridegroom speaking of himself, but then turns to the bride speaking about her bridegroom to the daughters of Jerusalem.

First, the bride rejoices to hear the sound of her bridegroom approaching (Song 2:8). Next, she actually sees him (Song 2:9). Finally, she hears him speaking, calling her to rise up and come away so that they can fellowship together in the glorious spring.



"My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away."

Imagine a young bride enthralled with the thought of seeing her bridegroom again. He had been away. How long we do not know. But, from the bride's perspective, too long. Many of us have experienced that to a degree when we have been away from our spouse. Not having the modern convenience of the telephone, the bride had not been able to fellowship with him. Seemingly, ages had passed. Now her heart yearned for him.

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After the long wait, she finally hears him approaching. That is why she calls out, “The voice of my beloved” (Song 2:8a). Literally, we could translate, “The sound of my beloved.” Imagine her heart beating in anticipation: Here he comes! I can hear him! She continues, “Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills” (Song 2:8b). The fact that he leaps upon the mountains and skips upon the hills shows that he is coming quickly and nothing can stop him.

But if the sound of his coming delighted her, his voice actually speaking to her was more delightful: “My beloved spake....” The bride wants the daughters of Jerusalem to know about it. “My beloved came and talked to me! He even called me his ‘love’ and his ‘fair one!’” Calling her “my love” he acknowledged that she was his special companion and friend. In addition, she was also his “fair one.” She was beautiful to look upon outwardly, and she was beautiful inwardly. He enjoyed her companionship and delighted in her beauty, as is right and proper in a relationship of bride and bridegroom. We see in the bride a delightful longing for her bridegroom.

That is the kind of love that ought to characterize the relationship of husbands and wives. But Solomon, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is talking about Christ and the church. Just as the bride longs for and rejoices to see and hear her bridegroom, so the church of Jesus Christ rejoices to hear His approach. “The voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.” Jesus Christ is coming! Leaping and skipping. Is it not a wonderful thing? He is coming quickly to accomplish our salvation. The church delights to hear that glorious message. “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen” (Rev. 1:7). “Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book” (Rev. 22:7).

Behold, He cometh!

For whom is He coming? He is coming for His love, the church, whom He has loved with an everlasting love. He is coming for the church, with whom He delights to dwell in covenant fellowship. “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is

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). His desire is to dwell with us in perfect covenant fellowship! He is coming for His fair one, the church, which is so beautiful in His eyes. To her he says, “Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee” (Song 4:7).

Do we rejoice in our Savior? Do we rejoice that He took upon Himself human flesh and died for us on the cross? Do we look forward to the marriage feast, as the bride in our text obviously did? Do we delight in the fact that Jesus Christ loves us and looks upon us as His beautiful and dear companion?

Behold, He cometh!



If that is our rejoicing, then listen to the sweet voice of the bridegroom calling us: “Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.”

The bride mourns in the bridegroom’s absence. As long as He is away, there is darkness and sorrow. As long as we have no fellowship with Him, we are in misery. But in Christ’s presence is fullness of joy. At His right hand are pleasures evermore (cf. Ps. 16:11). Wonderfully, the bridegroom arrives and reassures the bride of His love for her and His delight in her by calling her “my love” and “my fair one.” Then he says to her “Rise up and come away.” Don’t stay in that miserable condition. Come away with me!

So, too, is the church cast down under a sense of her sin. Sin brings misery because it separates us from fellowship with God. But Christ says, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). Jesus Christ reassures us of His love for us and His delight in us. Then He calls us to “rise up and come away!” Rise up! Sit no longer in the gloom of your guilt. Come away and enjoy sweet communion.

But how can that be? How can the bride enjoy such a privilege?

“For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone” (Song 2:11). The winter of cloud and storm is gone. The time of unsafe and uncomfortable travel, of bad roads and impassible rivers, is over. Spring has arrived: “The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the sing-

ing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away" (Song 2:12-13).

We were in desperate darkness and in the shadow of death because of our sins and sinfulness. But God tells us that the dark winter of His wrath is over and gone and that the tempest is not against us anymore. "And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me" (Is. 12:1). God's fierce anger is turned away because Jesus took that wrath upon Himself. Now the darkness of hell does not hang over us. Rather, the Sun of Righteousness shines upon us in favor. "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall" (Mal. 4:2).




How can the bride be so sure that the winter is past and the rain over and gone? Look around! Listen! Smell! The flowers have appeared. The birds are singing and the voice of the turtledove is heard. The fig tree manifests its green figs. The grape vines with their

tender grapes give a sweet smell. All these give evidence of springtime.

How can the children of God know that His gracious face shines upon them? By the gracious work that He Himself has worked in us. He causes His new life to manifest itself in us even as He causes flowers to bloom in a wilderness. When the graces of the Spirit show themselves in us, it can only be because the Son of Righteousness has shined upon us and caused the winter of misery to pass. When the Sun of Righteousness arises in our hearts, then there will be abundance of singing. In song, we will recount what Jesus Christ has done for us. That glad song will be heard in every land. Finally, actual fruits of God's grace will begin to grow. All these give evidence of God's grace in our lives.

The comfort for the child of God is that the springtime of God's favor is ours now. In light of that knowledge, there is every reason to rejoice in Christ our Savior.

Not only that; one day we will hear His voice calling to us, "Rise up and come away." Rise up out of your graves and come away into the most blessed and sweet communion in heaven. How wonderful will those words of our beloved sound! May we look forward to that day. 

EDITORIAL

PROF. RUSSELL DYKSTRA

Rob Bell: A Consistent Heretic

Rob Bell is the pastor of a "mega-church" (Mars Hill) meeting in a former shopping mall in Grandville, MI. On a given Sunday, Rob Bell draws almost as many people to his services as will attend all the thirty-one churches of the Protestant Reformed Churches on the same Lord's Day. He is a popular preacher and speaker who

has written best-selling books. He produces powerful, well-orchestrated videos that have been viewed by millions. He is hailed as a creative and innovative thinker. His latest book (*Love Wins*)¹ has brought him remarkable notoriety, leading

¹ Rob Bell, *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived*. New York: Harper One, 2010.

to interviews on several television shows and national news magazines like *Time*. Thousands revere him as a preacher and a spiritual leader.

For all that, Rob Bell is a lying prophet. Rob Bell is a clever, entertaining false teacher, leading all who will follow him to the eternal hell that he denies exists.

Much controversy swirls around

Bell's teaching that God's love will melt the hard hearts of all the people who will ever have lived, resulting eventually in everybody being in heaven, and no more hell. Does he teach that? He does. In fact, his heresies go far beyond that. But the significant thing about Bell that is so unnerving to the evangelical and Reformed church world is this: Rob Bell is a consistent heretic. That is to say, his conclusions are consistent with the body of his teaching. But the essence of his message is what most evangelical and Reformed churches are teaching.

The Heretical Method

Rob Bell uses the time-tested instrument of heretics, namely, questions, especially questions laced with taunting irony. By means of such questions, Bell effectively leads down the path of error in such a way that he cannot easily be pinned down and accused of teaching contrary to the Bible. Bell also cunningly mocks Reformed (i.e., biblical) teaching, making it appear to be absurd.

A second characteristic of a heretic is a wrong view and use of the Bible. For Bell, the Bible is a collection of stories that are important because they describe what is happening to us yet today. This is the view of the German higher critic Rudolf Bultmann that what is important is the story, whether the events of the story really happened or not.

Bell badly misuses Scripture. Rather than to draw his teaching out of the whole of Scripture, he starts with a preconceived notion

and finds a few lines from the Bible that ostensibly support it. He improperly places verses from two different contexts together. He selects obscure texts, which he uses to confuse the issue at hand, and ignores texts that are clear and pertinent—which contradict his teaching. He paraphrases, quotes out of context, and wrongly applies texts. For one example, in support of his view that the kingdom of God will be on the earth, Bell perverts the Lord's prayer into a petition that "God's kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven."

Third, Rob Bell wants nothing of absolute truth. Churches that maintain certain truths and reject error have a form of Christianity that he mockingly labels "brickianity." He rather describes proper theology in terms of a trampoline spring. Such "flexibility" in theology is beneficial to a heretic for he cannot be condemned for teaching contrary to "the truth."

Fourth, Bell cleverly wraps his lies around a kernel of truth. With that small element of truth, heretics fool many who have a limited knowledge of the Bible. Besides, when heretics are challenged, they can always point to that kernel of truth and insist that they are maintaining the truth.

This is the methodology of heretics from Arius, to Pelagius, to Arminius. Peter informs us that these false teachers "privily bring in damnable heresies" (II Pet. 2:1).

Bell's lack of regard for honesty and truth are quickly apparent in his latest book. In the introduction, he claims that a "staggering number of people have been taught that a select few Christians will spend forever in a

peaceful, joyous place called heaven, while the rest of humanity..." (viii). Such misrepresentation/exaggeration, common in his work, is simply inexcusable.

