

The Standard Bearer

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God's Longsuffering Is Salvation

“And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation.”

II Peter 3:15a

Peter is ending his letter to some new Christians with an appeal that they stand fast and endure. He does not want to see them despair and give up. There is evidence that some of them had already become faint and had not endured (16). The danger is that they would be “led away” and “fall from [their] own steadfastness” (17).

The key to practicing the virtue of patient endurance (strength and stability) is the knowledge of God's Word generally—so Peter speaks of the Scriptures as they came through his spiritual brother Paul (15b, 16). Specifically the ability to be steadfast in the face of many temptations is to know God and to know what His Word says about His virtue of “longsuffering.”

Hence the admonition of our text: account (reckon) the longsuffering of God to be our salvation.

Why is the admonition to be steadfast necessary and important? Just how are we to understand God's attribute of longsuffering? What does it mean that God's longsuffering is salvation? And what kind of persons ought we to be so we reflect this virtue of God?



There are several reasons for the admonition to consider God's longsuffering to be salvation. First, it is necessary because there always seems to be a delay in the fulfillment of God's promise that the Lord Jesus will return. Many early Christians, after hearing that Jesus would return, concluded that He would come back very soon. Then, when He did not come back at the time that they anticipated, they began to question the promise of God that Jesus would return. And then they wondered whether God was keeping any of His promises. Whenever we doubt God, we will be afraid. This is what it means to fall from steadfastness. We become unstable.

Through the whole of this epistle, Peter has been assuring the Christians that they are in the right. He has shown them the importance of remembering what they knew and had learned from the apostles (1:12-21; 3:1, 2).

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Further, Peter spent a great deal of time demonstrating from history that God knows how to deliver the godly and how to reserve the unjust for punishment (2:1-9).

Second, the admonition to remain steadfast arises because of the persistent and always irritating work of the false teachers and scoffers. The “error of the wicked” (3:17) discourages believers. The wicked constantly tempt us to despair, to give in, and to give up. This is why we always need the reminder to endure, to hang on.

Thirdly, the need for the admonition to be steadfast arises from our natural instability. By nature we are pessimistic about our enduring or about our children and grandchildren being able to withstand the fiery darts of the evil one. By nature we see the power of temptations and the sweetness of the allurements of this world. By nature we focus on the present and on the earthly. It is so easy for us to be diligent when it comes to material things, but to be quite lazy with regard to the spiritual. We can get very excited about watching college football games or about deer hunting, but when it comes to reading a chapter of the Bible or an article in the *Standard Bearer*, we do it out of a sense of obligation, without any of the enthusiasm we have when we do something that satisfies our earthly life. We are easily distracted from setting our hope on the things above and on the inheritance to come. It is natural to focus on the things that are here and now.



How do we resist these temptations and these natural tendencies? How can we remain steadfast? Be careful that we do not answer these questions by depending on our will-power or on our strength. Rather, the way to steadfastness is to “account the longsuffering of our Lord” to be salvation!

Scripture shows that longsuffering is an attribute of God. When God’s glory passed before Moses as he was hid in the cleft of the rock, then Moses heard God say, “Jehovah, Jehovah God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth” (Ex. 34:6). Moses quoted this statement of God when he made intercession for Israel: “And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, the LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy...” (Num. 14:17, 18). David pleaded with God on the basis of His being longsuffering in Psalm 86:15: “But thou, O LORD, art a

God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.”

Longsuffering is an attitude of God’s love and mercy toward His people. First, longsuffering is God in His mercy willing constantly and unchangeably the final perfection of His people in the fullness of heavenly glory in Christ. Further, longsuffering is God willing that this glorious end be reached only in the way of suffering. We “must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). This suffering is a necessary means God’s love has determined for us to reach our final perfection in all its fullness. In order to enter glory we must fill God’s appointed measure of suffering. In fact, the suffering is said to “work” glory (II Cor. 4:17). Our present chastening may be grievous, but it yields the fruit of righteousness in them that are exercised by the chastening (Heb. 12:11).

The young Christians to whom Peter was writing had the promise of final salvation. It was for the fulfillment of that promise that they eagerly awaited. While waiting they were suffering. This suffering made stronger their fervent longing for the final perfection in Christ. But as these young Christians (and we) wait, it is easy to become impatient at what we think is God’s delay in sending the Lord Jesus. By nature we would despair. Peter calls Christians to reckon God’s tarrying, not as a delay, but as His longsuffering. Realize that the sufferings of this present time fit us for glory!

Further, realize that some of the elect of God are not yet conceived and born. They were elected into the body of Christ, but if Jesus would return right now (bringing relief to our suffering), then the whole of the body of Christ would not be present. God waits so that none might perish, but that all the elect will be born and converted.

God’s longsuffering does save!



In light of God’s longsuffering working our salvation, we ought to be patient. In patience let us trust His infinite wisdom and eternal love to know what is best for each member of Christ’s body and for the whole of Christ’s body.

And in our patience let us more and more practice the virtue of longsuffering. This is an attribute of God that

He enables His children to reflect. It is part of the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit given to every believer (Gal. 5:22).

Realize that we must be longsuffering. God commands us to be so. "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth [is longsuffering] for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it,...be ye also patient [longsuffering]; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (James 5:7, 8). We are commanded to "put on" longsuffering (Col. 3:12).

The key to developing longsuffering is prayer. Paul prays God to give it to the saints (Col. 1:9-11). Pray for the ability to be assured of God's promise to give us an inheritance in eternal glory. Pray to trust God's loving and wise hand in all the crosses He puts in our path. Pray for the ability to subject our desires and self-interest to His perfect will.

Exercise longsuffering in your attitude toward afflictions and griefs. The natural reaction to griefs and disappointments is despair. Longsuffering enables us to bear long and well the crosses God gives. We learn that each cross is determined by our loving and wise God to be necessary, and we learn that His grace is sufficient, that is, that His undeserved favor for us is the power that strengthens us to bear or take up the cross.

Follow the example of our Savior and Master, who was aware that His Father's longsuffering was for our salvation. He is now our Lord at God's right hand, ruling over all things in heaven and in earth. It is our Lord who is exercising longsuffering in order to accomplish salvation for each one and for all of His people.

Divine longsuffering is salvation! 

