

The Standard Bearer

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Our Beloved's Redeeming Cry

But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.

Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

Psalm 22:19, 21

Psalm 22 speaks directly and exclusively of Jesus Christ. It is His words as He hung upon the cross.

Matthew Henry aptly writes: "In singing this Psalm we must keep our thoughts fixed upon Christ, and be so affected with his sufferings as to experience the fellowship of them, and so affected with his grace as to experience the power and influence of it."

The focus of the Psalm is in verse 1 where, from the cross, Jesus cries: "My God, My God! Why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and

from the words of my roaring?" (see Matthew 27:35). That cry echoes through the Psalm and signals the changes of thought. We hear it again in verse 11, and yet again in verse 19: "Be not far from me...." Jesus *is* forsaken. He cries from the depths into which the consequences of our sins led Him—in pursuit of our redemption. And when He has finished the work, we hear it change to that joyful cry, "Thou hast HEARD [answered] me....," in verse 21.

With that understanding in place, we can observe that the Psalm divides itself into two parts at verse 21 as the pivot point. At that juncture, the gospel accounts tell us that Jesus looses a triumphant shout: "It is finished" (Mark 15:37, Luke 23:46, John 19:30); for Jesus had satisfied divine justice and eternally removed all that can separate Him and His elect from the holy God. Fellowship with God in life and love and grace and glory is restored—reconciliation is realized. Now Jesus is free to vow joyfully to His Father that He will share the blessings of peace with His brethren, and declare the good news of this reconciliation in His blood, not only within the great congregation, but to all the ends of the world, and build

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Himself a church confessing in her generations, that “He has done this!” (vv. 22-31).

This Psalm takes us where no other portion of Scripture takes us in quite the same way—down with Jesus into something of His inner experience on the cross, down into forsakenness, where nothing but unmingled holiness and trust in God supported His soul as the God-man; and up with Him in His victory. What our Lord describes of these atoning sufferings are His—ALL HIS—and HIS ALONE! But everything He says has eternal significance and application to us as believers.

Every *believer*, having his eternal election ratified by God’s effectually calling him into union with Christ by faith, may confess: “These are His experiences for *me*; and they are mine in Him. Jesus carried me into and through all that He did and suffered and achieved!”

That is true, believer, because this Psalm is the sharing of the inner thoughts of our federal (covenantal) Head, Representative, Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer with us. Into *Him* God legally and personally incorporated us in His eternal decree of election. Christ and we, His brethren, are all ONE in God’s sight. So, this Sufferer—this Substitute—is bearing our persons in His own mighty person; to His person God has imputed all our sins, making Him, legally and personally, “to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (II Cor. 5:21). God did that exactly so that He might punish our sins in the person of His Son according to His human nature, and thereby reconcile us to Himself. “By *His stripes we are healed*” (Is. 53:5-6), for God was reconciling us to Himself by Jesus Christ (II Cor. 5:18). What Jesus did, suffered, and achieved, therefore, God takes as done, suffered, and achieved by each of His elect! *We are* reconciled to God in the person of His Son!

*Every believer,
having his eternal election
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“These are
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and into all that He did
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It is wonderful also to realize that Jesus bore us in His heart on the cross—He didn’t forget us, not for a moment. As soon as He drank the last bitter dreg of the cup of the wrath of God, and God answered and embraced Him back into His fellowship, Jesus turns to those for whom He suffered, and speaks the words of verses 23 and 24: “*Ye that fear the LORD, praise him: all ye the [spiritual] seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither has he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him he heard*” (vv. 23-24). Ah, do you hear Him, believer? Do you sense the weight of glory

He shares with you in those words?

Reconciled soul, praise, glorify, and reverence God for what He has done for you in Jesus! Declare your trust: “I have peace with God through my Lord Jesus, for *all* my guiltiness of sin, *all* my alienation, and *all* my forsakenness have been eternally removed by Jesus!” Glory with Him, “It is FINISHED. God hears me!” Open your heart to the reconciled God’s promises, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Heb. 13:5). “Fear not, for I have redeemed you.... When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither

shall the flame kindle upon you. For I am the LORD *your God...*” (Is. 43:2-3).

Ah, believer, are you not a “more-than-conqueror through him that loved you...”? Is there anything that “shall be able to separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8: 37-39)?

No! For the LORD has heard HIS cry from the horns of the unicorns—for you.

It—is—finished! ∞

Controversy and Confusion over the Covenant: Is it not time to settle it? (3)

God's covenant of grace is essential both for life and for doctrine. Doctrinally, it is the crown jewel of the Reformed faith, uniting, demonstrating the harmony of all the doctrines, particularly the doctrines of salvation. The importance of the covenant in practical terms cannot be overstated—it defines our relationship to God. What, in all the world, can be more important than a man's relationship with God? Nothing.

Understanding that vital significance of this doctrine, and knowing that the doctrine has been discussed by the children of the Reformation for almost 500 years now, we deplore the lingering confusion, the lack of clarity and agreement on this central doctrine. And we grieve that that of which Peter warned is happening in Reformed churches—false teachers are covertly bringing in their damnable heresies, using their heretical doctrine of the covenant as their base (II Pet. 2:1ff.). I refer, specifically, to the “Federal Vision” proponents, who base their teaching of justification by faith and works squarely on their faulty doctrine of God's covenant. Justification by faith alone, the doctrine

on which the whole of the Reformation turned, is denied. And, no surprise, this heretical teaching on the covenant is being used to draw the Reformed churches back to Rome. Doctrinally and institutionally, the life and existence of Reformed churches is at stake. The need for clarity is urgent.

Yet, the confusion persists. And there is no sign that the churches intend to come together. It seems that most are content to allow this confusion to continue.

Is that really the case? And, I ask, *can* a Reformed believer in his Reformed church tolerate this? I ask each and every Reformed reader, are you willing to allow the crucial doctrine of God's covenant to remain vague and undefined? Are you, Spirit-filled believer, content to stand idly by and watch as this glorious doctrine of God's covenant is perverted by heretics? Is there not in you such a love for the truth, for God's truth, and for His church, that you will not allow this doctrinal confusion to continue? Is it not time for the Reformed church world to settle the issue?

But how? I believe that there are two possible ways that Reformed churches worldwide could come together with the goal to set forth the biblical (Reformed) doctrine of the covenant.

First, such a gathering could come together seeking the unity of the church and praying for the guidance of the Spirit of Christ. The current age is surely one of ecumenical activity. And true ecumenical activity is proper and right. Jesus' church is His body. His body is one. It is a Reformation principle that we ought to manifest the unity of the church as much as possible. But the unity of the church is in the truth of God. A superficial unity of various churches that is built on the smallest possible confession, vaguely written—that is false ecumenism. The Reformed church understands that and repudiates it.

No, unity is in the truth. The greater the agreement in doctrine, the stronger is the unity. This is true at all levels—in a congregation, in a denomination, and between denominations. The truth of God binds believers and congregations together. Denominations seeking true unity will be seeking doctrinal unity by means of discussion of God's truth.

Should not this crucial doctrine of God's *covenant*, then, be on the minds of all Reformed churches seeking to manifest the unity of Christ's body? Ought not discussion of God's covenant be on the agendas of Reformed ecumenical gatherings? How can there be unity

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among churches without settling this vital question: What is our relationship to God? What is God's covenant of grace?

I urge Reformed churches who are serious about manifesting the unity of the body of Christ to seek to resolve the controversies, to remove the confusion over the covenant. Churches that adhere consciously and deliberately to the Reformed creeds; churches that love the truth of God, and desire to set forth the Reformed (i.e., biblical and confessional) doctrine of the covenant—let these churches come together in humility to discuss, and by God's grace make some progress in setting forth, the truth of the covenant.

There are a couple of well known groups of Reformed churches that meet in order to strive for unity. I have in mind such bodies as NAPARC (North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council) and the ICRC (the International Council of Reformed Churches). Is either of these bodies willing to take steps towards this right and noble goal?

That is one way to strive for unity. It has some honorable precedents in the Reformation—attempts of the Reformers to remove differences in conferences. Admittedly, it does not always produce the desired goal. But the Reformers are to be admired and emulated in their strenuous efforts to settle doctrinal controversies among them for the sake of unity.

There is another avenue for settling doctrinal controversy. It also has a fine model to follow. It

involves a denomination calling all the Reformed churches together to help her settle a doctrinal controversy in her midst. The results of this method were excellent. I have in mind the "great Synod," the Synod of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands held in the city of Dordrecht in the years 1618 and 1619.

Controversy, over the central doctrines of salvation, convulsed the Reformed churches. The Remonstrants were teaching grievous errors—that God's election was conditioned upon man's believing and obeying to the end of his life; that Christ died for all men and every man to make salvation possible for all. These followers of Arminius insisted that fallen man has a free will that must cooperate with God's grace, and, in harmony with that, that God's grace, while necessary for salvation, was a resistible grace. They therefore called into question the precious doctrine of the preservation of the saints. We cannot be sure, they piously declared, that the believer, united to Christ, will not in the end fall away.

Parenthetically, we point out that some of these very errors are being promoted today in Reformed churches on the basis of erroneous covenant doctrine. They are dressed up a little differently, but the essence is the same.