But what does Rob Bell teach that is heretical? Books have been written outlining his errors. We will have to limit ourselves to a few areas.

Heaven on Earth

Central to all of Bell's theology is his insistence that heaven is on this earth. His conception of heaven is that it is a state of being, not a place as such. When we live as God wants, he writes, "the life of heaven becomes more and more present in our lives. Heaven comes to earth." He explains, "There is this place, this realm, heaven, where things are as God desires them to be. As we live his way, heaven comes here. To this place, this world, the one we're living in" (*Elvis*, 147).²

Later he writes, "The goal isn't escaping this world but making this world the kind of place God can come to" (*Elvis*, 150). And again, "We are not going somewhere else at the end of time, because this world is our home. And our home is good" (*Elvis*, 171).

In *Love Wins*, Bell concludes a description of life in "heaven" thus: "Life in the age to come. If this sounds like heaven on earth, that's because it is. Literally" (33). He pokes fun of the notion of white-robed saints in heaven—"Can you play sports in a white robe? How

² Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.

could it be heaven without sports?" (*Love*, 24).

Although Bell distinguishes between this life and the next, he never tells us how we will get to the next. Somehow all will be there. For some, it will be heaven. For others, it will be a hell.

Eventually, all will be saved, though it may take some time in "the next" life. For God, according to Bell, will give people what they want. If they "want isolation, despair and the right to be [their] own god, God graciously grants... that option" (*Love*, 117). Yet, Bell assures us that part of the Christian tradition maintains that "the love of God will melt every hard heart, and even the most 'depraved sinners' will eventually give up their resistance and turn to God" (*Love*, 107). So, go ahead and believe that.

An End to Hell

Rob Bell rejects the biblical teaching on hell as a *place*, as an *eternal* destiny, and as a *punishment* from a righteous and holy God. Hell is a condition of life. There are "all kinds of hells" right now (*Love*, 79). "Poverty, injustice, suffering—they are all hells on earth" (*Elvis*, 148). In the next life, hell will be "the very real consequences we experience when we reject the good and true and beautiful life that God has for us" and "the evil...when we fail to live in God's world God's way" (*Love*, 93). But that is our choice, and Bell gives assurance that if we choose to live in God's world in God's way, we will leave hell behind, and enjoy life in heaven.

Hell is not forever. It lasts as long as we choose it.

Deeper Heresies

As bad as they are, Bell's heresies go much deeper than erroneous teachings on heaven and hell. It reinterprets the cross as some kind of universal reconciliation of all things and all people to God. That reconciliation is not, emphatically not, based on a substitutionary atonement, nor some satisfaction of God's justice. The cross is simply a testimony that, contrary to all the frightening things happening around us, "the universe is on our side" (*Love*, 137). The death and resurrection of Jesus is nothing new; it is a part of all religions going way back. "But the first Christians believed that this idea had been lived out in a new and unique way in Jesus' death and resurrection" (*Elvis*, 140). This doctrine destroys salvation in the cross of Christ.

But Bell's heresies go deeper, to the very being of God. Bell starts with "God is love" and "God is loving" and ends with "Love is what God is" (*Love*, 197). That is an unclear statement, open to interpretation. It could be a reemphasis of the biblical statement, God is love. However, it could also be understood to mean: "Love is God." Or more properly, "Love is god."

In support of that latter interpretation, consider Bell's story of how he was asked to make a wedding ceremony "profound and deep and spiritual" without talking about Jesus or God or the Bible. Bell relates how he led this unbelieving couple to talk of a "force" that brought

them together, which force might be the same that holds the whole world together. The couple "said they would call that glue, that force, God" (*Elvis*, 77).

Thus, according to Bell, God is a force. The "God" of Bell is love. That would explain why, even though Bell speaks of Jesus as the divine in human flesh, he more often describes Him as a "life force" (*Elvis*, 92), as the energy in the world, and the sacred power present in every dimension of creation (*Love*, 158).

To be perfectly plain, for Bell it is not necessary that Jesus be the Incarnate Son of God. Already six years ago, Bell asked (*Elvis*, p. 26):

What if tomorrow someone digs up definitive proof that Jesus had a real, earthly, biological father..., and archeologists...find [his] tomb and do DNA samples and prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the virgin birth was just a bit of mythologizing the Gospel writers threw in...?

Obviously, that is a denial of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. If Jesus had an earthly father, He is not God. If He is not God, there is no salvation and no Christianity.

A Better Story

Bell claims that his gospel is a better story than that which the church has proclaimed from the time of Jesus to the present. Bell's "better story" goes something like this: God is love. In his love, he sent Jesus to die on the cross to show us that he is for us, not against us. The gospel is a story of love and renewal. Jesus' death and renewal is

important because we also experience death and resurrection. The earth is eternal. God (who is love) is seeking a people to care for the earth and to love each other. That is what God wants. If you take care of the creation, and live in love, you bring heaven to earth. If you violate

the creation and live in hatred, you bring hell to earth. You choose— heaven or hell. Love lets you choose. But eventually, love wins.

Consistent Heresy

As heretical as all that is, it is

consistent with itself. Thus Bell creates great difficulty for many. For, though the great majority of churches today affirm much of Bell's gospel, they are not able to stomach the conclusion. They are inconsistent in their heresies.

... to be continued. 

LETTERS

Two Kingdoms?

Dear editor,

Regarding Mark Hoeksema's review in *SB* 87:14 of the book by David VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought*, which I have recently read myself, I would like to make some comments.

First, the brother writes that he views "the kingdom as a broader and more inclusive concept than that of the church, in keeping with VanDrunen's historical analysis." Though I am not sure what the brother means by this idea, VanDrunen is at pains throughout the entire book to demonstrate that, beginning with Augustine and all the way through to Abraham Kuyper, theologians have taught that the "redemptive kingdom" of Christ has always been limited to the church. For example, VanDrunen summarizes the teaching of these theologians thus: "God rules the church (the spiritual kingdom) as redeemer in Jesus Christ and rules the state and all other social institutions (the civil kingdom) as creator and sustainer." VanDrunen quotes at length from these men in order to oppose the neo-Calvinist doctrine of a kingdom of Christ that is wider than the church. This is, in fact, one of VanDrunen's primary motives in writing this book. Furthermore, do not our confessions identify the kingdom as Christ's rule over the elect (i.e., the church) by His Word and Spirit (Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 123) as well as identifying entrance and exit from this kingdom as entrance and exit from the church (LD 31)? I do not understand, then, how the concept of kingdom can be "broader and more inclusive" than the church, unless the meaning is

that the kingdom of Christ's rule of grace in the hearts of the elect has visible effects in our workplace, schools, etc.

Second, having read the book, I was not at all convinced that the two-kingdom idea is the "traditional Reformed view." VanDrunen's "two kingdom" idea, although far better than the neo-Calvinist conception, is not historically Reformed. It is a very gentle (and hence more deceptive) form of common grace. This, VanDrunen demonstrates in the chapter on Abraham Kuyper, whose common grace theology VanDrunen shows to be in agreement with his own "two kingdom" theology in all important social/cultural/civil aspects. This is further shown in VanDrunen's book *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, in which he grounds the "civil kingdom" in the covenant with Noah, just as Abraham Kuyper grounded his "common grace" there. Furthermore, VanDrunen does not, in my opinion, prove that Augustine, Luther, and Calvin taught his "two kingdom" theology; he only quotes them as teaching that the kingdom of this world is separate from the kingdom of heaven but that God in Christ nevertheless rules over both and that believers ought to live in both. (Also woefully lacking in VanDrunen's theology is that the kingdom of this world represents the development of Antichrist and his kingdom, and that God sovereignly rules over it not for a purpose completely separate from the church, but for the sake of the church.) Finally, and perhaps most importantly, in the question of what is historically Reformed, the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Confession (the former of which VanDrunen does not deal with at all in his historical

survey, and the latter of which he barely engages with) know only of a single kingdom of God: the “kingdom of Christ,” the “kingdom of heaven,” etc. In the words of the Westminster Confession: “The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel...is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ” (25.2).

Third, I am not sure how the “natural law” can be the “moral standard for life in the civil kingdom,” since the Canons of Dordt say about “this light of nature... that [man] is incapable of using it aright *even in things natural and civil*” (III/IV:4). Ought not believers live all their lives, whether in the civil or ecclesiastical realm, not by “natural law” but by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit and the law of God that is written in their hearts?

Manuel Kuhs

Limerick Reformed Fellowship, Ireland

RESPONSE

Dear Mr. Kuhs:

Thank you for expressing your opinions on various points in connection with my book review. It is always good to know that people are reading and thinking, and in your case, taking pen in hand.

In large measure I agree with many of your comments.