EDITORIAL

PROF. BARRETT GRITTERS

A Pastoral Warning to Students in Christian Colleges (2)

Dear Reformed Christian Young People (and their parents),

Beware. My pastoral but very sharp warning last time was to look out for, in many Christian colleges and universities, a view of God's *kingdom* that trivializes God's *church*. This view makes the church merely a tool (only one of many) to establish the kingdom. For those who hold that view, God's kingdom is far broader than the church, becomes something altogether differ-

ent from God's church, and is actually God's real and supreme purpose in the world. In my judgment, this teaching that permeates Christian colleges in the US and Canada is more toxic than the poisons of evolutionism or egalitarianism.

Beware. This mentality of church and kingdom is a complete (and new) world-view. It forms hopes for the future, informs goals in this life, and directs one in his vocation. It changes how one thinks of the church and how, we must suppose, God thinks of the church. Saving souls (the church's work) is important primarily if not exclusively because saved souls can go out and build the *kingdom*. Preaching

the gospel (the church's work) now focuses on instructing the people in their social calling, the cultural mandate, political activities, so that God's *kingdom* can be established. Christians must shift their focus from the church to the kingdom.

This virulent teaching seems to be everywhere today. I would rejoice to hear from a Christian college whose views do not include this conception of God's kingdom. We will print their letter, thus publicizing their college, and rejoice in their defense of the old faith that maintains the thinking that if God is our Father, the church is our Mother. If my children were still of the age to

Previous article in this series: October 1, 2010, p. 4.

think about college, I would urge them to consider that college over those that promote the new thinking.

The kingdom-vision is new, but not brand-new.

It really “metastasized” in North America in the middle of the last century, which I will show next time. But I promised last time to quote the proponents of this view. I will do that more by date than by name (for now—although I have all the references at hand), so that you are not distracted by names and footnotes but concentrate on the views. I have found these views expressed in writings about *missions*—because the church’s *mission* now is to build the *kingdom*—although they are not confined to books on missions. They are found in books of theology, theological journals, and magazines, having authors ranging from Reformed to Roman Catholic. The kingdom vision is preached on popular blogs like *Breakpoint*, which heads its page today: “What’s a Christian to Think (and Do)? Defend the Truth. Live the Faith. Advance the Kingdom.” By “kingdom,” Chuck Colson and company do not mean *church*.

Their hope is here and now. A Reformed synod officially stated in 1997: “The goal of God’s mission is the glory of God in the establishment and acknowledgement of his rule over all creation in our present age...” The synod meant, *kingdom*. All creation. Our present age.

A very popular missions professor wrote a book on mission strategies, introducing it by saying, “Without the renewal of the church there

is little hope for the city.” Recognize his priority: the church exists for the city, the earthly community. He dedicates his book to the theme that “living churches [are] lighthouses of the kingdom.”

Another Reformed seminary professor said about his “first article theology” (this theology emphasizes *God the Father and our creation*, over against *God the Son and our redemption*), that his view “is fully Christological and eschatological while it also preserves the *primacy and relative independency* of creation and law.” Listen carefully: Creation and law are *before* and *independent from* the church.

A leader in the Reformed ecumenical movement claimed that “the *body of Christ gathered* exists precisely for the redemption of the whole world. It exists to serve the coming of the Kingdom.”

Another Reformed seminary missions professor wrote, “Members of the body of Christ are also citizens of the kingdom of God. They show what it means to belong to that kingdom as they...fulfill again the cultural mandate...and in this way fulfill God’s original purpose for them.... The purpose of the mission mandate...is to restore people back into a right relationship with God and...so fulfill again the *original* mandate God gave to mankind.” Then, “The cultural mandate is *prior* to the mission mandate.”

The massive third “Lausanne Conference on World Evangelization”—not a Reformed, but a broadly ecumenical effort, a conference that met just last month (October 2010) in Cape Town, South Africa—

emphasized *kingdom* over against church. At least one of its leaders hoped it would return to its “Lausanne I” social agenda. This leader has written a book called, *Missions between the Times: Essays on the Kingdom*, and said in a recent *Christianity Today* article, “the mission of the church must not be reduced to the oral proclamation of the gospel, as ‘evangelization and social-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty.’”

In full bloom, this view will candidly declare: “The kingdom stands central, not the church.” Another: “The church...is not the end, but *the means to the end*, in God’s purposes for the earth. That end is not the church, but the *kingdom of God and of Christ*, when the kingdom is interpreted as God’s reign on the earth.” The kingdom “is the creation which has achieved its goal.”

Disagree with them, and some of these teachers will assault you: “The church...maintains a crucial role in advancing the kingdom... (but) when the institutional church begins to see itself as the repository of truth and the end of all God’s dealings, it becomes an impediment to the actual task of the church, the people of God. Worse, it becomes an idol...” The church’s traditional view of herself as the pinnacle of all God’s works, to this man, is “idolatry.” Thus, you become “an idolater.”

More writers, by the dozen, could easily be cited. The view is not isolated. It is pervasive in Christianity. In Reformed Christianity.

A new thing

Many will not admit that this kingdom vision is new for orthodox Christianity. Others will admit it, even openly. Some are *deceptive* in this admission, even condescending: “Some Christian traditions have, from time to time, tended to equate the Kingdom of God with the church.” But “some Christian traditions” should be: “the majority opinion since the early church!” One, reckless in his defense of the new view, even claimed, “For John Calvin the Church is in the world to create the social structure long called the *City*.” So intoxicated with his view and carried away with his untruth, he said, “For John Calvin, Jesus came to live, to die, and to rise again to take rule in human history as King...of a ‘model community’ we’ve been calling ‘City’ and the ‘Kingdom.’” This writer did not mean *church*. Beware. This is the new “kingdom vision.”

Others are more honest about the novelty of the view. A Reformed seminary professor admits of “Calvin’s identification of the kingdom of God with the church.” For full disclosure, you may know that Calvin said, “It’s a Jewish vanity to seek and include the kingdom of Christ under the elements of this world.... And it matters not what your condition is among men, nor under what laws you live, since in them the kingdom of Christ does not at all consist” (*Institutes*, 4.20.1). But is this old view what you hear at the colleges that call themselves “Calvinist”?

The *most* honest among them want a “conversion of the church,”

and concede that this new view “requires a fundamental reshaping of both biblical studies and our theological understanding of the church.”

What the Christian colleges are teaching about God’s kingdom is not, in fact, the historic Reformed, historic Christian, biblical and confessional teaching about the church and the kingdom. If the teachers were honest, or scholarly, they would tell you that. But the lie has always been deceptive, and by now some teachers may not even know the historic position.