What did the Reformed churches in the Netherlands do about these grievous errors? She sent out a call for help, a request to come to her aid. These churches recognized that the heart of the Reformation truth was at stake. At the same time, they were acknowledging that they were not the only ones holding to the

Reformed truth. They understood that the other Reformed churches had a vital interest in preserving the truth of salvation by sovereign grace. They were convinced that the rest of the Reformed church world would in fact be able to contribute to a clearer presentation of this doctrine. Besides, the Reformed churches in the Netherlands were themselves badly divided by the controversy. They desired the help and support of the Reformed church world.

Hence they invited all Reformed churches in Europe to help them deal with the heresies and heretics in the Netherlands. The Reformed men in the Netherlands were convinced that these false teachings were contrary to the existing creeds—the Heidelberg Catechism and the Confession of Faith. Some Remonstrant teaching (on election and total depravity) was explicitly contrary to the existing creeds; other errors were not expressly condemned by the confessions, but were certainly contrary to the Bible, and outside the bounds of the confessions.

They had false doctrine to be examined. They had heretics to be tried.

They called for help.

The Reformed churches responded to the call. They came to the Synod of Dordrecht—an international gathering of Reformed churches.

The delegates to the synod listened to the accused—the Remonstrants. They studied their (the Remonstrants') written documents. They discussed them publicly. Each

delegation sat down individually and discussed the doctrines. They searched the Scriptures, and submitted their views on each point of doctrine. The “opinions,” as they were called, though not identical, showed amazing harmony. The delegates were united on the essential truths of salvation by sovereign grace.

The result is known to all. A committee, made up of delegates from several different Reformed denominations, drafted a body of canons that was presented to the whole, discussed, and adopted article by article. And all the delegates—Dutch delegates and foreign delegates—signed the canons.

How binding was this document? The Reformed churches in the Netherlands did not immediately call it a creed. The synod referred to it as “the explanation of some points of the aforesaid doctrine [i.e., that doctrine contained in the Heidelberg Catechism and Confession of Faith, RJD] made by the National Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-’19.” It was binding doctrine, and the great synod required that all officebearers sign their agreement to these decisions (see the Form of Subscription).

It was not similarly binding on the foreign churches who had sent

delegations to Dordrecht. Nonetheless, history has demonstrated that those Reformed churches that did not hold to the doctrines set forth in the Canons soon lost their Reformed character altogether.

The “great Synod,” then, is the second model for the churches today. In fact, that model has certain advantages over an ecumenical discussion. First of all, such a gathering would be dealing with concrete cases of men accused of error. The delegates would not be dealing with doctrine in the abstract, and struggling to know what to include in their study. Rather, laid before them would be specific teachings that could be studied, evaluated, and, as needed, rejected. The truth would be affirmed over against the lie. This certainly is a Reformed principle of church government, and usually yields the best, that is, clearest, results.

Secondly, such an assembly has the advantage also that it has ecclesiastical authority. It is not a mere discussion, as profitable as a discussion may be. It has the authority of a group of churches to make decisions that must be followed, at least in that body of churches. Other participating churches would have to face the decision of whether or not to adopt the decisions as their own.

Could it be, then, that a particular church (denomination), facing the reality that men are teaching doctrines contrary to the creeds—whether explicitly, or with teachings that lie outside the bounds of the confessions—calls the Reformed church world to assist her? Recognizing that she is not the only Reformed church, that the creeds belong to all the Reformed churches, and that all the churches have a significant stake in this doctrine of God’s covenant, she asks others to join her, seeking to reject the errors clearly and decisively, and set forth the doctrine of the covenant clearly.

In some churches, the heart of the gospel is being denied by false teaching on the covenant. The need is great. It takes courage to bring ministers to judgment, but faithfulness to the truth demands it.

May God give courage and strength to Reformed men to stand for His truth and to condemn false teachers. And as they do this, they may well consider the advantage of the Reformed churches speaking with one voice, setting forth the truth of God’s covenant clearly. Let them, then, issue the call. The Reformed churches as a whole may be very well served.

... to be concluded. 

LETTERS

■ Christian College...or Secular

I’m writing to you in regard to your recent short series in the *SB* issuing a warning to students attending a Christian college. Before I comment on that, I should tell you that I graduated from Calvin College and then

spent three years at the University of Michigan earning a master’s degree. So I have personal experience both with a small, Christian college and with a large, public university.

It is my opinion that we PR folks are woefully deficient

in education. Our modern society requires that we compete for jobs and that we be educated well enough for our modern technology. Good, well-paying jobs are necessary to enable us to support our churches and schools. The cost of these churches and schools continues to increase, frequently more than inflation. In addition, the Consistories and School Boards need to be educated, if they are to be able to deal with the issues that arise in the management and operation of our churches and schools. Mothers at home need to be educated, in order to assist with their children's education in grade school and high school and to be the home's "business manager." Also women who do not marry need to be educated, so that they can support themselves and also the kingdom causes. In spite of all this, the committee established to investigate relocating the ninth grade to the high school found that Covenant Christian High School, Grand Rapids, was a distant last in the percentage of graduates attending college when compared to our peer Christian or church-related high schools in West Michigan.

I do not think there is one, single reason that our PR young people are not attending college. Expense is probably a factor, but scholarships are available; and CRC, RCA, and Baptist families seem to be able to cope with this issue. I know that there is also some apprehension about advising students to attend Christian colleges because of their stands on common grace, evolution, women in office, and the like. However, there is no Christian college with which we agree completely. And the public colleges are, in my opinion, less desirable.

So, the concern that I have with your *SB* articles is that, while they accurately present the doctrinal issues with which we disagree, they may lead our young people to avoid the Christian colleges. The articles didn't present the much greater danger (in my opinion) in the public colleges. I agree that we have doctrinal differences with the Christian colleges. However, I am concerned that your articles may encourage our parents to advise their students to go to the public colleges, as a cheaper alternative, or not to attend college at all. As an aside, I am also concerned that, while our PR schools insist on hiring only PR teachers, they give little or no heed to where those teachers got their education. Many times it is from the public colleges.

While you have correctly identified the doctrinal differences that we have with the Christian colleges, you have not addressed the issues that our students face in the public colleges, such as atheism; profanity (even in the classroom); immorality of every sort, including homosexuality, drugs, and alcohol-abuse; and worldly entertainment of all sorts. (I have observed this first-hand a few years ago and I'm sure it is worse now). We avoid the public grade schools for these reasons, but we send our students to the public colleges, sometimes even to become teachers in our schools.

To conclude, I appreciate your articles, and I have no criticism of them. However, I think we PR folks have need of more education, and I think the best place to get it, in our modern society, is at the Christian colleges. I don't mean that we may not attend the public colleges. They have a place in our society. But I far prefer the education available at a good, liberal arts, Christian college, at least for the first four years.

Tom Newhof
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Response:

Mr. Newhof's letter reflects on important dimensions of the college education that the editorials were not addressing. We are glad to publish his thoughts. With much of the letter I can express full agreement. I would add a couple of matters for consideration:

1. The reason for a good college education, whether public or private, is more than the need to make more money (even though that need is not to be slighted in these difficult days). Our young people need to develop their critical thinking skills, and grow in the knowledge of God's "creation, preservation, and government of the universe" (Belgic Confession, Article 2). History, the physical sciences, philosophy, and psychology... the whole realm of learning is before God's people as means by which they can serve Him better, know Him more deeply, and thus glorify Him to their fullest capacity. All this both in the church and in our lives in the world.

2. The brother makes a judgment of "woeful deficiency" in education among us. We recognize that this is both a personal, non-scientific assessment, and a judg-

ment made about what is observed in only one area of the PRC. It would be interesting to hear *statistics*, as well as statistics of educational levels *outside* the Grand Rapids area.

3. As to the greater danger in public universities over against Christian institutions, can it be said that there are dangers in both, but that the important issue is not so much the degree of danger, but the *preparedness* of our young people to face what dangers there are. Let us parents ask ourselves, consciously, as we teach our high school students, whether our children are able to face the challenges of the subtle errors in the Christian colleges or the blatant assaults on Christianity in the public institutions.

May God bless our homes and the extensions of our homes in the rearing of God's covenant seed.

— BG, Ed.

■ Christian Colleges

As a regular reader of the *Standard Bearer*, I want to thank you for the consistent quality of the articles that you publish. Your readership will certainly be aware of the fact that my own views on many key theological topics differ greatly from those discussed in your magazine. But I do read each issue with the expectation that I will be stimulated—and even edified—by what I read. And I am seldom disappointed!

I have reflected much on the recent series of articles by Professor Barrett Gritters, addressed to college students. My interest in this case was reinforced by the fact that Professor Gritters was a student in one of my classes during my years of teaching at Calvin College. Indeed, I remember him fondly as an excellent student with whom I had some helpful exchanges about the subject matter of the course. He often disagreed with points that I was attempting to make, but I always found him to be a respectful and gifted student, and I regularly profited from our exchanges. I have followed his journey into leadership in your churches with warm memories of those early encounters.