You are considerably more critical of the book than I was, perhaps rightly. Nevertheless, I believe that the book accomplished the author’s intent. My point was that the book is worthwhile reading in the context of the current kingdom issue. The fact that I recommended it does not imply my total agreement, and does not constitute a blanket endorsement of the author’s views. Hopefully most readers are sufficiently perceptive to recognize errors when they see them (as you were), especially that of common grace, a pernicious heresy that wrecks everything it touches. My perspective was to mention the beneficial aspects of the book, not to analyze and condemn its every shortcoming. This latter always seems to occur soon enough.

Although the book review column is probably not the proper forum for a lengthy dialogue, perhaps the discussion can continue elsewhere. Thank you again for your contribution to the subject.

For a more in-depth analysis of this book, please see Prof. David Engelsma’s review in the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* (42:2, 169).

—Mark H. Hoeksema 

ALL AROUND US

REV. MICHAEL DE VRIES

■ A Gradual Demise of Marriage

A recent Associated Press article by Nigel Duara reflects on data released by the U.S. Census Bureau on May 26, 2011 that shows that married couples find themselves in a new position: They’re no longer the majority. Duara writes, “It’s a trend that’s been creeping along for decades, but in the 2010 Census, married couples represent 48 percent of all households. That’s down from 52% in the last Census and, for the first time in U.S. history, puts households led by married couples as a plurality.” This ought not be a surprise to us, real-

izing how God’s holy ordinance of marriage is despised and perverted in our day, but I still find it shocking.

Duara continues:

The flip in the 2010 Census happened in 32 states. In another seven states, less than 51 percent of households were helmed by married couples.

The reason, said Portland State University demographer Charles Rynerson, is twofold: The fast-growing older population is more likely to be divorced or widowed later in life, and 20-somethings are putting off their nuptials for longer stretches.

“People in their 20s are postponing marriage for many reasons, including money,” Rynerson said. “We also have an aging population, so there’s more people living alone.”

Rev. DeVries is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Fears of not being able to hang onto a job, a widening labor market for women and a shift away from having kids at a young age have all proved to be a disincentive for people in their 20s and early 30s to join the ranks of the married....

...The median age for first marriages has climbed steadily since the 1960s, when men got married at about 23 years old, and women at 20. Now, men are waiting until they're 28 and women are holding off until 26.

"Some of that is people coupling but not being married," Rynerson said. "There are not nearly as many people in their 20s who are married as in previous generations."

The data supports that, as the Census Bureau reported last year that opposite-sex unmarried couples living together jumped 13 percent from 2009 to 7.5 million.

We're also living longer, with an average life expectancy of 78 years, nearly a decade longer than in the 1960s.

To reflect the changing attitudes on marriage, the Census Bureau has broadened the definition of family this year to include unmarried couples, such as same-sex partners, as well as foster children who are not related by blood or adoption.

And attitudes on marriage are changing, too. About 29 percent of Americans say marriage is becoming obsolete, according to a Pew Research Center study published in November, up from 28 percent in 1978.

The most grievous aspect of all this is that so much of the church has compromised, if not completely abandoned, the biblical teachings regarding marriage and the family. *WORLD* magazine (June 4, 2011) contains edited excerpts of Marvin Olasky's interview with Jim Daly, president and CEO of Focus on the Family. Daly appears to acknowledge the failings of the church regarding the biblical maintenance of marriage. He says,

We've got to look at what God is doing in all of this.... Have we done such a poor job with marriage, is He so upset with our mishandling of it in the Christian community, along with our lust of the flesh as a nation, that He is handing us over to this polygamy and same-sex situation in order to, perhaps, drive the Christian community, the remnant into saying, 'OK, there's no no-fault divorce in our church?... if you're going to be a part

of this church and you're married, you're going to be committed to your marriage. There's no easy way out.' What if the Christian divorce rate goes from 40 percent to 10 percent or 5 percent, and the world's goes from 50 percent to 80 percent? Now we're back to the early centuries. They're looking at us and thinking, 'We want more of what they've got,' because we're proving in front of the eyes of the world that marriage in a Christian context works.... We've got to look at our own house, make sure that our marriages are healthy, that we're being a good witness to the world. Then we can continue to work on defending marriage as best we can.

What Daly is proposing would require large scale repentance and reformation in much of the modern-day church. Many churches are filled with unmarried couples living together in fornication, and couples who are divorced and remarried. Sound preaching and teaching with regard to these issues is almost impossible to find. The key of Christian discipline with regard to sins against the seventh commandment has long been covered with rust.

Yes, it is important "to look at what God is doing in all of this." We must see His righteous judgments in giving over, not only the unbelieving world, but also much of the apostatizing church unto the lusts of the flesh and a reprobate mind (Rom. 1:28). But may our God ever preserve a faithful remnant that, in doctrine and in life, strives to uphold the truth regarding marriage. May He preserve, in the midst of this world, His church, which is faithful in exercising the key of Christian discipline. By the grace of God, may our marriages be a faithful testimony to those around us in this evil day.

■ A Record-breaking Tornado Season

Certainly so far this spring, tornadoes have been "all around us." Though we are yet early in the storm season, 2011 is already the deadliest year for tornadoes in our country since 1950. A record 875 tornadoes have torn across the USA in April. And reportedly more than 520 lives have been taken. On April 27, at least 312 tornadoes ravaged seven southern states in a 24-hour period, killing more than 300 and leaving thousands homeless. The first two weeks of May were relatively quiet, but then on Sunday, May 22, a monster

tornado hit Joplin, Missouri, leaving at least 150 dead and more than 900 injured. This tornado was the single deadliest tornado in the U.S. since officials began keeping records in 1950. Certainly our hearts ache as we see and hear the reports of the devastation, the injuries, and the loss of life wrought by the many tornadoes in many places this spring.

The experts are asking why 2011 has spawned so many deadly storms. Researchers try to sort out the causes. More of the tornadoes this year have been in the two most destructive categories, F4 and F5, than in past years. Many experts believe that La Nina, a cyclical drop in temperatures in the Pacific Ocean, which lasts at least five months and repeats every three to five years, is part of the explanation. Others speculate about climate change being a factor. We may hear reports of survivors of a tornado who give thanks to God for sparing their lives, but seldom do we hear an acknowledgment that the sovereign God has sent and directed the storm. And almost never do we hear the response, "Christ is coming, and He's coming soon," as storms and tornadoes increase in their intensity and frequency.

Many may be reminded of specific tornadoes that have wreaked havoc in their own area and touched their own lives. Tornadoes were a familiar summer occurrence in the state of Iowa, where I grew up. And in the other places I have lived, tornadoes were a spring and summer weather hazard—also in the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Ontario. But the tornado that made the biggest impression upon me was one that struck farms and neighboring villages near Edgerton in southwest Minnesota in June, 1992. This one affected people we knew, some within our own congregation. We saw the devastation and helped with the clean-up. Some may be reminded of the very beautiful and moving meditation written by Rev. Gerrit Vos shortly after a devastating tornado struck Hudsonville, Michigan when he was a pastor there in April of 1956. The meditation, originally appearing in the *Standard Bearer*, is included in the book of his meditations from the Psalms entitled *O Taste & See* (pp. 147-152). The meditation, based on Psalm 46:8, 10, 11, was entitled "Visited by Majesty on High." As I recall, Rev. G. Eriks, the current pastor in Hudsonville PRC, was able to speak, and read a portion of Rev. Vos' meditation, at the 50th

Anniversary community commemoration ceremony of the tornado in 2006.

Rev. Vos' meditation speaks of how God came and roared, walking through that village leaving a path of devastation, death, pain, misery, and sorrow. It spoke of the awe that was also left in the hearts and minds of God's children. But let us hear from him:

Our village received a very special visit by the Lord Christ.

It was a visit of the Majesty on High.

What we really received was a little foretaste of the end of the world.

Some of us went to heaven in the process of that visit. Others are in the hospital because of that visit. Some of us had a brush with death. All of us were deeply impressed by that visit.

God came to us, and He roared. I have never before heard a voice such as we heard around supper time, Tuesday evening, April 3, 1956. It sounded as though a thousand express trains were traversing the sky.

His footsteps were seen. He walked from the southwest to the northeast, skirting our village. Everyone was aware of His august presence.

And we were afraid. Many cowered in the basement of their homes while God ravaged their (?) properties. He flung houses and barns far and wide. Such debris was mixed with black muck and the dust of the earth. He snuffed out the lives of some of us, broke the bones and the flesh of others. They were left moaning in His wake.

Oh yes, no one can dispute it: God walked among us; His Christ paid us a special visit; He left desolation, death, pain, and misery.

But also awe, the awe of the childlike fear of Jehovah.

One man said, "My Jehovah was beautiful in His raging!" And that man lost half of his worldly goods, and his life was in jeopardy.