Running out of space again. But let me finish this editorial with a brief overview of the traditional view of the kingdom—Calvin’s view, and Augustine’s view—and next time trace the new view to some of its sources, and show that the view these editorials propose is indeed the biblical, confessional, and historic view.

The truth about the kingdom: the church is the kingdom of God.

Apply, now, all the figures of kingdom to the *church*: The *king* is Jesus Christ, by His work on the cross. His *kingdom*? It is the church, according to the Reformed confessions (*Westminster Confession of Faith*, 30.2; I will show this from the Three Forms of Unity next time). Her *citizens* are believers and their elect children. Her *life, power, and riches* are Christ’s new, resurrection life and power, and the gospel—the pearl of great price—for citizens of this kingdom are not interested in earthly wealth. There is *justice* in this kingdom too: the *legal* righteousness of Christ imputed to believers and His *actual* righteous-

ness lived out by believers who are in but not of the world. And *peace*. Justified by faith we have peace with God in a right relationship with Him; and peace, as much as possible, with our neighbors in the household of *faith* especially though not exclusively (Gal. 6:10). *Entrance into* the kingdom and *enjoyment of* the kingdom are through regeneration, for except a man be born again he cannot even see it (John 3:3). Elders are the *rulers* in this kingdom, who both admit some and expel others. For this they wield the kingdom’s *keys*—preaching and discipline (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 31). There is even a weapon for this kingdom’s defense, carried capably by all her citizens: the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

The kingdom is Christ’s church. The kingdom is spiritual. It is “not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 14:17).

This kingdom we seek. Students, in Christian or state colleges, promote the institution of the church! Doing this, of course you will be not remiss in living out your *earthly* citizenship in faithfulness. I trust that you will not run from your duties as citizens in a particular *earthly* country, province or state, and local community. But you will live these earthly lives with your attention on and love for Christ’s blood-bought church. And you will live with your heads always lifted up, looking for “the very same person, who before offered himself for my sake, to the tribunal of God, and has removed all curse from me, to come as judge from heaven: who

shall cast all his and my enemies into everlasting condemnation, but shall translate me with all his chosen ones to himself, into heavenly joys and glory.” That’s the *Reformed* explanation of the confession we make every Sunday

evening, which is our real and ultimate hope: “Christ shall come again to judge the living and the dead.”

“And lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:28).

Where is your hope? What are your goals? Beware! Listen carefully. Judge biblically. And read history. Church history. It’s on your side. So is Scripture.

And, until next issue, may God bless you in your studies! 

ALL AROUND US

REV. CLAY SPRONK

The URC Synod’s Decisions Regarding the Federal Vision

The Federal Vision (FV) movement is a heretical movement plaguing Reformed and Presbyterian Churches. In the past the FV has reared its ugly head within the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA). The URCNA’s Synod, which met from July 26-29, dealt with the FV in an attempt to refute its errors, especially its heretical teachings regarding the doctrine of justification. The FV teaches the heresy of justification by faith and works.

Was synod successful in refuting the FV? *Christian Renewal* reporter Glenda Mathis believes it was. She writes, “Synod 2010 proved that the federation is united in its commitment to refuting the errors of the Federal Vision and to standing firm for the biblical truth of justification by faith.”¹ Dr. R. Scott Clark, of Westminster Seminary California, also believes the synod was successful. In light of synod’s decisions, “there can be no question,” according to Dr. Clark, “that the URCNA have rejected the self-described FV movement root and branch.”² The desire that the FV be rejected “root and branch” is commendable! But whether the actions of the URCNA Synod have done so is debatable.

¹ “Federal Vision and Justification: Unequivocal unanimity,” *Christian Renewal*, August 18, p. 8.

² “The URCNA Justification Report Stands,” <http://heidelberg.wordpress.com/2010/07/30/the-urcna-justification-report-stands/>, Oct. 4, 2010.

In the build-up to the meeting of this year’s synod, much attention was focused on a study committee report on the FV. The URCNA Synod of 2007 appointed “a study committee to examine by the Word of God and our Confessions the teachings of the so-called Federal Vision and other like teachings on the doctrine of justification; and present a clear statement on these matters to the next synod for the benefit of the churches and the consistories.”³ The study committee finished the report, which is sharply critical of the FV, well before the convening of Synod 2010 and publicly distributed its report so that it could be studied prior to the synod.

Prior to synod, controversy arose when the Consistory of the URC of Nampa, Idaho published a response that sharply criticized the study committee report.⁴ Nampa’s Consistory claimed it was not trying to “defend the orthodoxy of the FV” but only to make sure that the report was “accurate, careful, and fair.” According to Nampa’s Consistory, the report fails on all three counts. The main charge of Nampa’s Consistory is that the report does not fairly represent the teachings of the FV and therefore should not be adopted by synod. Perhaps implied in Nampa’s criticism is the specious charge, commonly made by proponents of the Federal Vision, that anyone who criticizes the FV as the study committee did can

³ *Acts of the Synod of Schererville 2007*, Art. 72.2

⁴ The report can be found at <http://urcnampa.org/resources/interaction.pdf>, October 4, 2010.

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expect only this for a response: “gasp—you sinned against the ninth commandment!”

Nampa’s response to the study committee report elicited strong reaction. Debate raged on the Internet. Rev. Doug Barnes, pastor of the Hills, MN URC, agreed with the Nampa Consistory that the report was problematic and should not be adopted. About Nampa’s response he wrote, “Having read it, I heartily endorse both the paper [Nampa’s response] and its conclusions. (If anything, had I written it, I doubt I would have been as gentle.)”⁵ Others were critical of Nampa’s paper. Dr. J. Mark Beach (professor at Mid-America Reformed Seminary) defended the study committee’s report over against Nampa. In his lengthy response, Dr. Beach expressed that he was “mystified” by the fact that “Nampa’s comments regarding the FV prove to be neither hot nor cold, for Nampa is not prepared (or is unwilling) either to defend FV orthodoxy or to declaim FV ambiguities on pivotal doctrines of the gospel.”⁶ It seemed the lines were being drawn for battle at synod.