It was with a bit of disappointment, then, that I discovered (in his installment in the Oct. 1 issue) that he continues to live with a troubled spirit over his “guilty silence” over something that he heard me say in that class

several decades ago. He did not mention me by name in his report of this incident, but I clearly recognized myself in his account. And let me say that he in no way distorted anything that he reported me saying in the lecture in question.

Needless to say, I was gratified by his reference to me as a “genial professor.” But I was also disturbed by his declaration that what I said on that occasion was not only an “absurdity,” but actually a manifestation of genuine “wickedness” on my part.

Professor Gritters reports that I “boldly proclaimed that Christ’s resurrection accomplished two very important works: it both liberated women and instituted civil disobedience.” He also laments the fact that there were a number of important things about the Resurrection that I failed to mention or discuss: “Nothing about Jesus’ victory over sin and death, or His breaking of the devil’s power, or His earning for the elect the spiritual blessings of salvation, centered in the forgiveness of sins.”

On those things that he did not hear me say, on that occasion, please let me make it clear that I do indeed confess those matters with all my heart. With Professor Gritters I am convinced that not only are these matters absolutely crucial for our eternal destinies, but that they ought to be boldly proclaimed on any occasion when we discuss the Resurrection. If our covenant youth are not learning in our colleges that in Christ’s Incarnation, Cross, and Resurrection our Sovereign God accomplished for us what we could never accomplish for ourselves, we are of all people most miserable. If I in any way during my years of teaching have given the impression that I do not hold to these matters in the deepest places of my being, I have failed in my mission as a teacher.

But what about liberating women and civil disobedience? Here too, I must admit that I may have put my points in too flippant a manner, and for that too I apologize. But let me rehearse here the core contentions I was getting at, and ask Professor Gritters to see whether he still wants to characterize my views as “wickedness.”

First, the question of the role of women. The background to my claim in that class lecture was that Old Testament Israel was a patriarchal culture, where only the adult male had legal “voice.” To put it bluntly: if a woman

was the sole witness to a man murdering five hundred people, no one “saw” it from a legal point of view. Only if a man could speak on behalf of a woman in a court of law could her testimony have legal standing. This is at the heart of God’s special concern throughout Scripture for the widow and orphan—neither of them have an adult male who is committed to representing them in public life.

Now, it is a biblical fact that both the angels and the resurrected Jesus Himself told women on Resurrection morning to “go tell the disciples.” It is also a fact that the disciples’ instinct was to dismiss the women’s report as “an idle tale” (Luke 24: 11). I take this to be an indication that something new was happening: that the word of a woman was now being given a new legitimacy. Admittedly, this does not by itself speak to questions of ordination and the like. But it does signal something new that was happening regarding the status of women in the believing community. My former student may still strongly disagree with me on this—and I will respect that disagreement. But does he really want to continue to characterize this as “wickedness” on my part.

Similarly for the civil disobedience matter. My core contention is that the Resurrection was in effect an illegal act, since the breaking of the seal of Pilate was a challenge to governmental authority. The larger issue here is that when Jesus said to Pilate that His own authority was not of the same world as Pilate’s, Jesus was not conceding to Pilate the authority to prohibit the Resurrection. And this refusal to allow “the powers that be” to place obstacles to God’s redeeming purposes is carried on, for example, in the Book of Acts, where angels release apostles from prison and God’s people do not acknowledge the right of earthly authorities to prohibit the preaching of the Gospel. Professor Gritters may plausibly argue with me about what we as citizens of earthly kingdoms may or may not do in actual cases with regard to civil disobedience. But surely it is not wicked to use these examples to make the general point that we all acknowledge that real situations arise when out of obedience to the Gospel we must “obey God rather than man.”

Well, enough said. My main concern here is to assure my fondly-remembered former student that I still

respect his voice on issues of shared concern, and that at least in my case his “guilty silence” has been corrected. I also, of course, want to apologize for any overstatement or excessive rhetoric in that class of many years ago—while insisting that the core convictions that motivated me to say what I did do not deserve to be categorized as “wickedness.”

Yours, under the mercy of our only true and righteous Sovereign,

(Dr.) *Richard Mouw*

(President of Fuller Theological Seminary,
Pasadena, CA)

Response:

Dr. Mouw’s letter is appreciated.

SB readers may be reminded that Dr. Mouw’s concerns do not address the main point of my editorials. My editorials centered on another weakness in Christian colleges—a wrong view of God’s kingdom in which the church is marginalized and the kingdom is this-worldly. But introducing that series about kingdom-teaching, I mentioned that there are also *other* dangers in Christian colleges that must be guarded against, including teachings like Dr. Mouw’s that the resurrection of Christ liberated women and instituted civil disobedience (although I had not identified Dr. Mouw or his college).

Dr. Mouw objects to characterizing his teachings as “wickedness.” In his letter, he apologizes for some things; he also qualifies and clarifies his views on the liberation of women and civil disobedience. These apologies, clarifications, and qualifications that he makes are significant. Had the qualifications and clarifications been clearly made in the college classroom almost 30 years ago, I may not have judged his teachings in the way I did.

Dr. Mouw qualifies his teaching about Christ’s resurrection liberating women: “Admittedly, this does not by itself speak to questions of ordination and the like.” Had the impressionable college students heard this qualification, it would have made a world of difference. Of course “something new...was happening regarding the status of women.” Of course women have different rights and abilities in the New Testament than they had in the Old. Reformed Christians have always

recognized this (even if the basis of this teaching has not been found in the *women's* witnessing of the resurrection.) The important question is whether the difference includes opening of ecclesiastical special offices to women. But without Dr. Mouw's qualification, the implication was clear: "Women ought to be allowed into ecclesiastical office. They are freed from their oppressive shackles and now permitted to be deacons, maybe elders and pastors too."

Put into historical context, the matter is even more serious. The school year was 1983/1984, in the midst of the CRC's turmoil about women in the special offices. In 1978, after lengthy battles, the CRC Synod opened the door to women deacons; and reversed that decision in 1979. In 1978 a woman applied for ordination into the ministry and was denied. The CRC's stance was: "no women may serve in ecclesiastical office." The battle lines were drawn. The issues were vital. In that context, the teaching that "the resurrection of Christ liberated women and instituted civil disobedience" is not innocent. In fact, holding the lie before students of a Christian college as though it were truth, sowed a seed that was deadly and hastened the adoption of great evils in his denomination. That is my definition of "wickedness."

Along with the qualifications, Dr. Mouw apologizes for, perhaps, putting his "points in too flippant a manner," and for including in his lectures "overstatement or excessive rhetoric." The apologies are important; by now it likely is not possible to apologize to the many students who were influenced by the teaching. But it was that flippancy, overstatement, excessive rhetoric, and failure carefully to qualify, in a Christian college lecture hall, in that historical context, that moved me to call the teaching not just "wrong," but "wicked."

I put the matter of civil disobedience in a slightly different category because there was no current ecclesiastical battle fought about that issue. That does not take away from its gravity. Dr. Mouw's teaching was that the resurrection of Christ also "instituted civil disobedience." Christ broke the official seal on His own tomb, and by that example permits Christians to engage in civil disobedience.

If this conclusion is not sinful in itself (I judge it to be so), it certainly is both failure properly to "nuance"

teachings and highly questionable exegesis of Scripture. The context of the instruction was discussion of Martin Luther King's "Dream" speech, and of movements to force governments to change oppressive and discriminatory laws. Let me first ask briefly (readers may make their judgments): 1) Were the seal (and the guards) those of the *civil* authorities (Pilate) or of the chief priests and Pharisees and thus *ecclesiastical* authorities? 2) How does *Christ*, the sovereign Lord of the universe Himself, breaking the seal to reveal His resurrection translate into permission for *Christians* to engage in civil disobedience? 3) In the history of exegesis, has anyone else found in Christ's resurrection a justification for civil disobedience? Who were they? 4) When the apostles in the book of Acts preached the gospel in plain disobedience to the authorities who had commanded them not to preach (4:19ff.; 5:29ff.) and "obeyed God rather than man," is not this very different from a crowd paralyzing a city until civil rights laws are enacted, or an unruly mob trying to oust a tyrannical ruler from present-day Egypt or Libya? Until questions such as these are faced, the instruction ought not be considered scholarship worthy of the highly regarded institution in which it was given. I regard it as careless. If I were to teach that way, I would want my overseers to call it sinful—it presented what is contrary to Scripture as though it were based on Scripture.

Dr. Mouw's letter is cordial. He speaks of his core convictions. He remembers fondly my presence in his class. I am thankful for that. But may we all understand that in teaching covenant youth, although conviction and cordiality are demanded, careful adherence to the Word of God is paramount. In the end, his memory of me is unimportant. What does God remember? Where have I led His children?

In the name of academic freedom and being open to opposing views, truth is being forsaken, if only so gradually. We wish there were Christian colleges and universities we could recommend without having to caution our young people to beware of such fundamental (but subtle) denials of biblical truth.

— BG, Ed.