Yes, I have seen Him too.

His pathway through Hudsonville was about three or four city blocks from my dwelling....

...The tornado calls us to a rededication, to a reconsecration. It did that to me. We have given our answer to God's visit in our communal prayer. And we tremble at His presence now. For God says, "Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."

God desires to be exalted. And, let us never forget it, He *will* be exalted. Therefore He walked through our

town on a bias, on a line from the southwest to the northeast. Even the dogs saw Him and trembled.

He was exalted. Even by the reprobate, although they will not admit it.....

...Did you note that the daily papers did not connect the tornado with God and His Christ?

But we are still, Father! We know that Thou art God. And we exalt Thee, even while we cower in the southwest corner of our basements....


... The papers say, "Get to the basement." They even specify the exact corner which is safest: the southwest. Or under a table or a bed if you have no basement. I have no quarrel with the scientist. We must use the means.

But there is a refuge that is better, far better.

We hide in the shadow of the cross of our Jesus.

And all is well. Amen. Hallelujah!

Do we hear this Word? Is this Word in our minds and hearts as we see and hear of the destruction, the injuries, the death wrought not only by tornadoes, but also by earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, floods, and fires? Do we hear this Word: "Be still and know that I am God!"?

By grace, we desire to exalt our God! For this God is our Father; He is our refuge and our strength, the God of our salvation. He has sent the storms of His wrath upon His only begotten Son on the cross for us! Truly, "the Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge!" 

Militant Pastor (2)

The Reformed minister is a soldier, called to war a good warfare (I Tim. 1:18). He fights for the gospel of Jesus Christ, for doctrine which is according to godliness. Hence he battles against the lie and all sin.

At the same time, the minister is a pastor, a shepherd.

For God's people are sheep. "We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture" (Ps. 100:3). Moses was prepared for leading Israel by tending to sheep. Likewise David. Jesus identifies Himself as "the good shepherd" (John 10). In restoring Peter to the role of a preacher/apostle, Jesus commanded him: Feed my sheep and be a shepherd to them, and feed my lambs.

The form for ordination of ministers identifies ministers as pastors. "Here we see that the holy apostle,

among other things, saith that the pastoral office is an institution of Christ."

The form adds:

What this holy office enjoins may easily be gathered from the very name itself; for as it is the duty of a common shepherd to feed, guide, protect, and rule the flock committed to his charge, so it is with regard to these spiritual shepherds who are set over the church, which God calleth unto salvation and counts as sheep of His pasture.

And again,

Love Christ and feed His sheep, taking the oversight of them not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind, neither as being lord over God's heritage, but as an example to the flock. Be an example of believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

And: "Preaching the gospel for the comfort of the sheep."

Commencement exercises of the Protestant Reformed Seminary were held on June 16, 2011 at Grandville Protestant Reformed Church. An abbreviated version of Prof. Dykstra's address on that occasion was begun in the July issue and is concluded here.

In harmony with that calling is the admonition to Timothy: “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth” (II Tim. 2:24, 25).

That the minister, the servant of Christ, is not to strive is not a contradiction of the calling to war a good warfare. The context of II Timothy 2 makes it plain that Paul has reference to battles over pointless matters—the foolish questions and discussions that have no value, and are not even answered by Scripture. At the same time, it does indicate the proper attitude of the minister towards his flock. He must not be at war with his sheep. The pastor’s calling is to feed them and care for them, not to battle them.

Thus, Paul adds, but be gentle to all men. The only other place that the word translated “gentle” is used in Scripture is in Paul’s description of his work among the saints in Thessalonica: “We were gentle among you as a nurse cherisheth her children” (I Thess. 2:7). Do you see the picture of a nurse walking the floors, tending to the baby in her arms with tender affection? That is the attitude of the minister to his congregation. He has a tender affection towards them.

Such a minister has the desire to teach (apt to teach). That does not refer merely to the ability to be a logical, capable teacher. A basic requirement for every minister is that he be able to teach. Rather, that a pastor is apt to teach means first that he wants to teach. He is not looking for a fight. He is rather looking to instruct. And second, that a man is apt to teach includes that he knows how to give instruction to the particular member of the congregation. It is instruction fitting both for the member and the issue at hand.

In addition, Paul reminds pastors that they must be patient. The word implies that one does not take offence at wrongs done to him. In harmony with that, he must labor “in meekness.” Meekness is the opposite of pride. It is the opposite of putting oneself forward. It is an activity of seeking the good of the other, and in humility willing to put oneself down. In meekness, the pastor is to give instruction (as one would to a child) to those who “oppose themselves,” that is, set themselves to oppose something. And what are they opposing, but

the way of truth and godliness? These people, who are to be treated with gentleness and patience, are those ensnared by the devil, who require repentance (vv. 25, 26)!

A minister is a shepherd of the sheep, gentle to all.

What are the tools of a shepherd? His tools are the same that he uses in the good warfare. Preaching is the shepherd’s rod and staff. By preaching he leads the sheep in green pastures, beside still waters. That is, by preaching, *chiefly* by preaching, he *teaches*, and this must be done patiently and in meekness.

Preaching must edify, exhort, and comfort, according to I Corinthians 14:3. It begins with edification—building up the believers. A preacher is a teacher. Jesus’ word to Peter is: Feed my sheep. Feed my lambs. Be a shepherd to my sheep (John 21:15-17). As a warring minister, your sermons must contain polemics. However, if the greatest part of your sermon is polemics, it has entirely the wrong balance. And if the part of the sermon that you enjoy is especially polemics, that is entirely the wrong emphasis. Preaching is, first and foremost, for edification. Then exhortation and comfort.

The Double Calling

God calls the minister to war a good warfare. God exhorts him to be gentle to all. Preachers need these admonitions. Let us see why.

We ministers need this admonition to war, first of all, because of very real opposition to truth and godliness. Heretics and heresies abound. The truth is openly denied, even cardinal truths such as the creation account of Genesis 1-2; the deity of Christ; heaven; hell; sovereign grace; God’s everlasting covenant of grace; and so much more. And sin is openly approved in the church world—divorce for any and all reasons, and remarriage after divorce; homosexuality; rebellion; abortion; euthanasia; Sabbath desecration; and so much more.

It would be a relief if the minister need battle such evils only *outside* the walls of the congregation. That, however, is not the case. II Peter 2 warns against false teachers who will be within the church itself. Pretending to be true preachers of the gospel, they will surreptitiously bring in damnable heresies.

The Revs. Hoeksema, Danhof, and Ophoff discov-

ered that heresy was being taught in their denomination, our mother church, and fought against it in the 1920s. In the PRC, ministers were promoting the heresy of conditional theology in the 1950s. The ministers (as well as the members) were compelled to do battle for the truth.

Let us not delude ourselves into thinking that Satan will no longer trouble the PRC with heresies.

In addition to such battles for the truth, virtually all the congregations have faced those who blasphemed the truth (like Hymenaeus and Alexander) and finally had to be excommunicated.

Indeed the battles are fought within the congregations. In Ephesus, certain members wanted to be teachers of the law (I Tim. 1:7). Battles often rage in connection with the law. Some are antinomians (against law), and some are legalists who want to press their “laws” on all the members. Ministers must war against both.

And then there is the constant battle against sin. Every member of the congregation has an evil nature, prone to hate God and the neighbor. The minister fights his own sinful nature. He also wars against the sins of the flesh—instructing, warning, reproving, rebuking.

Clearly, there is a war to be fought. A spiritual war with many sides and facets. Surely you graduates see the battles. Yet, God does not leave it to the discretion of the minister whether or not to war a good warfare. Rather, God specifically commands you men to war. Why?

God must call us to the battles exactly because you and I do not like to fight. Talk to any soldier who has been through a war. Wars are ugly; they are bitter; they are simply horrible. The same is true of this spiritual war. The attacks can leave wounds far worse than the wounds of a bullet or a hand grenade. They leave scars in the soul. There are casualties in the war—people leave the congregation after being unnecessarily wounded in the battles. Besides that, we want to be liked. We would rather not confront those speaking the lie, or living in sin. In the face of all that, God commands: War a good warfare.

The Other Admonition

But you men are also called not to strive, but rather

to be gentle, patient, apt to teach, and meek. Why is this admonition necessary?

It is necessary, first, from the point of view of the congregation. God’s people are sheep. Sheep, left on their own, are prone to stray from the good pasture. They are apt to follow—follow also someone teaching errors or walking in sin. And sheep are proud. They can be stubborn and rebellious. “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way” (Is. 53:6).

Accordingly, the people of God need instruction from a gentle pastor. If we are fierce and unapproachable, or if we bristle anytime someone comes with a criticism of our preaching, we will drive the people away from us. That is wrong! Ministers must be shepherds who draw the people to them in love. For that, they must be gentle.