With such vigorous debate leading up to synod, it is surprising that the reports coming out of synod indicate the study committee report sailed through synod with no controversy, indeed with almost no debate at all. Glenda Mathis reported: “Although the study committee’s report has received some criticism (primarily on the internet), those criticisms did not surface during either advisory committee meetings or on the floor of Synod. A clearly unified sense of purpose and spirit of cooperation pervaded both advisory committee meetings and plenary discussion. Synod adopted the report’s revised recommendations with unequivocal unanimity.”⁷ Mathis concludes the lack of debate proves there is unanimity in the URC in opposing the FV. John Van Dyke suggests it may be that the lack of debate indicates “unanimity,” but it could also

⁵ Quoted from <http://johannesweslianus.blogspot.com/2010/06/united-reformed-churches-to-deal-with.html>, October 4, 2010.

⁶ “Comments on the Paper of the Consistory of the United Reformed Church of Nampa, Idaho,” <http://johannesweslianus.blogspot.com/2010/06/united-reformed-churches-to-deal-with.html>, October 4, 2010. I share Dr. Beach’s surprise that Nampa’s Consistory is more concerned about dealing with the FV charitably than it is about condemning its egregious errors. It is ironic that the Consistory is sharply critical of the report of the study committee while it argues for a charitable attitude towards the FV.

⁷ *Christian Renewal*, August 18, p. 8.

indicate “a lack of time to discuss more thoroughly” (August 18 *Christian Renewal*, p. 4). Whatever the reason, the lack of debate is surprising, especially in light of the fact that Rev. Doug Barnes, who publicly stated that he was perhaps more critical of the study committee report than the Nampa paper, was a delegate at the synod.

Perhaps there is a simpler explanation for why the report was the subject of little debate: the report itself was never voted on by synod. There is some confusion about this. Professor R. Scott Clark reported that “the justification report...passed without audible dissent.”⁸ However, before synod Dr. Beach wrote, “it ought to be mentioned that whatever flaws mar the Study Committee Report, what the Committee asks the churches to affirm is *not the Report itself* but only its closing recommendations (emphasis mine).”⁹ Glenda Mathis’ report in *Christian Renewal* indicates that synod did indeed only adopt the recommendations at the end of the report and not the report itself. Perhaps delegates who opposed the report, such as Rev. Barnes, determined it was not necessary to engage in debate over a report that was not being voted on by synod.

What did Synod adopt? It adopted a recommendation, “That Synod urge all office-bearers to repudiate Federal Vision teachings where they are not in harmony with the following articles from the Three Forms of Unity.” (Mathis reported that this statement was followed by “nine confessional quotations,” but she did not include those quotations in her report, August 18 *Christian Renewal* p. 8).” Also, synod adopted an affirmation of 15 teachings of Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity.¹⁰ It seems these 15 teachings were affirmed in order to contradict errors of the FV.

It is striking that synod did not adopt a decision that officially identifies and condemns specific errors of the FV. Had the synod adopted the study committee report, it would have officially condemned specific teachings of

⁸ “The URCNA Justification Report Stands” <http://heidblog.wordpress.com/2010/07/30/the-urcna-justification-report-stands/>, October 4, 2010

⁹ “Comments on the Paper of the Consistory of the United Reformed Church of Nampa, Idaho,” <http://johannesweslianus.blogspot.com/2010/06/united-reformed-churches-to-deal-with.html>, October 4, 2010.

¹⁰ These teachings can be found in *Christian Renewal*, August 18, pp. 9-10.

the FV, which would have been a sharper repudiation of the movement. Instead synod adopted a rather bland general condemnation of the movement's teachings only "where they are not in harmony with...the Three Forms of Unity."

This is a weak and ineffective way to deal with the FV. The trouble with this approach is that FV proponents are a wiggly bunch. Some of them readily admit their views contradict the confessions. But many of them claim they can find wiggle room for their views within the confessions. So one can expect that the response of many wigglers/FVers to the synod's affirmation of the 15 scriptural/confessional teachings will be, "but of course, I affirm those things too." In fact, one of the FVers has already responded to synod's decision in this fashion. James B. Jordan, a well known proponent of the FV, claims there is only one of the 15 affirmations that touches upon an area of "real difference" between the synod's views and his views (cf. the Sept. 15 issue of *Christian Renewal*, letter to the editor on p. 5). Jordan is an advocate of the position that children should be allowed to partake of the LS, known as paedocommunion, and he readily admits that he disagrees with the synod's affirmation that children of believers must make confession of faith before partaking of communion. But what about synod's important affirmations concerning more important issues in the debate such as election, justification, and the perseverance of the saints? Yes, Jordan says, I agree with all those affirmations! Thus, the fact that none of the delegates voted against the 15 affirmations does not mean that all the delegates were united against the Federal Vision. James Jordan's response indicates that if an FVer (an FVer, at least, who is not an advocate of paedocommunion) were a delegate to synod he could have easily voted in favor of the affirmations! Had synod adopted a "rejection of errors" section in the manner of the Canons of Dordt, it would have more sharply repudiated the errors of the FV.

But what if the synod adopted the study committee report? There is no question that the synod would have taken a sharper stand against the FV had it adopted the report, especially with regard to the FV's doctrine of justification by faith and works. But would adopting the report have meant the FV was rejected "root and branch"? In order to accomplish that, the report would have had to deal with the root of the heretical movement of the FV.

What is the root of the FV heresy? As the name "Federal Vision" indicates, the root of the movement is its doctrine of the covenant. The report comes close to identifying the root of the movement. It states that "FV writers have reformulated, revised, or even rejected aspects of the understanding of the *covenant* in the Reformed tradition" (p. 7).¹¹ However, instead of identifying the FV's doctrine of the covenant as the root of the heresy, the report views it simply as "one of the pervasive themes of the FV" (p. 7).

Instead of dealing with the root of the FV heresy, the report focuses on one of the branches that sprout from the root, the FV's doctrine of justification (which is what Synod 2007 told the committee to make its focus). The report does faithfully explain and defend the Reformed doctrine of justification by grace alone, on account of Christ alone, by faith alone. Thus, synod did cut off the FV's teaching concerning justification. But cutting off a branch is not the same thing as pulling out the root.

The fundamental error of the FV's doctrine of the covenant is that it teaches that the covenant of God is conditional. The report does not condemn the FV's doctrine of a conditional covenant. Indeed, the report explicitly states, "The problem with the FV formulation at this point is not that it emphasizes the 'conditionality' of the covenant relationship" (p. 25). Thus, even if the URCNA had adopted the study committee report it would not have successfully rooted out the heresy of the FV.