Herman Bavinck on Covenant and Election (2)—conclusion

Unconditional Covenant

Neither are election and covenant different with regard to their unconditionality. As a Reformed theologian, Bavinck held unconditional election. As a Reformed theologian, Bavinck also confessed that the covenant of grace is unconditional. Because the issue of the unconditionality or conditionality of the covenant is controversial in the Reformed churches, and because the vast majority of Reformed theologians like to leave the impression that the Reformed tradition overwhelmingly has taught that the covenant is conditional, dismissing the doctrine of the unconditional covenant as a “radical” aberration, it will be profitable to hear Bavinck on the issue.

In the beginning, Reformed theologians spoke freely of “the conditions” of the covenant. But after the nature of the covenant of grace had been more carefully considered and had to be defended against [Roman] Catholics, Lutherans, and Remonstrants, many of them took exception to the term and avoided it.¹

¹ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 3: *Sin and Salvation in Christ*, ed. John Bolt, tr. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 229. I insert the word “Roman” in the quotation. The translator erred. Neither here nor elsewhere in his dogmatics did Bavinck refer to the Roman Catholic Church as the “Catholic” Church. Here the Dutch original has the word “Room-schen,” that is, ‘Romish’ (see Herman Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, vol. 3, 2nd revised and expanded ed., Kampen: Kok, 1910, 241). The Roman Catholic Church is not the catholic church of Christ. It is not even a catholic, or universal, church; it is a *Roman* church. This was the conviction of Bavinck.

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Previous article in this series: March 15, 2011, p. 273.

Bavinck continues: “In the covenant of grace, that is, in the gospel, which is the proclamation of the covenant of grace, there are *actually...no conditions*.” What Bavinck has in mind by “conditions,” as by the term “demands” (which he uses in the sentence just quoted as the equivalent—in the sentence—of “conditions”), he makes plain in his explanation. “For God supplies what he demands. Christ has accomplished everything...and the Holy Spirit therefore applies [everything].”²

Bavinck denies, absolutely, that the covenant is conditional *in the proper sense of the term “condition,” namely, a decision or work of a member of the covenant upon which the covenant and its salvation depend*. Bavinck denies, absolutely, that the covenant is conditional *in the sense that the member of the covenant must make a decision or perform a work that is decisive for the maintenance of the covenant*. Bavinck denies, absolutely, that the covenant is conditional *in the sense that by performing a demand a member of the covenant makes himself to differ from others who, like himself, are objects of the covenant grace of God*.

He [God] made it [the covenant of grace]...with the man Christ Jesus.... And in him, who shares the divine nature and attributes, this covenant has an unwaveringly firm foundation. It can no longer be broken: it is an everlasting covenant. It rests not in any work of humans but solely in the good pleasure of God, in the work of the Mediator, in the Holy Spirit, who remains forever. It is not dependent on any human condition; it does not confer any benefit based on merit; it does not wait for any law keeping on the part of humans. It is of, through, and for grace. God himself is the sole

² *Ibid.*, 230; emphasis added.

and eternal being, the faithful and true being, in whom it rests and who establishes, maintains, executes, and completes it. The covenant of grace is the divine work par excellence—his work alone and his work totally. All boasting is excluded here for humans; all glory is due to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.³

Whoever cannot say “Amen” to this, from the bottom of his or her heart, is no Reformed Christian.

Bavinck will speak only of the “conditional form” of the administration of the covenant: “In its administration by Christ, the covenant of grace does assume this demanding conditional *form*.”⁴ By a conditional form, Bavinck refers, among other constructions, to the biblical exhortations and admonitions that use the preposition “if”: “If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God” (Deut. 30:10); “If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom. 8:13).

By acknowledging a conditional *form* of the administration of the covenant, Bavinck does not give back with the left hand the error that he has just taken away with the right hand. A conditional form of the administration of the covenant is not the same as a conditional covenant. The conditional form of the administration of the covenant does not mean, for Bavinck, demands for a human work upon which the covenant depends, or for a human work that must make impotent covenant grace effectual in the case of the one performing the work.

The conditional form of the administration of the covenant rather refers to God’s dealings with “humans in their capacity as rational and moral beings...to treat them as having been created in God’s image; and also...to hold them responsible and inexcusable; and, finally, to cause them to enter consciously and freely into this covenant and to break their covenant with sin.”⁵

That for Bavinck this conditional form of the administration of the covenant does not mean a conditional covenant is confirmed by the fact that the very next sentence following Bavinck’s explanation of the covenant’s conditional form is the affirmation of the

³ Ibid., 225, 226.

⁴ Ibid.; emphasis added.

⁵ Ibid.

unilateral character of the covenant. “The covenant of grace, accordingly, is indeed unilateral.”⁶

A unilateral covenant is an unconditional covenant—a covenant accomplished from beginning to end, with regard to every aspect of it, by God alone. It is a covenant dependent from beginning to end, with regard to every aspect of it, upon God alone.

The covenant of grace is as unconditional as is gracious election.

Bavinck’s exposition and defense of the unconditionality of the covenant ought to give twenty-first century Reformed theologians and churches pause. Bavinck gives the lie to the popular notion that the doctrine of the unconditional covenant has no place in the Reformed tradition, or, at least, no place anywhere near the center of this tradition.

Bavinck suggests, on the contrary, that those who freely, indeed vehemently, contend for a conditional covenant have not very “carefully considered” the nature of the covenant of grace. Nor, evidently, are they concerned to defend the covenant of grace “against [Roman] Catholics, Lutherans, and Remonstrants.” On the other hand, those theologians and churches who take exception to the term “conditions” (of the covenant), rather than being reproached as hyper-Calvinists, or ignored as beyond the pale, ought to be credited with having carefully considered the nature of the covenant of grace and with a zeal for defending the gospel of grace against its foes.

Most importantly, Bavinck indicates the seriousness of the issue of the unconditionality or conditionality of the covenant. At stake is the gospel of free, sovereign (that is, unconditional) grace itself. For the “gospel...is the proclamation of the covenant of grace.”⁷ The doctrine of the unconditional covenant is the good news of grace. The doctrine of a conditional covenant is the false gospel of salvation by the will and works of the sinner. That is, the doctrine of a conditional covenant is the Arminian theology of the covenant.

Covenant Membership

God makes His covenant with the elect in Christ, and with the elect alone. The elect, and the elect alone, are members of the covenant. Bavinck teaches this in

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

the statement, “The covenant of grace has been made with Christ...[and with] his own.”⁸ He reiterates and explains this when he comes to the matter of covenant membership at the conclusion of his treatment of covenant and election.

Bavinck sharply distinguishes two essentially different kinds of connection to the covenant of grace. There is the vital membership in the covenant itself of a true and living faith. This membership affords participation in the blessings of the covenant.

There is also, in radical distinction, a membership merely in the covenant’s “earthly administration.” This is the connection to the covenant of those who lack true faith. This membership does “not share in the covenant’s benefits.”

Here is Bavinck’s statement of the distinction: “It is self-evident, therefore, that the covenant of grace will temporarily—in its earthly administration and dispensation—also include those who remain inwardly unbelieving and do not share in the covenant’s benefits.”⁹

There are those (Bavinck is thinking especially of baptized children of believers) who are “*in* the covenant,” but not “*of* the covenant.”¹⁰ This is a strong statement of the qualitative difference between the two kinds of connections to the covenant. In the original language of his dogmatics, Bavinck uses two Latin expressions: “*de foedere*” (English: ‘of the covenant’) and “*in foedere*” (English: ‘in the covenant’).¹¹ Some (baptized children) are *of* the covenant. The covenant is the origin of their true, spiritual life; they are born again by the covenant promise. They share the essence of the covenant. They belong to the covenant. The covenant identifies them. The covenant determines their life, experience, and behavior.

Other (baptized children) are merely *in* the covenant. By natural birth to believing parents; by the administration to them of the sacrament of the covenant; by their training under the word of God in a godly home, a true church, and a Christian school; more or less by their outward conduct (at least for a while); and

even by their profession of faith (which does not arise from the heart), they are closely related to the covenant, as closely as a human can be without being “of” the covenant. But they are never part of it. Nor is it ever part of them.

The difference is that between a genuine, healthy cell of the human body and a foreign substance in the bloodstream.

In accordance with these two distinct kinds of covenant connection, Bavinck speaks of “the external and internal sides” of the one covenant of grace.¹²

Regarding covenant membership, therefore, Bavinck denies that all the baptized offspring of believers are in the covenant in the same way. Indeed, Bavinck denies that all the children are members of the covenant. If some children have membership merely in the covenant’s “earthly administration,” they are not members of the covenant in its essence.

What determines and governs this twofold connection to the covenant is God’s predestination. When Bavinck distinguishes the two radically different connections to the covenant as belonging to the covenant, for some, and merely being “*in* the covenant,” that is, being in the “earthly administration” of the covenant, for others, he obviously has his eye on Romans 9:6. In this passage, the apostle distinguishes two kinds of physical offspring of Abraham. Some are merely “of Israel,” that is, in Bavinck’s words, they are in the “earthly administration” of the covenant. Others “are...Israel,” that is, in Bavinck’s expression, they are “of the covenant.” And in Romans 9:6-23, the apostle accounts for the two distinct connections to the covenant by appeal to eternal predestination: “that the purpose of God according to election might stand” (v. 11).