We ministers need this admonition too because of our pride. When a member opposes us, we sometimes would like to retort something like this: I went to seminary. I know Greek and Hebrew, the original languages of the Bible. I have had three years of Dogmatics. Who are you to question me?! And if that is the attitude of the minister, he will not have to *say* any of those things. The people of God will *feel* that proud attitude.

If, when he is attacked, the minister rises up in pride; if he strikes out at the sheep; if he attacks in kind, if he uses the pulpit as a whipping post and uses the preaching to settle his disagreement with someone in the congregation—(I’ll show him that I am right!)—such a minister needs to hear the word of Paul to his beloved spiritual son—“The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all.” This is particularly difficult when a member of the congregation attacks the minister personally, or even criticizes his family. Be gentle to all.

The Possibility

Can you graduates do this? How is it possible for you to be warriors for truth and godliness, and yet gentle pastors to all the flock?

I Timothy 1:18 gives the key: “according to the prophecies which went before on thee.” And then notice, “that thou *by them* mightest war a good warfare,” that is, *by the prophecies*.

The prophecies refer to the preaching, that is, the

preaching of the glorious gospel of Christ. The good news that Christ humbled Himself—came into the flesh, suffered, even unto death. And yet it was in that most astounding humility, that He also did battle with the ungodly, with sin, and with Satan, death, and hell. Jesus did all of that out of love for God, and love for God's people.

The preaching of exactly that gospel prepared you graduates. You have been prepared from your youth in catechism and under the weekly preaching. You have been prepared through your seminary instruction—a special kind of preaching. By all the preaching that “went before on” you, God prepared you for today, and in a few months to take up the work of being both a pastor and a soldier. God gave gifts and developed them. God give you the spiritual blessings of strength and wisdom. Now, live out of that gospel as a soldier/pastor.


And if you live out of that gospel, you will live out of the power of God's love. You will love God, and thus be filled with zeal for His glory. You will not tolerate false teaching about the God whom you love. You will fight error in the church world around, in the congregation, and in the hearts and minds of the children, the youth, even to the aged saint. You will stand for the truth, and

not allow sin in yourself or in the congregation to go unrepented. For God, whom you love, is a holy God.

At the same time, your actions are governed by love for the people of God. You will be a pastor, caring for the people of God, remember, “as a nurse cherisheth her children.” And since all three of you men are fathers, you know what this means. As a father loves his children, so you will love your sheep.

Faithfulness to the calling to be both a pastor and a soldier takes wisdom. When do I battle? When must I be gentle? When do I give a stern rebuke? And when a gentle admonition? You will need wisdom and courage as you prepare a sermon, where the text speaks to a particular walk of life, perhaps a particular sin. Yet, perhaps, you already had that very week a confrontation with a member over this very sin. The sermon must not become your instrument to whip the member. However, you must be faithful to the text—both explaining and applying it correctly. Wisdom. And courage.

Pray for wisdom. You will grow in wisdom if you continue to beseech God for it as you ought, and as you labor faithfully with the Word.

So, young men, you go forth with our blessing and with our prayers. Be faithful as a minister of the Word. Warring a good warfare; gentle to all. 

GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

REV. RICHARD SMIT

A Description of Popular Roman Catholic Culture in the Philippines (1)

One of the unique characteristics often mentioned about the Philippines, in distinction from other Southeast Asian countries, is that it is a Christian nation. Common statistics about religion in the Philippines state that the population of

the country is about 90% Roman Catholic, with the remaining 10% of the population adhering to Islam, Buddhism, international cults, domestic cults, or Protestantism, which would include even the small presence of various Reformed churches in the Philippines. Although according to these statistics it may be true that the Philippines is a nominally Christian nation, yet upon closer examination of the popular religion in the Philippines, one learns that it could better be described

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as a pagan-Christian mixture, which is not the true, biblical, Reformed Christianity.

Although not much is known about the history of the Philippines before the sixteenth century, there is enough information to know that, in regard to religion in particular, the peoples of the islands were mostly religiously animistic. This means that the peoples of the islands had a religion of the spirit world, believing that a vast array of spirit gods and departed spirits of ancestors ruled and influenced their daily lives. Surprisingly, this animism so dominated the peoples of the islands that it resisted the Islamic thrust into the islands from the south and the influence of Buddhism through mainland Asia trading relationships. As a result, this animism remained the dominant religion until the mid-sixteenth century.

The animistic religion had a supreme god who remained very distant from daily life and mostly unconcerned about the daily affairs of the islanders. Although he was considered unapproachable, he was regarded as the ultimate source of good for life. This one-person, rather lonely god governed the great things of the universe and controlled only the ultimate fate of the islanders. Some called him Bathala, others Laon, and others Kabunian, depending on the region in which the islanders lived.

Below this god were the numerous spirit-gods called "anito." These gods had daily contact with everyday life, in contrast to the aloof supreme god. They lived everywhere and affected everything in daily life. Great care was taken not to offend the spirits who lived in open fields, in trees, in animals, in dark caves, or the waters of rivers, lakes, and seas. To offend these spirits in any way was to expose oneself to a curse, which could take the form of sickness or, worse, death. As a result, sicknesses were not merely a medical problem for the islanders, but were always viewed as the work of an offended spirit that needed to be appeased by the help of a local, spirit-world specialist.

For example, if a child was sick, a local animistic specialist would be called by the parents into the house to help cure their sick child. The specialist might take a bowl of cold water and pour into the water hot wax. Whatever form the wax would take, when hardening in the cold water, indicated to the specialist which

evil spirit was the cause of the child's sickness. After identifying the offended spirit, the specialist could then prescribe the necessary cure.

To obtain a cure, and so to appease the offended spirits, sacrifices of fruit, rice, coconut oil or wine, and other food stuffs were often made. These offerings or other rituals would earn back the favor of the lower gods and their blessings. It became common, then, for sacrifices to be made for present problems, such as the recovery of the sick, or that other rituals would be performed as an insurance for future endeavors, such as prosperous journeys, good harvests, conceptions and successful childbirths, and happy marriages.

One part of the spirit world that the islanders greatly revered was that of the spirits of ancestors. Reverencing and praying towards the dead relatives was a necessity in order for the living to have a good and prosperous life. Showing due reverence to the spirits of grandparents and notable leaders of one's village or island was necessary for a prosperous life because these departed spirits served as vital mediators to the supreme god, who was the ultimate source of anything good. Through the intercession of the ancestral spirits, the islanders sought to maintain a healthy relationship with all of the spirit-beings that controlled everything in their life from conception and birth until death.

We can imagine how important and complex it was for the islanders to live in harmony with the spirit world. To do that they needed to avoid all possible offense against the spirits. For example, having finished a banana and simply tossing the leftover peel into an open and unoccupied field, one could easily offend the spirit of that field by that unwelcome intrusion. One missionary learned that some believed that even thoughtlessly tossing a piece of trash out of a window at night would surely incur the wrath of the spirits lurking about outside. To avoid such things the islanders, through rituals, good-luck charms (amulets), and other magical objects or practices (e.g., salt behind the ears), protected themselves from unwanted curses and somewhat manipulated the spirit world to their advantage. Even fireworks, an obvious delight and favorite pastime of Filipinos on Old Year's night, were originally, and often still are by some, used to scare away menacing spirits who might bring bad luck.

The islanders believed that, after death, their bodies returned to the earth, but their souls continued on into the afterlife of the spirit world. There they expected to inherit a level of glory that was directly proportionate to their social standing in life. If one was a slave or was very poor in this life, he would expect to be placed into the lowest level of glory in the life hereafter. In order to gain a high level of glory, according to the islanders' conception of an afterlife, they needed to strive for a high level of economic and social status in this life. In their unbelieving understanding, one's morality in this life did not affect one's level of glory in the afterlife, which idea, we can imagine, provided no incentive to a morally upright life.

The islanders' popular religion promoted a very superstitious, idolatrous life, far away from the truth of the providence of the triune God and the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel of true peace in His shed blood. What Romans 1:21 teaches is true regarding the islanders in their pagan religion. They "became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." In worshiping and revering the spirit world, they willingly gave themselves unto the bondage of the Devil and his dominion.



While true reformation was taking place in the church in Europe through Martin Luther and others, Ferdinand Magellan sailed into the islands in early 1521 and came ashore on the island of Cebu, which is in the middle region of the islands. Magellan claimed the islands for King Charles I of Spain, although the islands were later named in honor of King Philip I (1556-1598) as "The Philippines." Permanent settlement of the Spanish in the Philippines did not actually take place until Miguel López de Legazpi, the first royal governor, arrived in Cebu from New Spain (Mexico) in 1565. Six years later, he established the capital of the Spanish colony in Manila.