But what if the defenders of the Reformed faith at the URCNA Synod had approved a report that condemned the FV's teaching that the covenant is conditional? This is the question that brings us to the heart of the problem with the URCNA's handling of the error of the FV. It is commendable that the synod of the URCNA is opposed to the FV heresy. It is commendable that the synod of the URCNA is willing to take action and denounce the FV heresy. We desire and fervently pray that the URCNA will be able effectively to root out the FV heresy. But heresy is not effectively dealt with by condemning *false teachings*. The way to purge the church of a false teaching is to discipline false teachers. ☺

¹¹ The report can be found at <http://www.wscal.edu/clark/urcnajustificationrepfinaljune09.pdf>, October 4, 2010.

Truth

What is truth? Pilate skeptically asked Jesus (John 18:38). Then he promptly subjected the truth to mockery, torture, and death. That's the way it is with the ungodly—holding the truth in unrighteousness, they change the truth into a lie, put it to shame, turn from it with their hearts, and expel it from their minds to serve the creature (Rom. 1:18-28). Yet, they dare ask, What is truth?

God is truth (I John 5:6). God is truth in that He alone is God (Rom. 1:20). He is truth in that He is perfect, righteous, and without iniquity in all His being, life, and ways (Deut. 32:4). His eyes are upon the truth (Jer. 5:3). His judgments are according to truth (Rom. 2:2). His word is right and all His works are in truth (Ps. 33:4). And as truth, God is glorious, the light that shines in the darkness (John 1:14; I John 1:5). Thus, truth is also the glorious, perfect, unchanging knowledge of God as He reveals Himself. As the Westminster puts it, "God is both the truth itself and the author thereof" (WCF, 1.4). He *is* truth, and the God *of* truth (Is. 65:15).

God has revealed Himself through His Son, so that the truth is in Christ Jesus (Eph. 4:21). "I am...the truth," He claimed (John 14:6). Therefore no man comes to, knows, or loves the Father but by Him. The truth came by Jesus Christ, God's Word made flesh dwelling among us, full of grace and truth (John 1:13, 17). His one task, He told Pilate, was that "I should bear witness unto the truth" (John 18:37). What is truth? It is Jesus, minister for the truth of God to confirm the promises (Rom. 15:8).

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"I tell you of a truth," he declared (Luke 9:27). And anyone who teaches otherwise than the words of Jesus knows nothing and is destitute of the truth (I Tim. 6:5). Jesus' words are the Scriptures. And as His word, Scripture is also infallible truth (WCF, 1.5; Dan. 10:21).

The truth is salvation (Eph. 1:13). God begets us with the word of truth (James 1:18). By the truth we are justified—the truth makes us free (John 8:32). We are sanctified by the truth, our souls purified in obeying the truth through the Spirit (John 17:17; I Pet. 1:22).

Truth is the fruit of the Spirit (Eph. 5:9). Proceeding from the Father, He guides us into all the truth so that the church is pillar and ground of the truth (John 14:17; I Tim. 3:15). And the truth preserves us (Ps. 40:11; 61:7). It is our shield and buckler (Ps. 91:4). To withstand the evil day, the good soldier has loins girt with truth (Eph. 6:14). Therefore the truth is precious. The believer binds the truth about his neck (Prov. 3:3), buys the truth and sells it not (Prov. 23:23), rejoices in the truth (I Cor. 13:6), and has no greater joy than to hear that his children walk in truth (III John 1:4).

The ungodly hate the truth. Stands to reason—they are of their father the devil, in whom there is no truth (John 8:44). His blasphemous spirit casts truth to the ground (Dan. 8:12). And his children receive no love of the truth (II Thess. 2:10). Ever learning, but unable to know the truth; men of corrupt minds, they resist the truth (II Tim. 3:7-8). They do not plead for truth, but trust in vanity and speak lies (Is. 59:4). They are not valiant for the truth, but proceed from evil to evil (Jer. 9:3). They do not endure sound doctrine, but turn away their ears from the truth unto fables (II Tim. 4:4). Truth is perished and cut off from their mouth, and by them the way of truth is evil

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spoken of (Jer. 7:28; II Pet. 2:2). Damned are they who believe not the truth (II Thess. 2:12).

The righteous nation not only loves, but obeys the truth (Is. 26:2). He who is of the truth loves not in word but in deed (I John 3:18). If we claim His fellowship but walk in darkness, we do not the truth; if we profess to know Him but keep not His commandments, the truth is not in us (I John 1:6; 2:4). God desires truth in the inward parts (Ps. 51:6). He is worshiped in spirit and truth (John 4:24). So the believer prays, “Lead me in thy truth” (Ps. 25:5). He believes, “All the paths of the

LORD are truth” (Ps. 25:10). He knows that, in Jesus, mercy and truth are met together; in Christ, God’s truth toward Israel is remembered (Ps. 85:10; 98:3). Justified, the believer can exclaim, “I have walked in thy truth” (Ps. 26:3). Sanctified, he speaks the truth in love—for no lie is of the truth (Eph. 4:15; I John 2:21). By faith, he holds for truth all that God has revealed in His Word (L.D. 7). And doing truth, he comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God (John 3:21). Indeed, every one born of the truth hears His voice (John 18:37). 

SPECIAL ARTICLE

PROF. BARRETT GRITTERS

The Minister As Physician and the Seminary As Medical School (1)

A minister is very much like a physician; and the seminary like a medical school.

There are other metaphors—more than you might think—that properly describe the calling of a pastor. His work can be compared to the employment of a farmer or a shepherd, and then the seminary is like an “A&M,” an agricultural school. A minister’s work is like the intense and violent activity of a soldier, and the seminary then is a military academy. Sometimes it helps to compare his work to the strenuous demands of an athlete, and

the seminary then is likened to a gymnasium, where an athlete learns technique, discipline, and endurance. A minister’s work can even be compared to the tender and nurturing labors of a nursing mother, and then the seminary is most like a godly home, where a young woman best learns to be a mother of children. The multiplicity of figures indicates something of the complexity of the gospel minister’s labors.

One of the richest metaphors, if it is not the most frequent, is that of a medical doctor.