But Bavinck does not leave to implication, clear and necessary as the implication may be, that the two essentially different connections to the covenant “proceed from God’s eternal decree,” as the Canons, I/6 puts it. In explanation of the reality that some are merely “*in* [the earthly administration of] the covenant,” whereas others are “*of* the covenant,” Bavinck appeals, explicitly, to divine election.

Here on earth they [those who are merely in the admin-

⁸ Ibid., 229.

⁹ Ibid., 231.

¹⁰ Ibid., 232.

¹¹ Bavinck, *Geref. Dog.*, vol. 3, 244.

¹² Ibid., 232.

istration of the covenant] are connected with the elect in all sorts of ways, and the elect themselves...can as an organism only be gathered into one under Christ as their head in the way of the covenant.¹³

Those who are connected to the covenant by vital membership in the covenant itself—in the very essence of the covenant—are the elect, and election determines their covenant membership. That Bavinck should teach this is nothing strange. For he was a Reformed theologian. And the Reformed faith confesses that faith, which is the living bond of union with Christ and, thus, fellowship with the triune God—the covenant in essence—proceeds from God’s eternal election. “That some receive the gift of faith from God...proceeds from God’s eternal decree.”¹⁴

Those whose connection is merely the “external side” of the covenant, membership only in the “earthly administration” of the covenant, are, for Bavinck, the non-elect, the reprobate from eternity. This non-election, or reprobation, determines their exclusion from the covenant. That Bavinck should teach this is nothing strange. For he was a Reformed theologian. And the Reformed faith confesses that the non-reception of faith (which alone constitutes living, spiritual union with Christ and communion with God), whether on the part of a contemporary heathen in the depths of San Francisco, or on the part of a baptized child of godly Protestant Reformed parents, proceeds from God’s eternal reprobation. “That... others do not receive it [faith], proceeds from God’s eternal decree.”¹⁵

Herman Bavinck repudiates the covenant doctrine that refuses to relate covenant membership to predestination, that deliberately banishes predestination from consideration in the matter of covenant membership, that will not find the source of covenant membership in God’s election.

Bavinck condemns the covenant doctrine that teaches that all the baptized children of godly parents are in the covenant in the same way, at least originally, at baptism.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Canons of Dordt, I/6, in Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966), 582.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Bavinck exposes the doctrine of the covenant that rejects the teaching of two essentially different connections to the covenant as altogether outside and contrary to the Reformed tradition.

Bavinck not only approves of but also insists upon the distinction between two kinds of connection to the covenant, whether the distinction is called “internal/external”; “covenant/administration of the covenant”; or “of the covenant/in the covenant.”


How the distinction is phrased is of no great significance. The distinction itself is fundamental. To disallow the distinction is to fly in the face of the Reformed tradition; to reject the apostolic doctrine in Romans 9:6-23; and, necessarily, to introduce the Arminian heresy into the Reformed doctrine of the covenant.

This last, the theology of the Federal Vision is demonstrating clearly, and practicing with a vengeance.

Conclusion

In light of Bavinck’s doctrine of the covenant, it is a mystery why contemporary Reformed theologians so violently react against a doctrine of the covenant that closely relates the covenant and election, and relates them in such a way that election governs the covenant. These theologians assail such a doctrine of the covenant as illegitimate. Their dismissal of the “identification” of the covenant and election (which is their pejorative way of describing a doctrine of the covenant in which election governs the covenant) leaves the impression, if it does not *intend* to leave the impression, that this doctrine of the covenant has had no place in the Reformed tradition. But every knowledgeable, honest scholar must acknowledge, at the very least, that the teaching that the covenant is governed by election has had a prominent, powerful, honorable place in the Reformed tradition.

And then we might be able to carry on a profitable discussion *why* prominent, orthodox Reformed theologians, including Herman Bavinck, taught the close relation of covenant and election.

And thus, under God’s blessing, there would be defense and development of the truth of God’s covenant of grace in our day. 

Update: Federal Vision on Trial in the PCA (2)

A Case Study in Working Hard not to Exercise Discipline

In a previous article we noted that three governing bodies of the Presbyterian Churches in America (PCA) have recently dealt with ministers accused of teaching or defending views consistent with the heresy of the Federal Vision (FV) and have refused to take decisions condemning these ministers and their views. In that article the actions of the Presbytery of the Siouxlands (SLP) were examined. This article focuses on the actions of the Standing Judicial Commission (SJC), which represents the General Assembly of the PCA. After SLP refused in January of 2010 to investigate Joshua Moon under a strong presumption of guilt for defending and teaching views consistent with the FV and contrary to the Westminster Standards, three SLP ministers forwarded a complaint to the SJC.¹ The SJC upheld SLP's unjust decision, thereby not only refusing to take a stand against the deadly FV heresy, but also providing sanctuary for Joshua Moon and his erroneous views within the PCA.

Here are the relevant parts of the SJC's decision:

II. STATEMENT OF THE ISSUES

1. With respect to certain reports concerning TE Joshua Moon, was Siouxlands Presbytery sufficiently diligent and careful in compliance with its responsibilities under BCO [Book of Church Order] 31-2?
2. With respect to certain reports concerning TE Joshua Moon, did Siouxlands Presbytery err in finding TE Moon's testimony a satisfactory explanation concerning the reports and finding no strong presumption of guilt in TE Moon related to the reports?

¹ The complaint was viewed at <http://www.sjc2010-4.blogspot.com> on 12/21/2010.

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Previous article in this series: March 1, 2011, p. 257.

III. JUDGMENT

1. Yes.
2. No.

IV. REASONING AND OPINION

This complaint is brought against Siouxlands Presbytery (SLP) for its alleged failure to properly conduct and conclude a BCO 31-2 investigation into the Christian character of a member of Presbytery, TE Joshua Moon. The provision in question reads as follows:

It is the duty of all church Sessions and Presbyteries to exercise care over those subject to their authority. They shall with due diligence and great discretion demand from such persons satisfactory explanations concerning reports affecting their Christian character. This duty is more imperative when those who deem themselves aggrieved by injurious reports shall ask an investigation.

If such investigation, however originating, should result in raising a strong presumption of the guilt of the party involved, the court shall institute process, and shall appoint a prosecutor to prepare the indictment and to conduct the case.

Presbytery acted upon the overture from the session of Foothills Community Church regarding TE Moon in open session during its October called meeting. Arguably, Presbytery should have proceeded under BCO 32-2, treating the overture not as a report (BCO 31-2) but as specific charges against TE Moon. However, the Complainants did not object to presbytery's method of proceeding before presbytery or in this complaint, so that question is not properly before us. Process against TE Moon could still be instituted by some person or persons who would undertake to make out a proper charge pursuant to BCO 32-2. Upon such a charge being laid before the Presbytery, the Presbytery must follow BCO 32-3, subject to BCO 31-8.

During presbytery's consideration of this matter, TE Moon specifically denied that he held the heterodox views alleged by the Overture. Following his denial, Presbytery allowed, and TE Moon answered, questions

for clarification and concern from the floor. After a motion to close debate Presbytery found that “having heard [sic] testimony from TE Moon, we deem TE Moon’s testimony a satisfactory explanation concerning the report and find no strong presumption of guilt in TE Moon related to the report.”

In coming to this judgment the Record shows that SLP was sufficiently diligent and careful in compliance with its responsibilities under BCO 31-2. In January of 2008 and again in July 2009 Presbytery had considered at length TE Moon’s views through the licensure and ordination processes, and thus Presbytery’s understanding of his views was recent and familiar.

In the September 2009 meeting Presbytery itself witnessed the expression of TE Moon’s views that were the subject of the FCC overture and had the same recorded in its minutes. In its consideration of the FCC overture SLP heard a direct response to the allegations from TE Moon and allowed questions from the floor.

Having complied with its responsibilities under BCO 31-2, did SLP then err in finding TE Moon’s testimony a satisfactory explanation, in finding no strong presumption of guilt? This Court is bound to rule on this question according to the standards of review set forth in BCO 39-3:

A higher court should ordinarily exhibit great deference to a lower court regarding those matters of discretion and judgment which can only be addressed by a court with familiar acquaintance of the events and parties. Such matters of discretion and judgment would include, but not be limited to: the moral character of candidates for sacred office, the appropriate censure to impose after a disciplinary trial, or judgment about the comparative credibility of conflicting witnesses. Therefore, a higher court should not reverse such a judgment by a lower court, unless there is clear error on the part of the lower court.

Complainants hold that TE Moon’s defense of certain views of TE Lawrence, as views within the permissible latitude afforded by the PCA’s standard for subscription, implies that TE Moon shares in the alleged errors of TE Lawrence. But this is a non sequitur. It may be illustrated as follows: it is widely held that paedocommunion is a permissible minority view within the PCA, but it does not follow that all who consider it permissible, hold to the position of paedocommunion.

Complainants hold that certain views expressed by

TE Moon, capable of a heterodox interpretation, must be so interpreted. But this violates the judgment of charity, that if a view can be interpreted in an orthodox fashion, it ought to be so interpreted until one is forced to do otherwise.

Complainants hold that certain of TE Moon’s views imply heterodox doctrines, and therefore impute those doctrines to TE Moon. But this is a non sequitur as well. One cannot properly impute implications that are drawn from a position to a person who expressly denies the implication.