Only one week after setting foot on the beaches of Cebu and meeting the king, queen, and some of the people, Ferdinand Magellan had the royal family and the entire population of Cebu baptized into the Roman Catholic Church. Candidacy for baptism included the requirement that married couples have a monogamous

marriage, that the convert repent from the sins of his past life, and that he believe that the sacrament of baptism actually saved him when the water was poured upon him. Later on, converts were also required to memorize the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and, of course, the "Ave Maria." Upon successful approval, the applicants were duly baptized into the Romish church. As a result of the Roman Catholic missionary effort in the islands from 1565 to the 1590s, about 50% of the population of the islands had been baptized into the Romish church.

Although this statistic indicates "success" in the gathering of islanders into the membership of the Romish church, the actual spiritual condition of the members indicated something far less than true success. What religion developed among the islanders was not really official Roman Catholicism, but a mixture of Roman Catholicism and the islanders' animistic religion. Especially when Catholicism and animism seemed to overlap in ideas, the Catholic ideas were quickly embraced. The statues, holy water, interceding saints, amulets, prayer to saints, etc. were very appealing. Towns adopted their patron saints and the annual fiestas centered in the patron saints, instead of the former spirit-gods. Miracles attributed to spirits were then attributed to the patron saints, or often to the Mary-goddess of Roman Catholicism. Even the supreme god of animism was replaced by the Roman Catholic theology of God. As regards daily life, much of the animistic ideas of everyday life remained unchanged.

In the end, Roman Catholicism took a syncretistic form in the Philippines, a mixture of paganism with Roman Catholicism. This mixture of animism and Catholicism one missionary has called "folk Catholicism."¹ It is a form of Roman Catholicism in which many of the ideas and superstitions of animism still persist—in some cases in harmony with Catholicism, in other cases merely alongside of Catholicism. It should be noted that although most of folk Catholicism is not officially sanctioned by the Romish hierarchy, yet much of it is left alone and unchecked by the church, so that on the local level folk Catholicism flourishes still today.

... to be continued. 

¹ p. 11, Rodney L. Henry, *Filipino Spirit World* (Manila: OMF Literature, Inc, 1986).

Peer Pressure

So many warnings you have heard about peer pressure. “Don’t follow the crowd!” “If everyone else is doing it, that is no reason for you to do it.” Peer pressure you hear about in connection with drinking, smoking, and almost everything else that will get you into trouble. Peer pressure is the enemy. You must not cave into its demands.

What is peer pressure? Peer pressure is influence that you feel because of a group with whom you identify yourself. You tend to adopt their ways of thinking, speaking, and acting. That tendency is so strong, not only because those ways surround you, so that you are exposed to them, but also because you want to fit in with that group and you enjoy the favor of that group.

Peer pressure can have the effect of pushing one to do bad things. One may be so caught up in what the crowd around him is thinking and doing, that he finds himself saying and doing things that otherwise he would not. Peer pressure is something like alcohol. One does things because alcohol removes inhibitions, with the result that he does what he would certainly not do by himself. Equally true it is, however, that peer pressure appeals to your sinful nature. You have in yourself a desire to do what is wrong. Peer pressure gives you the excuse to do what otherwise you would not do because of the consequences. Know yourself!

Scripture gives plenty of warnings against peer pressure. Against the peer pressure of slander and being judgmental there is the warning of Exodus 23:2: “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment.” Proverbs 1:15, 16 sharply warns against running with an evil crowd: “My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.”

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Our calling is to take a firm stand against that kind of peer pressure. You must know that you are responsible for what you say and do. Your peers are not the cause of the sins that you commit, *you* are. Since peer pressure does have its effect in the battle against sin, you must resist that peer pressure. One of the first questions to ask yourself is whether or not you truly belong in this or that peer group if it becomes such a cause of trouble for you. It may be better to be alone than to run with a crowd that has a poor influence on you. But you must also ask yourself why you may be so weak as to cave in under pressure, forsaking what you know is right, to do something wrong.

There is, however, another side to peer pressure, a positive, proper side. Peer pressure can be a good gift of God. Not always is it evil. It can be one of the benefits of membership in, and reasons for, the church of Jesus Christ. It is one of the reasons why He has created relationships between you and your fellow young people. Your privilege is to help each other, putting a good pressure on each other to do what is pleasing to your God.

One of the greatest blessings of the covenant is that you are faced with two powerful incentives to keep yourself in the way of what is pleasing to God.

The first incentive I cannot label as “peer pressure.” I mention it because it is the foundation of all good peer pressure. I also mention it because it operates in the same way as peer pressure, except far more powerfully than you can imagine. One of the reasons I must mention it here is because of the wonderful truth of the covenant: God is your God, your sovereign Friend, who has in sheer grace made you His friend servant. He has defined to you what is good and pleasing before Him. In addition, He has given you the most powerful incentive to be good and pleasing before Him: His grace, which bears the blessed fruit of thankful consecration. You belong to Him by grace. Even further, He has sup-

plied you with His Spirit, to enable and equip you to be pleasing before Him.

The first incentive to keep yourself in the way that is pleasing to God is that in it you are kept near to God. With this nearness to God you hear powerfully and clearly His word of approval. You know from His Word the way that is pleasing to Him. What a wonderful, powerful incentive you have in knowing that you have His approval when you walk in this way. So what if hundreds of millions of men oppose you? What is their disfavor compared to God's favor? What delightful, powerful pressure to keep to His way and His truth!

The second incentive is that you are kept near to your fellow saints according to who they are and what they should be. Your place is to be a holy young person among other holy young people, and among a holy congregation. That holiness does not mean only that you have a place in the church, whether you refer to the church as the glorious body of Christ, or as the congregation of which you are a part. But your holiness means also that you are filled with the Holy Spirit, consecrated to the cause of God's truth and righteousness. Therefore you have a proper place among your fellow saints who are also consecrated to the cause of God's truth and holiness. Together you share the same covenant friendship of God, the same powerful incentive of gratitude, and the same Holy Spirit. This peer group is proper. "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts" (Ps. 119:63).

The place you have in the church by God's grace brings you to this good, positive, and healthy peer pressure.

Knit together in this fellowship, you are all facing the same direction and aiming at the same goal: the honor and glory of your God. You share the same desire of speaking the truth and doing righteousness, what is pleasing to God. Sharing that direction and that walk, together you enjoy the love and favor of God on your path. Walking in light, you are surrounded by light. What a blessing to enjoy that light in your gatherings, whether at society meetings or on outings, or meeting with each other at different occasions!

How can you turn from that good direction and look in another, to the world or to sin? Together you walk in

the same way, according to the will of God, in all manner of good works. How can you break ranks to walk in a different path or to walk at a different pace? In that way you lose the pleasant company of your fellow saints. In that way you lose the consciousness of God's favor and friendship. You then feel the kind of pressure that is a good peer pressure: Get back where you belong! Here is the kind of pressure that peer pressure ought to be.

You recognize, of course, that there are matters that belong to you individually. There is your own, inner, spiritual life. There is the life of the heart, bringing it out from its rebellious, depraved ways, bringing it under control, and directing it to the love of God and delight in His ways. But what a blessing to be surrounded by those you know to be engaged in the same task! Together you are able to share in your mutual, heartfelt delight in the things of God and His kingdom. In your worship you share the common love of God, and common commitment to His truth.

There are also your own unique circumstances. The Lord has given you your own, unique relationships with your parents, teachers, friends, co-workers, and acquaintances. There are the events in your life that affect you in ways that affect no one else. Out of them there are the peculiar temptations that you face, the burdens that you alone bear. At the same time, you know that you are not alone. Other young people close to you may not share exactly the same circumstances, but they are all going through similar experiences. If you have good peer pressure with one another, you will be able to talk to each other about these matters so near to you. You will then find that you are not that different even in these close, individual matters. You will be able to encourage each other in your struggles. By that encouragement you will become more tightly joined together, supplying even more good peer pressure.


To maintain this good peer pressure you have two specific responsibilities. Your first responsibility is that you take heed to the young people near you. How you behave yourself, how you talk, how you dress—all these will influence them. You must behave in such a way that carries a good influence. That does not mean only that you are going to be careful to behave, dress, or talk in a way that resembles what everyone else does. It means

that you are going to make choices consciously mindful of the influence that you must have on the whole for the betterment of the whole. Your calling is to apply peer pressure in a good direction. This way Scripture sets before you in Hebrews 10:24: “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.”

Your second responsibility is to give yourself over to that good influence and peer pressure. You may be stronger in some areas, and able to give good influence and direction. In other areas you will be weaker. In those areas, let that pressure make you better. Let it motivate you to change.

These two ways Paul properly uses to direct the church at Corinth to a proper, heartfelt, abundant

giving. Notice II Corinthians 9:2: “For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.” That is, Paul spoke to the churches of Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea) of the zealous generosity of the church of Corinth, in Achaia, or Greece. He desired to provoke the churches of Macedonia into the same generous giving for the welfare of the saints at Jerusalem.