That a minister is like a physician does not come from explicit, as much as from implicit, scriptural evidence. There are literally hundreds, if not thousands, of references in Scripture to illnesses, medicines, and physicians. It would be a fascinating study to find all the references, just in the Old Testament, to the various diseases and ailments that people suffered. The people of God suffered boils, palsy (epilepsy?), fevers, burning ague (perhaps malaria?), leprosy, consumption (very possibly TB), hemorrhoids (“emerods”), itches, strokes, and ulcers. There were intestinal worms and dysentery. It is clear why Psalm 103 speaks of “*all thy diseases.*”

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(Seminary convocation was held in Southwest PRC on September 15. SW PRC is right next door to the seminary, which was opened for visitors after the convocation program. The students and professors showed the newly remodeled building to many interested guests and friends of the seminary—more than the parking lot could hold. We are thankful for the interest of those who live in the area. At the suggestion of the Theological School Committee, we print the speech given at that occasion by Prof. Gritters, revised only slightly for publication.)

The most familiar medicine was the balm from Gilead. Early in Scripture mention is made of a medicinal balm the origin of which was Gilead, east of the Jordan in the land of promise. The slave-traders who took Joseph to Egypt were travelling via Gilead, carrying spices, myrrh, and balm (Gen. 37:25). In the prophets, God warned Egypt (Jer. 46:11) and Babylon (Jer. 51:8) that no balm would heal them. And the prophet Jeremiah asks, “Is Israel’s continued affliction because there is no balm in Gilead?”

As to physicians, Scripture records that kings of Judah and Israel sought out physicians for their illnesses, after which, usually, the prophets rebuked them for not having asked God for healing. Job criticized his friends, “ye are all physicians of no value” (Job 13:4). In the New Testament a woman spent all her money on doctors who could not heal her bleeding. Jesus acknowledges the presence of doctors when He (apparently) quotes a proverb, “Physician, heal thyself,” and says to the people, “They that are whole need not a physician.”

None of these references yet explicitly makes an office-bearer a physician. However, Scripture does make two things very clear. First, the believers’ physical troubles were illustrations of their spiritual maladies. Psalm 103 is clear. But the familiar questions put by the prophet, “Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?” plainly imply that the sickness they had contracted was spiritual, and the physician they needed was a physician of their soul. The New Testament is replete with miracles of healing for the people of God. All the diseases that God’s people suffered were conquered by the miracles. But those miracles were not performed—contrary to many New Testament scholars today—for the sake of healing itself, but as illustrations of what God will do for the people of God spiritually! Second, Scripture teaches that the word of the gospel (in the coming Messiah) is the instrument of healing, and that that gospel is administered by the officebearers—primarily the pastors. Physical troubles are illustrations of the spiritual, and the word of the gospel as the instrument of healing makes the minister a physician.

There is no question, therefore, that the image of a physician is apropos to describe the work of the minister, and a medical school the work of the seminary.

But I want to take the liberty this evening at our semi-

nary’s 2010 convocation to *extend* this biblical metaphor of the Minister as Physician, and the Seminary as Medical School, so that:

1. The membership of the PRC who love and support this work may understand it better;
2. The students, whose labors here are some of the most intense that any school could demand, may appreciate its rigors.
3. And the faculty and the TSC may remind themselves how crucial it is to recommend for graduation from this institution only those men who are fully qualified to take up this life-and-death occupation.

The Minister and His Work

As many shocking and disturbing things as a trauma doctor observes in his work, a minister of the gospel will see in his. If he were not bound to privacy, a minister would have as many stories to tell his family as a big-city emergency-room physician would his. He will see devastation and death. He will witness with a helpless feeling the slow but certain demise of some. He will inform families of dreadful spiritual injuries, of the diagnosis of sad and awful diseases.

The troubles will be as diverse as the diseases of the Old Testament. He will observe the lame and paralyzed, the blind and deaf. He will deal with minor fevers and infections and bruises, as well as terrifying symptoms of rampaging viruses. The sphere of the minister is the sphere of illness, injury, and death.

The origins of the problems are diverse, too.

Some of the troubles come from foolish sporting (I use the figure deliberately) with sin. Members will come to his study with injuries like those (to change the figure) from a bad car-wreck. Others come in with a kind of knife-wound, because they “covet[ed] after [money], and...pierce[d] themselves through with many sorrows” (I Tim. 6:10).

Some ailments and injuries come from wicked association with unbelievers who infected them with painful and (if not treated immediately and radically) fatal diseases.

God’s people sometimes fall under the influence of false teachers, whose words eat and rot like gangrene (in II Tim. 2:17, where the KJV uses “canker,” the original is “gangrene”).

Still others, assaulted by the Devil, are wounded with

fiery darts, poisoned with serpent's venom, that will rot the flesh or paralyze the muscles and eventually (also if not treated) lead to death.

Yet others are ill or wounded, not because of outside influences, but because of the home in which they were born and because of the particular parents who raised them.

But every one of them—wounded with a special wound or infected with some rare syndrome or not—every one of them will be infected with the same hereditary disease (I use the language of the Canons) that you and I have: the original sin that makes their natures and the natures of their infant children as repulsive and nauseating as the rotting flesh of a body long dead. *Personally* we all are as Israel was *nationally* in the time of Isaiah: "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it [us]; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (Is. 1:6).

The calling that the minister has, therefore, is so much like that of a physician: To deal with, in behalf of the Great Physician, these spiritual maladies of God's dear children.

First of all, the minister must *diagnose*. The *minister-physician* asks, "What ails you? Why the weakness, injury, inability to function?" He asks hard questions. He must be kind, but bold. Is your affliction from an injury? Or a disease? If injury, what happened? If disease, what did you contract? Where have you been? Were you infected by bad company? Or perhaps is the cause of this ailment heredity? Or did the devil inflict this wound? Or was it self-inflicted?" And then he determines, How bad is it? How far advanced? How long has the injury gone untreated?

This minister-physician must not make mistakes.

I will be very displeased with the doctor who carelessly attributes my chronic cough to allergy and prescribes Al-

legra when, had he looked more carefully, he would have found aggressive lung cancer; or my headaches and aches to a common virus rather than a virulent bacterial meningitis. Diagnose, and do so accurately!

When he does, he must be brutally honest about the diagnosis. There must be no soft-pedaling of the diagnosis or of the prognosis. I will be *more* angry with the doctor who knows that my affliction is lung cancer, but out of some misguided sympathy or cowardly fear informs me that it is something else.

So the minister of the gospel must speak the truth in love—painful and distressing as it may be—to the ill and injured people of God. That's the implication of Jeremiah's judgment: "they healed the hurt of the

daughter of my people slightly, saying 'peace, peace' where there is no peace." The healing was superficial because the diagnosis was insufficient. Only with a proper diagnosis can a proper medicine be applied and healing take place.