Against this reasoning stand TE Moon’s express and specific denials of the heterodoxy alleged in the Overture, and his affirmations of orthodoxy. The only question, then, is with respect to TE Moon’s credibility. The Standing Judicial Commission must defer to Presbytery’s judgment, unless there is a finding of “clear error” (BCO 39-3(3)). Nothing in the Record supports such a finding. Presbytery exercised its jurisdiction with respect to the theological questions at issue. In fact, Presbytery had previously adopted a statement condemning the very heterodox doctrines alleged to be found in TE Moon’s statements. Presbytery found TE Moon’s defense of his views to be credible. One may suspect that TE Moon is guilty; one may even be privately persuaded that he is guilty; but apart from a showing of clear error on the part of SLP in the Record, this Court must defer to the judgment of Presbytery (<http://sjc2010-4.blogspot.com> viewed on 12/21/2010).

The SJC based its decision to uphold the SLP decision not to investigate Moon by first sweeping away most of the issues raised by the complaint by claiming the complaint is based upon faulty logic and assumptions that are uncharitable to Moon. Ironically, upon careful examination it is plain the SJC’s decision is based upon faulty logic and is uncharitable towards the men who wrote the complaint.

The SJC dismisses two of the complaint’s arguments as “non-sequitur[s].” This is a technical way of saying the evidence used by the complaint does not prove Joshua Moon is guilty of holding unorthodox views. However, the SJC’s attempt to dismiss the arguments of the complaint fails, because in both instances where it charges the complaint with a non-sequitur, the SJC is guilty of setting up a straw man, which is the technical way of saying the SJC destroyed arguments that were not made by the

complaint and failed to deal with the complaint's actual arguments.

The first straw man the SJC sets up has to do with Moon's defense of the heretical views of Pastor Greg Lawrence (cf. the previous article in this series). According to the SJC, the complaint wrongly concludes Moon "shares" Lawrence's views because he defended Lawrence. The complaint does not make such an argument, and it is unbecoming of the SJC so uncharitably to charge the writers of the complaint with making such an argument. The complaint actually makes two other very valid arguments with regard to Moon's defense of Lawrence.

First, it argues Moon agrees with at least one of Lawrence's erroneous views because in his defense of Lawrence, Moon himself said he agreed with it. The complaint quotes Moon saying, "The fact is, what TE Lawrence says on baptism is held in various ways and with various nuances by a lot of people in our PCA: *...myself included.*"

Second, the complaint argues Moon is worthy of censure even if he doesn't share Lawrence's views because it is wrong for an officebearer in the PCA even to defend views that are contrary to the Westminster Standards. The complaint quotes the PCA's Book of Church Order (13-9), which says Presbyteries (and presumably individual officebearers) have the duty to "condemn erroneous opinions and practices which tend to injure the peace, purity, or progress of the church." Instead of agreeing with this argument and stressing the absolute necessity of officebearers refuting all errors, the SJC seems to suggest an officebearer can defend *any* teaching, so long as he himself does not agree with the teaching and it is "widely held" that such a teaching is "a permissible minority view within the PCA." The SJC's argument here is not only wrong, but extremely dangerous, because an argument might be made in favor of the FV because it is "widely held... to be a permissible minority view in the PCA."

The second straw man the SJC sets up has to do with Moon's own statements. According to the SJC the complaint argues that "views...capable of a heterodox interpretation, must be so interpreted." Again this is uncharitable on the part of the SJC because the complaint simply does not make such an inane argument.

The SJC decision leaves the impression the complaint made an argument about statements that may be interpreted as teaching heterodoxy in general. But the complaint focuses on specific statements of Moon. And the complaint does not assume the statements are heterodox simply because they are capable of a heterodox interpretation, but instead the complaint explains why some of Moon's specific statements can only be interpreted as contradicting the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Here is a sample of how the complaint actually argued this point:

What TE Moon has made abundantly clear is that he believes that the language of the reformed tradition can be used in more than one sense. He therefore sees nothing inappropriate with using confessional terms in ways that are not confessional. For example, he will say that "(true) adoption, (true) redemption, and (true) sanctification are the properties of the invisible church alone." But at the same time, he has asserted a willingness to also use such terms "in something less than or other than the strictest sense—or use them in some other regard than speaking of election and reprobation" (ROC, p. 72, Lines 9-10). As a result he remains more than willing to speak in a way that would ascribe saving benefits in some sense to those who would be reprobate.

This is seen to be true in that TE Moon sees nothing wrong with "attributing to all the baptized some form of union, adoption, new life, and forgiveness." He says speaking in this way is "speaking the language of our tradition and of our Scriptures..." (ROC, pages 82 and 94). TE Moon also has said that all children of believers regardless of their own faith can be spoken of as having "union with Christ [and are] partakers of his righteousness" (ROC, pp. 79 and 91).


The complaint's argument is that the Westminster Standards limit adoption, redemption, sanctification, union, new life, and forgiveness to the elect alone and do not attribute these things to the reprobate. Further, the complaint argues that Moon admits he is not using these terms as they are used in the Standards when he attributes them in some way to the reprobate. The complaint argues, rightly so, that Moon is wrong in thinking he can affirm that these things only apply to

the elect in the way they are used in the Standards but can also affirm that they can “in some sense” be attributed to the reprobate. By attributing these things to the reprobate in any way at all, the complaint correctly concludes, Moon is contradicting the Westminster Standards. The complaint carefully and persuasively deals with Moon’s views and did not “violate the judgment of charity.”

In light of the arguments actually made by the complaint, the SLP *clearly erred* in deciding not to investigate Joshua Moon, which means the SJC should have overturned the SLP’s decision and instructed the Presbytery to conduct an investigation.

How serious is the SJC’s decision not to instruct the SLP to investigate Moon? It may seem this decision is not very serious because the SJC did not say Moon’s

views were orthodox but merely said the evidence given did not prove they are heterodox. However, although the SJC did not explicitly exonerate Moon, it must be remembered the SJC was told that Moon has said that saving benefits are given temporarily to the reprobate, and the SJC determined this was not clear evidence of heterodoxy. In other words, officebearers in the PCA have been told by the SJC they may defend and may also teach that the reprobate receive forgiveness of sins, adoption, union with Christ, etc.; and if ever they are charged with error for teaching such things, they may rest easy knowing it will be declared they are not guilty of teaching “clear error.”

The SJC failed to discipline a teacher of the FV heresy. Worse, it has provided sanctuary for him and his error. Next time we will consider the actions of the Missouri Presbytery with regard to Pastor Jeff Meyers. 

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

REV. JAMES LANING

For quite some time, the articles I have submitted for the *Taking Heed to the Doctrine* rubric have been on Dispensationalism. In my judgment, there is quite a bit that still needs to be written on this—not only because the error is so prevalent today, but also because it seems God is using this error to get us to consider a number of centrally important passages found in the prophecies of Scripture. So, the Lord willing, I do plan to continue to submit articles on this subject from time to time, but no longer under this rubric. It seems to me that it would be best if we did not take too long on any one subject in the rubric itself, since the idea of the rubric is to keep moving through the doctrines of Scripture, so that the full system of doctrine can more clearly be seen. That being the case, it is my intention at this time to move on in the rubric, and to submit future articles on Dispensationalism as “Guest Articles.”

The article in this issue, then, marks the beginning of the treatment of a new subject—revelation. Under this theme a number of fundamentally important truths can be considered—truths such as the particular revelation of Christ, the word God makes known in creation, the inspiration of Scripture, the call of the gospel, and the significance of signs and wonders, to name a few. We begin with the truth that Christ is revealed only to His people, and from that starting point we will move on, Lord willing, to consider various aspects of this most fascinating subject. —JL

Revelation (1)

The Particular Revelation of Christ

Not Judas Iscariot, but the other disciple of Christ named Judas, asked our Lord a question that was so significant that it was included in Holy Scripture for all of God’s people since then to consider. His ques-

Rev. Laning is pastor of Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa.

tion was this: “Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?” (John 14:22). Judas asked this question in response to the following statement made by our Lord: “Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me... he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (John 14:19–21). In a little while, Christ said, only those that love Christ were going

to be able to see Him. Judas wanted to understand how this could be.

What Judas wanted to grasp was the truth concerning particular revelation. God's people see Christ, and the world does not. Christ reveals Himself to us, and not to others. What does this mean? How does He do this? Let us begin to look into this fascinating subject.

Christ Revealed to Some, Hidden from Others

To reveal is to uncover something that is hidden. This is the meaning of one of the chief terms for revelation, as comes out clearly in the following verse: "... there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known" (Matt. 10:26b). The opposite of covering something and hiding it from view is uncovering it so that it can be clearly seen. That is what is meant by revelation.

Sometimes Scripture speaks of the revealing of sins, which man foolishly thinks he can hide. Other times it speaks of the revelation of the truth, which God in His wisdom hides from some and makes known unto others. It is this revelation of the truth—and specifically of the truth concerning Christ—that we are considering at the moment.