Peer pressure is a good, even a wonderful, gift of God. Do not abuse it! Use it for good—for your good, for the good of your fellow saints, for your strength of youth! 

WHEN THOU SITTEST IN THINE HOUSE

REV. ARIE DEN HARTOG

Relationships in the Covenant Family

The family is a beautiful creation of God. The family is the foundational institution of all human society. Out of the family organically arose the clan, the tribe, and finally the nations of the earth. When man fell into sin he corrupted himself and his race. He made it really impossible to live in harmony with his fellow man. This is revealed especially in his corruption of marriage and the family. The family, because of the fall, becomes the stage of strife and bitterness. Husbands rule in tyranny over their wives and abuse them to satisfy their own lust and pride. Wives rebel against their husbands for the same reasons. Children are abused and are themselves rebellious and unable to live in harmony in society. Because of this the world is filled with violence and wickedness.

God in His mercy in Christ Jesus restored the family in the Christian home in the sphere of the covenant. No Christian family is perfect or anywhere near to

God's ideal yet in this age. There is also a measure of sorrow and strife in the Christian family, in some more than in others. But God also has caused the Christian family to be a haven of blessing, a shelter in the world of confusion and sin and ungodliness. The truly Christian family is one of the most beautiful pictures that we have of heaven in all its glory and blessedness.

God is pleased to gather His people in the line of continued generations. In the covenant, God promises to be our God and the God of our children after us. This is the only hope for the Christian family. God obviously worked in covenant ways in all the history of the covenant in the Old Testament in the nation of Israel. One cannot read the Old Testament and ignore the wonder of God's work with the patriarchs and their succeeding generations and finally in the nation of Israel.

The covenant is one in the Old and the New Testament. The covenant of the Old Testament is continued and realized in even richer development in the New Testament. In the history of the church in the New Tes-

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tament the promise of God is to believers and their children, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. God works in covenantal ways in the established church, preserving and keeping in her the institution of the Christian family for the realization of His covenant purposes with His chosen people whom He has redeemed. This is true as well in the gathering of the church through the work of missions. In the book of Acts there are numerous beautiful examples of the salvation of whole families at once (Cornelius and his house, Lydia and her house, the Philippian jailor and his house).

The letters of the apostles have many admonitions for the children in the Christian families that make up the New Testament churches. Without strong Christian families there will not be a continuing church. Where there are no Christian families, the church will in most cases be gone in one generation.

The family begins with marriage between one man and one woman, voluntarily entered by a man and a woman, united together by the mysterious work of the Lord in the bond of the love of Christ. These two must from the beginning be committed to lifelong covenant faithfulness to each other, motivated by the fear of the Lord. Young people must carefully choose their partners for marriage with the truth of the covenant central in their mind and heart.

There obviously cannot be a Christian home without a truly Christian marriage. Husband and wife must live together in unity in the bond of the love of Christ and in the fear of God. The very essence of marriage is unity. Two become one flesh. This the Bible calls a great mystery reflecting the intimate union of Christ and His church. The task of marriage for husband and wife is to live together as one, in every sphere of life, in their personal life, in their family life, in the carrying out of their daily earthly occupation and as members together of the church of Jesus Christ. Sin constantly threatens the blessed unity of marriage, and the God-fearing couple must strive together to overcome sin by the grace and Spirit of God in their hearts. Sin must be put away by bringing it to the cross in confession and forgiveness.

*Parental love
has a strong influence
in the nurture of children
in marriage.*

The unity of marriage must come to expression within the relationships that God has ordained for the institution of marriage. The husband must exercise headship over his wife. He must do that not as a tyrant, or for his own carnal lust and pride, but in order to protect and care for his wife, nourishing and cherishing her as Christ does His church. He must be ready to give himself for his wife as Christ did for His church. The husband must live with his wife, dwelling with her in covenant fellowship as a man of understanding, giving honor unto her, deeply sympathizing with her as the weaker vessel.

The wife must serve her husband in godly humility and love, not grudgingly but willingly, as the help meet for her husband. She must respect his God-given authority, serve and assist him in all things lawful in this life, encouraging and supporting him, even correcting him according to the Word of God when this is necessary.

Husband and wife must acknowledge each other and treat each other with honor and respect, showing deep affection towards each other as joint heirs of the grace of life. They must seek to help each other in the greater purpose of a life of serving the Lord. Everything that threatens to divide the marriage must be guarded against. The greatest danger of division comes from the sinful nature of both husband and wife. Through constant acknowledgment of our weaknesses and sins, and constant forbearance, forgiveness, and reconciliation, marriage is strengthened over the years by the grace of God. In Christian

marriage husband and wife have a tremendous influence on each other. They mold one another, affecting, in many ways, each other's perspective, behavior, and even thinking. Growing in their knowledge of the Lord and His truth, maintaining that truth in their marriage, serving the Lord together, supporting each other in the grace and comfort of the Lord, they grow also in love for one another.

According to God's will He gives children to marriage. The natural bond of children to their parents is a unique and powerful bond. This bond is important

for the nurture and instruction of children. On earth there are few that parents love more dearly than their own children. Parental love has a strong influence in the nurture of children in marriage.

The Christian home is the training ground of the children, to nurture and raise them in the fear of the Lord as the next generation of God's people. Virtually everything that happens in our covenant home will have an influence in molding the character and personality and life-perspective of the children growing up in this home. This happens over the days and years of the life of the covenant family in an even greater way than we might ever imagine. There are genetic traits that our children inherit from us as parents, but there are also very important aspects of the development of their personalities and perspective of life that are the fruit of their upbringing in the home. We acknowledge that our children are conceived and born in sin. The Word of God teaches us that foolishness is born in the heart of the child, and the rod of correction shall drive it far from them. The sphere of the home must be the place where sin is lovingly driven out of the hearts of our children through good discipline and correction, and where the work of grace begins to develop, is nurtured, and grows more and more.


The behavior of husband and wife in relationship to one another will have a great effect on their children either for good or for evil. How father deals with mother in the home will have a great impact on the children and must be their example. Healthy emotional, psychological, and spiritual development of children is greatly helped by unity of love between father and mother. Divorce has devastating consequences for the lives of the children of broken homes. Divorce leaves a profound hurt and psychological and spiritual damage in the lives of the children of divorced parents. This should be seriously considered by anyone who is contemplating sinful divorce from his God-given partner. Often the divorce of parents begins a cycle of divorce for the children from generation to generation. Positively, the pattern of a faithful, devoted relationship between husband and wife will do much to prepare the children for a stable marriage later in their own life.

Children must in the home be taught to honor and respect their parents. Parents must maintain a certain

dignity above their children, in order to maintain their office as parents over their children and live in such a way that they are worthy of the respect of their children. It is foolishness for parents to lower themselves to the level of their children such that they compromise their authority over them and lose the serious respect of their children. Parents must maintain an intimate, personal relationship of friendship with their children but it must be from the perspective of their God-given office over them. The covenant relationship between parents and children in the Christian family is dependent on the children honoring and respecting their parents. It will have very detrimental consequences in the lives of children if they are not from childhood firmly taught to respect their parents and strongly admonished for their disobedience and disrespect of their parents and warned about the judgment of God that comes with ongoing disobedience and rebellion.

In future articles we shall address the other relationships in marriage, such as the relationships that arise out of the beautiful distinction of male and female that God has created in the human race. This distinction runs very deep in one's personality. Our children must be raised with a view to the calling girls have for future covenant homes and boys have to become courageous, strong leaders and good husbands in days to come.

The Christian home must necessarily be a private and sheltered place where husband and wife can live intimately with one another. Also, children need to grow up in a sheltered environment during the years they are growing up, to protect them from the evil influences of the world as much as this is possible. At the same time, the Christian family must be open for Christian hospitality with fellow members in the church and to be a Christian witness in the world.

The Christian family must be the school and spiritual gymnasium for the training of covenant young people. It must be the place where they are molded and even made beautiful for the service of the Lord. In the beautiful words of the Psalm 144, young men must grow up in sturdy strength and noble truth for the sake of the maintenance and defense and advancement of the kingdom of Christ. Our daughters must be raised in true spiritual beauty to be polished stones for the palace of King Jesus. 

Young People's Activities

The first ever Western Young People's Retreat was held June 29-July 2 at a camp in Post Falls, Idaho under the sponsorship of the Young People's Society of the Lynden, WA PRC and the Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA. Young people from Lynden and Spokane, along with others from First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada; Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada; Hope PRC in Redlands, CA; and the Loveland, CO PRC met together for this retreat. The theme was, "Watching for Christ's Coming," with speeches by Rev. John Marcus and Rev. Ron Hanko. Rev. Rodney Kleyn prepared discussion group topics on listening to the preaching and on cell phone and Internet use. Since the retreat ended on a Saturday, many of those attending chose to stay in the area and worship with the congregation of Covenant of Grace in Spokane on Sunday and return home on Monday.