Then, he *heals*. Apply the medicines, administer the treatments, and pray God to use them to heal!

If Christ is the Great Physician, then every minister under Jesus Christ is called to seek the healing of the people under his care. After diagnosis, he applies the appropriate

medicines, and performs the necessary surgeries, in order to restore to health and strength the ailing and wounded people of God.

The minister-physician's services are most commonly public labors in which he applies the gospel balms *generally* (which also means that his diagnostic skills must be exercised not only individually, but congregationally, with the aid of the elders, because every congregation is different).

Sometimes he makes house calls and applies the medicine *specifically*.

Once in a while his study becomes a Trauma Center where, in the middle of the night, a patient is airlifted, as

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it were, and the pastor spends the wee hours of the morning hovering over the battered, bleeding, broken child of God.

But he heals the brokenhearted, binds up their wounds. He declares to them the gracious forgiveness in Jesus Christ; proclaims the power of His Spirit to cure the spiritual paralysis; testifies of the cleansing strength of Jesus' blood, the amazing ability of the gospel to stop the spread of spiritual infections, the healing power of Christ to close up the wounds of the devil or the self-inflicted lacerations of their own folly; and broadcasts the mysterious virtue of the gospel to work hope. The minister-physician enables the children of God to live in spiritual health, in the joy of their salvation.

Included in his calling is to issue alerts. BEWARE!!! DANGER!! This physician sees special dangers on the horizon and issues public health warnings. Or he

observes the enemy preparing an assault on a certain front with their false teachings or promotion of an ungodly lifestyle. He learns of diseases that are specially infectious! BEWARE!!! The *professors* have this calling according to the Church Order (Art. 18); but so does every pastor in the congregation he serves. And he will be remiss if he does not warn. Would not earthly physicians be remiss if they failed to do so?

The minister/physician even promotes general spiritual health: healthy eating, avoiding those things that are ruinous and damaging, and partaking of those that tend to spiritual well-being. He also counsels exercise. Exercise thyself unto godliness. Bodily exercise profits little (for such a short time), but godliness is profitable both for this life and for the life to come.

... to be continued. 

GUEST ARTICLE

REV. ANGUS STEWART

The Westminster Confession and Church Unity (2)

The Westminster Confession on the Church

In keeping with the directives of the Solemn League and Covenant (1643), the Westminster divines fervently sought a thoroughly biblical and doctrinal church unity for the Reformed churches of the British Isles.

The Westminster Confession's opening chapter, "Of the Holy Scripture," is, in my opinion, the greatest creedal statement anywhere on the truth of God's inspired Word. Philip Schaff states, "No other Protestant symbol has such a clear, judicious, concise, and exhaustive statement of this fundamental article of Protestantism."¹

¹ Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 1 (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1877), p. 767; cf. B. B. Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly and Its Work* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), pp. 155-156.

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This is a continuation of Rev. Stewart's article in the Special Reformation Issue, October 15, 2010, p. 42.

The other chapters, broadly speaking, treat God and man (ch. 2-6), Christ and salvation (ch. 7-20), and the church and the last things (ch. 21-33).

In chapter 25, "Of the Church," the Westminster Confession affirms the unity of the *invisible*, catholic, or universal church, as consisting "of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof" (25:1). The next article states that the unity of the *visible*, catholic, or universal church embraces "all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation" (25:2).

To the visible, catholic church, "Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life, to the end of the world" (25:3). It is in the degree of faithfulness or unfaithfulness in exercising or administering these things ("the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God")

that “particular churches...are more or less pure” (25:4). The following three marks or notes of the true church are listed: “according as [1] the doctrine of the Gospel is taught and embraced, [2] ordinances administered, and [3] public worship performed more or less purely in them” (25:4).

The next article makes the following evaluation based upon the marks: “The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan” (25:5). The chapter concludes with a condemnation of the pontiff of Roman Catholicism: “Nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head [of the church]; but is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God” (25:6).

The next chapter, “Of the Communion of Saints,” stresses the spiritual union and communion of believers with Christ and, therefore, with each other. This communion among the saints includes fellowship in “love,” “gifts,” “graces,” “duties,” “worship,” etc. (26:1-2). “Which communion, as God offereth opportunity,” the Confession continues, “is to be extended unto all those who in every place [including saints throughout the British Isles and in the continental Reformed churches] call upon the name of the Lord Jesus” (26:2).

This Christian unity and communion of saints in profession, worship, and love is not only intensely spiritual and truly catholic; it is also costly. Believers “are obliged to the performance of such duties, publick and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man” (26:1) and “are bound” to perform “such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities” (26:2). But this is not, Westminster affirms, to fall into communism (26:3)!

The next three chapters of the Westminster Confession succinctly present the Presbyterian and Reformed doctrine of the two sacraments (ch. 27): baptism (ch. 28) and the Lord’s Supper (ch. 29). Obviously, these three chapters are contrary to Romanism (especially 27:3-4; 28:5-6; 29:2-8), like all the chapters of the Confession. Lutheran baptismal regeneration (28:5-6) and consubstantiation (29:7) are also opposed. Contra the Baptists,

“the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized” (28:4) and immersion is “not necessary,” for “baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water on the person” (28:3).

The religious uniformity in the British Isles proposed by the Westminster Confession is rooted in the truth not only of the church and its fellowship (ch. 25-26) and the Christian sacraments (ch. 27-29), but it is also preserved and maintained by godly church discipline (ch. 30) and authoritative broader assemblies (ch. 31).

Notice how the following two articles on faithful church discipline and broader church assemblies, respectively, present biblical church authority as serving true church unity:

Church censures are necessary for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren; for deterring of others from the like offences; for purging out of that leaven which might infect the whole lump; for vindicating the honour of Christ, and the holy profession of the gospel; and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the church, if they should suffer his covenant, and the seals thereof, to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders (30:3).

It belongeth to synods and councils ministerially to determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience; to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the publick worship of God, and government of his church; to receive complaints in cases of maladministration, and authoritatively to determine the same: which decrees and determinations, if consonant to the word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement with the word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God, appointed thereunto in his word (31:3).

The Westminster Confession on God’s Absolute Sovereignty

The unity proposed by the Westminster Confession is especially rooted in the truth of Jehovah’s gracious and sovereign choosing of the “elect” and “invisible” church (25:1) and His “gathering and perfecting” of the saints in faithful, “visible” churches (25:3).