How is it that Christ is revealed only to God's elect people? The words God makes known are available for anyone to read. The Christian religion does not have some secret book to which only an elite few are allowed access. Anyone who has the ability to read and who can obtain an accurate translation of the Bible in his or her own language may read every passage that God has given to us. So how can it be said that God's revelation of Christ comes only to the elect?

To understand this we must know what it means for God to reveal Himself. When God reveals Himself to people, He not only speaks words to them, but also causes them to understand what He has said. Many people have a copy of what God has spoken, but only a small portion of them are granted the grace to understand it.

This is what our Lord Himself has taught us: "Many be called, but few are chosen" (Matt. 20:16). Although many outwardly hear God's call, only a few, relatively speaking, are chosen by God to receive the grace to see

Christ and to embrace Him in their heart. From the others, Christ remains hidden.

God reveals truths; but He also hides them. He never hides them from those who are truly seeking them. He hides them from those who are not really interested in what God has to say.

Christ understood this, and praised His Father for it: "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Matt. 11:25). God's truth is hidden from those who are wise in their own eyes. Such people are impressed with their own thoughts, and receive the just judgment of having the truth hidden from them. But those who see themselves as little babes, and who confess their need for the Father to instruct them through His Son, are the ones who receive the privilege of having the glory of Christ revealed to them.

Christ Revealed to Those God Desires to Save

The fact that God reveals Himself to some and hides Himself from others is yet further proof that God desires to save only some. Most professing Christians say that God desires to save every human being. But if that were the case, why would God hide the truth from so many people? If He wanted to save everyone, He would reveal Christ to everyone. The fact that He does not do this, therefore, is proof that He desires to save only a particular group of people—the people whom He has unconditionally chosen to be in Christ.

The history recorded in the Old Testament clearly illustrates this same truth. If God desired to save every human being, then why did He give His word only to Israel? God's revelation to one particular group of people is proof of His particular love and mercy:

He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD (Ps 147:19–20).

When we sing Psalm 147, we are saying that we know that God has chosen to reveal Himself only to some people. In fact, we are saying not only that we know this, but also that we actually desire to praise God for this.

God has determined that some will never even come into contact with the truth, and that others will outwardly hear the truth, but will not be given the grace to believe it. We have an example of the latter in the multitude who heard Christ and yet refused to believe on Him. Scripture tells us that there were many who heard the preaching of Christ Himself, saw the miracles He performed, and yet still refused to believe on Him. Such unbelief was inexcusable, and was justly and severely punished. Yet this wicked sin of unbelief was also something that God had decreed:

Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them (John 12:39–40).

God blinds the eyes and hardens the hearts of certain people. It is not God's will that these people be converted and healed.

Although by nature we are inclined to object to this truth, we must never do that. Rather, we must remember that it would have been perfectly just if God would have left all of us in our sins. God created man good, and it is man's own fault that he now has a nature that is totally depraved. God justly could have left all of us in our unconverted condition. It is a wonder of grace that anyone is saved.

Revelation by the Word

God the Father reveals Himself through His Son. So to know the Father we must believe what the Son says about Him. It is only in the way of believing the Son that we can know the Father whom He reveals.

The Son is able to reveal the Father, because He Himself knows the Father: "...no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Matt. 11:27b). No man can reveal the Father, because no man knows the Father. Only the Son knows the Father, and thus can reveal Him. So for us to know the Father, we must listen to and believe what the Son says about Him.

This means that we come to know God the Father

from His Word, and not from some mystical feeling that comes to us apart from His Word. The Son is the Word of God through whom the Father reveals Himself. Therefore we must look to the Word to see and know the Father.

But when we say that we can know God the Father only from the Word of God, are we referring to the second Person of the Holy Trinity—that is, to the eternal Word of God—or to the Holy Scriptures? The answer to that question is: both. To know God from the Scriptures is to know Him from the eternal Word, because the eternal Word is the one who is speaking to us in the Scriptures. In other words, to believe the Scriptures is to believe in the Son, who is speaking in these Scriptures.

The Scriptures are the words of God's Son, and they are also all about God's Son. But to see the Son is to see the Father, since the Son is the Image of the Father. This means that when we look to the Scriptures and see the glory of the Son, we are seeing the glory of the Father whose Image He is.

The Spirit Who Brings the Son's Words

It is by the Spirit that the Son reveals the Father. The Son's words reveal the Father, but it is by the Spirit that the Son's words get to us.

The Spirit brings us the words of the Son in more than one way. First, He is the one who guided the writers of the Scriptures so that they wrote down God's words without any errors. Then, having given us the Scriptures, the Spirit is also the one who guides us to understand these Scriptures. In both of these ways, the Spirit is bringing us the words of the Son.

Without the Spirit, no one could understand the Scriptures. Many can read the Bible, but only a small portion of those who read the Scriptures actually have the Spirit needed to understand them.

The Son can reveal the Father because He knows the Father. Similarly, the Spirit can make known to us the things of God because He Himself knows the things of God:

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God (I Cor. 2:11).

None of us could know the things of God, if the Spirit of God did not reveal them unto us.

But, someone may say, the Spirit has already revealed these truths, and they are now found on the pages of Scripture. So why are not these Scriptures alone sufficient to make someone see the truth? The answer is that the natural man cannot understand the truths recorded in Scripture. When he reads them, he finds them to be foolishness. He cannot know how to interpret them, because they are spiritually discerned:

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (I Cor. 2:14).

The natural man cannot discern what the Spirit is saying. The Spirit is required to explain what He has written. Without the Spirit, the revelation of Christ's glory in Scripture would never be seen.

Seeing This Revelation of Christ

The Spirit causes us to understand the Scriptures, which means He is the one who causes us to see that the Scriptures are all about Christ. That, then, brings us back to considering the question that Judas asked. He wanted to know how Christ was going to manifest Himself only to His disciples without the world being able to see Him. The answer is that Christ sends us the Holy Spirit, who guides us to understand that every passage of Scripture is speaking to us about Christ. In this way the Spirit is causing us to see the glory of God's Son.

This is what our Lord was speaking about when He told Judas that He would manifest Himself only to believers. Judas wanted to understand how Christ would do this, and this is the answer that Christ gave him:

...the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you (John 14:23-26).

Christ here is promising His disciples the Holy Spirit. It would be the Spirit within them that would show them Christ, causing them to remember the things He has taught them.

Now it is one thing to know intellectually that this is

what the Spirit does, and it is another thing to experience the Spirit's work in our lives. The Spirit causes the elect to see Christ's glory. But we experience this only when we are walking in obedience to God.

Christ pointed this out when He responded to Judas. He promised the disciples that He would manifest Himself to them. But He also told them that they would see His glory only in the way of being submissive to what God has said. Note how Christ began His answer to Judas:

Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him (John 14:23).

When we come to hear the preaching, or whenever we meditate upon the Scriptures, we will see the glory of Christ only when the Spirit is making His abode with us.¹ But we experience the Spirit making His abode with us only when we are loving Christ and showing this by keeping His words.

We recognize that the Spirit really is within us when we experience Him opening our understanding, so that we are seeing more clearly the glory of Christ as it shines forth in the pages of Scripture. We consciously experience this at some times more than at other times. Christ was telling Judas, and us, that we will experience this more the more we show our love for Christ by submitting to the words He is speaking to us.


When we see the glory of Christ—beholding what He is and what He does—that revelation comes to us with a calling. Seeing what Christ does, we are then called to imitate Him. And the more we submit to this calling out of a love for Christ, the more grace will be given to us to see even more clearly the glory of our Lord.

We should remember this when sitting under the preaching, and when opening up the Scriptures. If we desire Christ to reveal Himself to us more, we should be cheerfully submitting to the revelation of Christ we have already received. Receiving what Christ has

¹ The passage speaks of the Father and the Son making their abode with us. But verse 26 makes known that it is by the Spirit that the Father and Son do this.

already revealed and asking for more, we will find that increasingly our understanding is being opened and that the glory of Christ is shining unto us and through us.

Understanding this, let us seek this revelation, imi-

tating Moses, who cried unto God: "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory" (Ex. 33:18b). If we truly pray this prayer, we will receive our request, and experience the wonder and the power of the gracious and particular revelation of Jesus Christ. 

REPORT OF CLASSIS WEST

March 2, 2011

Classis West convened in regular session on March 2, 2011 in the beautiful new facilities of the Protestant Reformed Church in Crete, IL. Rev. James Laning chaired this meeting of classis.

Much of the business of this classis was routine. Classis heard reports from, and approved the work of, its stated clerk, reading sermon committee, classical committee, and church visitors. Classis provided classical appointments to Edgerton PRC. It also approved subsidy requests for 2012 for the congregations of the Bethel, Covenant of Grace, First Edmonton, Heritage, Immanuel, and Lynden PRCs, and will forward these requests to Synod 2011.

At its September 2010 meeting, classis had approved support for Cornelius Hanko, handicapped son of Rev. R. Hanko, at Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Center in the Grand Rapids area, and classis approved recommending that synod establish a special fund for this cause. Since then, Pine Rest informed the Hankos that it does not believe it can care for Neal's needs. Rev. Hanko therefore informed classis that he will not need financial assistance from synod at this time. In response to these developments, classis rescinded the pertinent decisions of the September 2010 meeting. At the same time, it advised Rev. Hanko and Lynden's consistory to return to classis with a request for help in the future, if the need should arise.