The Young Adult Society of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA hosted a Young Adults Retreat from July 4 to July 7. The theme of their retreat was, "God's Will for Our Lives." Rev. Dan Holstege was this year's featured speaker, speaking July 4 on "Knowing God's Will Concerning Our Temporal Sufferings." Discussion topics were, "God's Will for the End: Understanding Revelation,"

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

and "God's Will for You in His Covenant and Church (elders, deacons, mothers, fathers, etc...)." All these subjects were taken from and based on Psalm 143:8-10. We thank God for the blessings of fellowship in the body of Christ and pray that our young people and young adults may grow spiritually together.

Members of the First PRC in Holland, MI were invited to attend a pancake breakfast and car wash sponsored by their young people on Monday morning, July 4, with proceeds going toward the 2012 convention expenses.

The Council of the Providence PRC in Hudsonville, MI recently approved a recommendation they received to organize a young people's society beginning this fall.

In late June a group of around 15 young people and 6 adult chaperones from the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI took part in a week-long service trip to help refurbish water-damaged homes in Hammond, IN.

In early June the young adults of the Calvary PRC in Hull, IA were invited to an afternoon of paint balling. Those invited included recent high school graduates. So...already in June, a "benefit" of graduating from high school.

Congregation Activities

Members of the Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD, along with others from nearby PR congregations, were invited to a day of fellowship on July 7 at Wild Water West in Sioux Falls. An all-day pass gave those attending

unlimited access to go-carts, batting cages, mini-golf, bumper boats, water park, wave pool, and sand volleyball.

Members of Providence PRC in Hudsonville, MI enjoyed a canoe trip on the White River in Northern Michigan on Saturday, June 25. Knowing from personal experience, I can testify that a canoe trip during the summer means a wet ride down a river.

As Providence PRC continues to grow, as evidenced by their proposed addition of a young people's society this fall, D.V., it is now necessary to have more chairs set up each Lord's Day for their own members and to make visitors feel welcome. Beginning in late April, Providence began setting up at least 160 chairs in the Music Room at Heritage Christian School to meet those anticipated needs.

Sunday evening, June 26, the Calvary PRC in Hull, IA enjoyed a summer singspiration after their evening service. The program included a variety of music and singing of Psalms and hymns.

Mission Activities

Missionary pastor Rev. Richard Smit, his wife, Tricia, and their children left the Philippines on June 7 to begin their six-week furlough in Canada and the United States. They traveled first to Edmonton. On June 13 they were scheduled to travel to west Michigan. Their time in Northwest Iowa was set for July 6-12 and coincided with the church picnic of the Doon, IA PRC, the

calling church. Then they were to travel on to Lynden, WA to visit with family, and on July 20 they planned to fly home to the Philippines. Along the way there were, by our count, at least seven public presentations of the work in the Philippines given, several opportunities to preach on the Lord's Day, plus meetings with the Council of Doon and our denomination's Foreign Mission Committee. Hopefully the Smit family did find some time in those six weeks for a little time to relax before they resume their labors on our behalf in Manila.

We also noted that a consistory meeting in the Berean PRC in Manila was canceled in June

due to flooding—flooding due to the rainy season which began in May in the Philippines. Rev. Daniel Kleyn writes that “recent rainfall over a weekend came to just under 5 inches, and so far today (June 23) 4.5 inches....and it's still raining.”

The seminary sent Mr. Eric Guichelaar, a third-year student, for a four-week summer assignment under Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, to our mission work in Pittsburgh. Eric will shadow Rev. Bruinsma during this time and also speak a word of edification on the pulpit. This began July 8.

Minister Activities

The faculty of our seminary is pleased to announce that they have

licensed third-year seminarian Eric Guichelaar to speak a word of edification in our churches. We rejoice in the goodness of God, who gives gifts of speaking to the seminary students and uses this means to train them for the gospel ministry.

Rev. Nathan Langerak declined the call he received to serve as the next pastor of the Hope PRC in Walker, MI.

Prof. David Engelsma declined the call extended to him from the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA to serve as their next pastor.

Rev. Arie den Hartog declined the call he was considering to serve as the next pastor of the Edgerton, MN PRC. ☁

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wedding Anniversary

■ With thanksgiving to our heavenly Father we rejoice with our parents,

JACK AND HAZEL ANDRINGA, that on August 25, 2011 the Lord has blessed them with 50 years of marriage. Through their marriage the Lord has also blessed us with loving care, an example to live by, and godly instruction. Our covenant God is faithful to His promise and it is our prayer that God continues to bless them in their lives together. Psalm 127:1, “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.”

- ☁ J.T. and Sharon Andringa
Joshua, Alex
- ☁ Ted and Audra Andringa
Jacob, Joseph, Samantha, Benjamin,
Noah, Vanessa
- ☁ Jeff and Rose Andringa
Thomas and Courtney Andringa
Landen
Marcus, Courtney, Zachary,
Hilary, Jonathon, Daniel, Joseph,
James, Jessica
- ☁ Cassy and Justin Regnerus
Hull, Iowa

Wedding Anniversary

■ On July 5, 2011, our parents, **EDWARD and PATRICIA HUIZING**, celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary. We give thanks to our heavenly Father for their example of a godly walk, loving marriage, and commitment to the faith. “Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Psalm 16:11).

- ☁ Jonathan and Rachel Huizing
Kiera
- ☁ Justin and Tanya Huizing
- ☁ Benjamin and Stephanie Tolsma
- ☁ Kevin Huizing
- ☁ Aaron Huizing
- ☁ Daniel Huizing
- ☁ Samuel Huizing
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Annual Meeting

■ RFPA annual meeting will take place on September 22 at 7:30 P.M. in Faith PRC.

Wedding Anniversary

■ On August 11, 2011, our parents,

IKE and PHYLLIS UITTENBOGAARD, will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. We give thanks to God for the many years of faithful marriage He has given to them. We are thankful for their guidance and instruction, as well as the godly example they have set for us. Our prayer is that our heavenly Father will continue to bless them in the years to come. Psalm 89:1: “I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever; with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.”

- ☁ Chad & Sue Uittenbogaard
Haley, Emily, Alyssa, Kelsey,
Karyn, Bryce
- ☁ Dan & Kathy Poppema
Faith, Anna, Elizabeth, Drew,
Grace, Levi
- ☁ Jeff & Becky Uittenbogaard
- ☁ Steve & Denise Uittenbogaard
Alaina, Olivia
- ☁ Mike & Stephanie Uittenbogaard
Hull, Iowa

Ride-along enclosed

Classis East

■ Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 14, 2011 at the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, MI. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 13, 2011.

Jon J. Huisken, Stated Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Hull PRC express their Christian sympathy to Mrs. Lois VanMaanen, Mr. and Mrs. Evert A. VanMaanen, Mr. and Mrs. Henry VanMaanen, Mr. and Mrs. Daryl VanMaanen, Mr. and Mrs. Dan Blankespoor, Mr. and Mrs. Kevin VanMaanen, Mrs. Margaret Hoekstra, Mr. and Mrs. Ted Hoekstra and their families in the death of their husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather, brother and brother-in-law,

MR. HAROLD VAN MAANEN.

II Corinthians 4:14: "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up also by Jesus, and shall present us with you."

Rev. James Laning, President
Brian Gritters, Clerk of Records

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of First PRC of Holland express their Christian sympathy to the family of

MRS. ALICE STOB,

whom God has received into her eternal home. May they place their hope in our gracious God and find comfort in the words of II Corinthians 5:8: "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

Rev. Daniel Holstege, President
John Van Uffelen, Assistant Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Consistory and congregation of the Randolph PRC mourn the death of one of our members,

TED DEVRIES.

We express our Christian sympathy to his wife, Sue, and to his brothers and sisters-in-law who are members of our congregation—Don and Hilda, Shirley, Frank, Hank and Barb, Morry and Arlene. May God comfort them in His mercy, and give them grace to bless Him as our Father in Christ, who "according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (I Peter 1:3-5).

Rev. Doug Kuiper, President
Eugene Braaksma, Clerk

Classis West

■ Classis West will convene Wednesday, September 7, at 8:30 A.M., hosted by the Peace PRC of Lansing, IL. All material for the agenda must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than Monday, August 8. Delegates should be aware that an officebearers' conference is being planned for Tuesday, September 6.

Rev. Douglas Kuiper,
Stated Clerk

Reformed Witness Hour
August 2011

Date	Topic	Text
August 7	"The Conversion of Pagan Sailors"	Jonah 1:14-16
August 14	"The Second Time"	Jonah 3:1-4
August 21	"The Wonder of Nineveh's Repentance"	Jonah 3:5-9
August 28	"Conviction for Christian Education"	Ephesians 6:4