In closed session, classis dealt with two matters of discipline. In both instances, after hearing the nature of the sin and the work of the consistory in dealing with the sinner, classis advised the consistory to proceed with discipline.

In its annual elections, classis appointed several men to three-year terms of service to the classis: Rev. Overway was appointed to the classical committee, Rev. Kuiper as stated clerk, and Rev. Marcus as assistant stated clerk. Classis appointed Revs. Key, Kleyn, Kuiper, and Marcus to be church visitors for the next year, with Revs. Brummel and Laning as alternates. Pending synod's approval, classis appointed Rev. Key to a three-year term as synodical deputy, and Rev. N. Langerak to a three-year term as an alternate deputy. Delegated to synod were Revs. Brummel, Key, R. Kleyn, Kuiper, and Laning, and elders Jim Andringa (Hull), George DeJong (Crete), Henry Ferguson (First Edmonton), Ed Stouwie (Crete), and Robert VerMeer (Peace). Alternates are Revs. N. Langerak, Lee, Marcus, Overway, and Spronk, and elders Duane Bruinsma (Crete), Aaron Edwards (Covenant of Grace), Steve Feenstra (Hope Redlands), Dennis Griess (Loveland), and Robert Kelley (Lynden).

The expenses of this meeting totaled \$7,504.35.

God willing, the Peace PRC of Lansing, IL will host the September 7, 2011 meeting, and the Hope PRC of Redlands, CA will host the March 7, 2012 meeting.

Rev. Douglas Kuiper, Stated Clerk 

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER

School Activities

On the night of February 17 the parents and teachers of Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, MI were invited to their annual Spring

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

PTA meeting. Rev. G. Eriks, pastor of the Hudsonville PRC, spoke on the topic, "Covenant Communication with our Children." Following his speech, teachers and parents, over cookies and coffee, were encouraged to continue the discussion on how we communicate with our children.

One week earlier, on February 10,

the supporters of the PTA of Hope PR Christian School in Walker, MI were invited to gather together to hear Mrs. Tina Mingerink speak on how children learn with their whole bodies, not just their brains, and how learning is dependent on gross motor development. Parents were encouraged to come and see how early

intervention can improve a child's academic success.

Friends and supporters of Hope Christian School in Redlands, CA were invited to a Tasting Bee on Friday evening, March 4, at their school. Everyone enjoyed a fun-filled evening of tasting various recipes taken from Hope's latest fund-raising effort, the just-published cookbook, "Our Favorites with a Twist!" On a personal note, we just received our copy this week and are looking forward to trying some recipes, especially Elephant Stew.

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of the First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI invited their congregation to a special program on Sunday evening, February 27, to learn more about the work that is being done under the supervision of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI, with Paul Raj in India. Georgetown's India Committee gave a PowerPoint presentation, with time for questions and answers following. A light lunch was provided between the evening service and the program.

The Redlands Tucson Sub-Committee of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA hosted a lecture in Tucson, AZ on February 25. Prof. D. Engelsma spoke on the subject, "Church Membership: A Necessity," at the Hampton Inn in Tucson. A group from Hope went to Tucson Friday morning, attended the lecture, stayed at the Hampton Inn Friday night, and returned home on Saturday.

Mission Activities

The Consistory of the Berean PRC in Manila, the Philippines, announced in a recent bulletin that, starting on March 13, they will be

making Reformed Doctrine catechism instruction available in the Tagalog language for those adults who are more fluent in the Tagalog and who wish to make confession of faith and become members of the congregation. The Tagalog Reformed Doctrine Class began with a study of the Heidelberg Catechism, and planned to meet between worship services on Sundays, and will be led by the elders.

The young people of the PR Fellowship in Pittsburgh, PA enjoyed a day of snow-tubing at Hidden Valley on Saturday, February 26. Other members of the fellowship were also invited to join the young people. After snow-tubing, all, young and old, were invited for lunch at the home of a fellowship family.

Young People's Activities

The Young People's Society of the Wingham, ON PRC hosted a church skating-day at the Belgrove Arena on Saturday, February 26. For the first hour, plans called for family skating, with the second hour reserved for hockey.

The young people and young adults of the Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD were invited to join with the young people and young adults of the Edgerton, MN PRC on February 21 for a fondue supper and game night. Those who came were encouraged to bring something that would go well with either cheese or pizza fondue.

Rev. James Laning, pastor of the Hull, IA PRC, plans to host a time of Bible study, food, and fellowship for the young adults of Hull at the parsonage on Sunday evenings. This study began already on March 6. Plans called for two groups, the first consists of those who are in their first or second year out of high school, and the other group consists of those who

are older than that. Each group will meet every other Sunday and will be discussing the book of Acts.

The Young People's Society of Hope PRC in Walker, MI invited their congregation, as well as others around the west Michigan area, to a soup-supper on March 5 before the Hope Foundation travelogue. Four delicious homemade soups and desserts were promised.

Denomination Activities

At the request of our denomination's Contact Committee, Rev. Ron and Sue Van Overloop, of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI, left on February 23 for Singapore in order to preach for Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore for four Sundays. This visit is intended to assist the CERC and help develop the relationship between that congregation and our denomination, and to provide pulpit supply while their pastor works with a group in Pnang, Malaysia, which will be organized into an instituted congregation in March, D.V.

Sister-Church Activities

Rev. Martyn McGeown, missionary pastor to the Limerick Reformed Fellowship in Ireland, gave two lectures during the last week of February—one on Monday night in Limerick, under the title, "What Does It Mean to Be Born Again?" and the other on Thursday night in Porthcawl, South Wales, on "God Is Love."

Minister Activities

Rev. William Langerak declined two calls he received to serve as pastor. The first decline was to the Edgerton, MN PRC, and the second decline was to the Hope PRC in Walker, MI. ☺

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wedding Anniversary

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

ALVIN and SALLY KOOIKER,

as they commemorate 50 years of marriage on April 4, 2011. God has greatly blessed us with their loving care, godly instruction, and example in marriage. We pray that God will continue to bless them and keep them. "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations" (Deuteronomy 7:9).

- * Michael and Bev Kooiker
Angela, Steven, Danielle, Samantha
- * Philip and Bonnie Kooiker
Brittany, Zachary, Erin, Jennifer
- * David and Lori Kooiker
Nathan, Kimberly, Kirsti, Daniel
- * James and Heidi Kooiker
Damon, Katie, Grant, Logan, Caleb, Nolan, Trent
- * Todd and Beth Van Baren
Jori, Jacob, Andrew, Tyler
- * Seth and Mary Vis
Caden, Dawson, Madelyn, Mattias
Hull, Iowa

Wedding Anniversary

■ With gratitude to God, on April 10 we celebrate with our parents,

WILLIAM and KAREN PIPE,

their 40th wedding anniversary. We thank our eternal Father for providing us with parents who have set a godly example.

- * Mark and Kathy DeKraker
Kalysta, Matthew, Mark, Amanda
- * Nathan and Tanya Pipe
Brienne, Alyssa
- * Bill and Linda Pipe
Travis, Megan, Ashley, Tyler
- * John and Sherry Pipe
Everett, Jaxon, Blake, Hudson
- * Brad Pipe and Fiancé
Leanne Doezema
- * Justin and Brenda Pipe
Joseph, Deborah
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The members of the Men's Society of Hope PRC, Walker, Michigan extend heartfelt sympathy to their member Mr. Roger Kamphuis and to Mrs. Henry Kamphuis in the death of his father and her husband,

MR. HENRY KAMPHUIS.

"Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psalm 73:24).

Harry Langerak, President
David Moelker, Sec'y.

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Byron Center PRC wish to express Christian sympathy to Mr. Lee Brower in the death of his wife,

MARILYN BROWER.

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one" (John 10:27-30).

Rev. A. Spriensma, President
Dale Bartelds, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council of Southeast PRC expresses deepest Christian sympathy to Don and Mary Kamphuis in the death of Don's father,

HENRY KAMPHUIS.

We say with the psalmist, "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints."

Rev. William Langerak, President
Ed Ophoff Jr, Asst. Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The members of the Hudsonville PRC Ladies Society express their sympathy to member Mrs. Mary Lynn Postmus in the death of her father,

MR. JOHN BOBBYL.

Isaiah 25:8: "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it."

Pat Lanning, Secretary
Hudsonville Ladies Society

Synod

■ All standing and special committees of the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as individuals who wish to address Synod 2011, are hereby notified that all material for this year's synod should be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than April 15. Please send material to:

Don Doezema
4949 Ivanrest Ave. SW
Grandville, MI 49418

Classis East

■ Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 11, 2011 at the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church. Material to be treated at this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk by April 11, 2011.

Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk

Reformed Witness Hour April 2011

Date	Topic	Text
April 3	"Jesus' Prayer for Our Sanctification"	John 17:17-19
April 10	"Jesus' Prayer for Our Unity"	John 17:20-23
April 17	"Jesus' Prayer for Us to Be with Him"	John 17:24-26
April 24	"The Not Quite Empty Tomb"	John 20:1-10