The Confession summarizes the Bible’s teaching concerning the triune God:

[He] is alone in and unto himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which he hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own

glory, in, by, unto, and upon them: he is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom, are all things; and has most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever himself pleaseth (2:2).

This includes God's unconditional, double predestination, consisting of eternal election and reprobation (3:3-8), as well as Jehovah's all-embracing providence, which "extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men, and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering, and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to his own holy ends" (5:4).

"Christ's one only sacrifice [is] the alone propitiation for all the sins of the elect" (29:2), for His "perfect obedience," "sacrifice," and "reconciliation" are "for all those whom the Father hath given unto him" (8:5). "To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption, he doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same; making intercession for them" (8:8).

"All those" and "those only" who are "predestinated unto life" are effectually called (10:1), and these alone are justified (11:1), adopted (12:1), sanctified (13:1), and preserved by God (17:1-2). "The elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls" (14:1), are given by the Lord the "evangelical grace" of "repentance unto life" (15:1), and so do good works as those "created in Christ Jesus thereunto" (16:2).

The Westminster Confession itself summarizes,

As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so has he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ; are effectually called unto faith in Christ by his Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith unto salvation (3:6).

The next sentence presents the truth negatively: "Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only" (3:6). As the Confession explains, fallen man has no "free will" (9:3), and so those "not elected" can "never truly come unto Christ, and therefore cannot be saved" (10:4).

The Judgment Day is for the vindication of the absolutely sovereign God: "The end of God's appointing this

day is for the manifestation of the glory of his mercy in the eternal salvation of the elect, and of his justice in the damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient" (33:2).

A Bastion Against "Many Dangerous Errors and Heresies"

The Westminster Confession's superb statement of scriptural truth—and all I have given above is a mere summary—also established it as a great bastion against false doctrine. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (27 August, 1647) rightly recognised the "Confession of Faith," required "by the Solemn League and Covenant," as the "principal part of the intended uniformity in religion [in the British Isles]" and "a special means for the more effectual suppressing of the many dangerous errors and heresies of these times."²

Scottish Commissioner George Gillespie declared,

The Confession of Faith is framed, so as it is of great use against the floods of heresies and errors that overflow that land; nay their intention of framing it was to meet with all the considerable Errors of the present time, the Socinian, Arminian, Popish, Antinomian, Anabaptistian [Anabaptist], Independent errors, etc. The Confession of Faith sets them out, and refutes them, so far as belongs to a Confession.³

Clearly, the Westminster Confession was and is a great Reformed creed, serving Christ's church and its unity. But how was it implemented in the British Isles in the years after its formulation? Was its lofty vision of religious uniformity realized in established Presbyterian churches in Scotland, England, Wales, and Ireland? And have the churches in the British Isles since then maintained the truth of the Westminster Confession? These things we shall consider next time (DV). 

² *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1985), pp. 14, 15.

³ Quoted in Warfield, op. cit., p. 58, n. 99. To Gillespie's list, David Dickson, in the first commentary written on the Westminster Confession (1684), would add many others: Greeks (i.e., Eastern Orthodox), Lutherans, Erastians, Libertines, Quakers, Enthusiasts, Judaisers, etc.—to name just some of them (*Truth's Victory Over Error* [Burnie, Tasmania: Presbyterian's Armoury Publication, 2002]).

The Dispensational View of the Rapture (4)

The Dispensational Denial of the Signs

With great emphasis, dispensationalists claim that the rapture can take place at any moment. By this statement they mean that there are no signs that must take place before it occurs. And if there are no signs for us to see, there is no purpose in our looking for them.

Yet looking for these signs is precisely what our Lord has called us to do. If we are not watching, then we are sleeping:

Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch (Mark 13:35–37).

In spite of this, many dispensationalists try to persuade us that there is no need for us to do so.

Signs for Israel, but not for the Church

The Bible clearly and repeatedly speaks of the signs of Christ's coming. That being the case, there is no way to deny that there are such signs if one wants to profess to hold to the Scriptures. There are, however, two effective ways to get rid of those signs, if you do not want them. One way is to say that these signs have already taken place in the distant past. This is the typical postmillennial way of denying the signs. Another way is to say that these signs will take place *after* the church has been raptured from this earth, so that there is no need for the church to be looking for them now.

Both methods have been very successful at getting people to believe that there is no need for us to watch for these signs today. They are two lullabies that are being used quite effectively to put multitudes to sleep.

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

Previous article in this series: July 2010, p. 427.

It is the second of these two methods that is employed by the dispensationalists. They will admit that there are signs that will precede the second coming of Christ. But, they say, these signs are for Israel, not for the church. The church, they maintain, will be gone before they take place.

Note how the dispensationalists are once again making use of their erroneous Israel–church distinction. They use this distinction to get around many truths, including the one concerning the signs of Christ's coming:

Many signs were given to the nation Israel, which would precede the second advent, so that the nation might be living in expectancy when the time of His coming should draw nigh.... To the church no such signs were ever given. The church was told to live in the light of the imminent coming of the Lord to translate them into His presence.... Such passages as 1 Thessalonians 5:6; Titus 2:13; Revelation 3:3 all warn the believer to be watching for the Lord Himself, not for signs that would precede His coming.¹

Israel is given signs, but the church is given none. Israel will one day watch for the signs of Christ's coming, but the church is to watch for the Lord Himself. Such are some of the strange distinctions that arise when one divides God's people into two groups.

We do not stand gazing up into heaven, looking to catch the first glimpse of His appearance. We watch for our Lord *by* beholding the signs—signs our Lord has given us that we might be assured that His final coming really is approaching rapidly.

Separating the rapture from the day our Lord returns

The dispensationalist maintains that the signs will be seen by Israel, but not by the church. The day the church

¹ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (1958; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Dunham Publishing Co., 1966), 202–3.

is raptured, they say, will be at least seven years prior to the day our Lord returns. Then, after the rapture, the signs of Christ's coming will take place in that seven-year time period between the rapture and Christ's second coming.

The Scriptures, however, speak of the church being raptured on the day our Lord returns:

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

It is on the very day that our Lord descends from heaven that the elect will be caught up to meet Him in the air.

Dispensationalists maintain that the rapture will take place at least seven years before our Lord comes back. If you ask them how they came up with this number, they will normally point you to Daniel 9:27, which, they say, teaches that the Antichrist will agree to make a seven-year covenant² with Israel, but will then later go back on his word, break off his covenant at the mid-way point, and begin to persecute Israel. This seven-year period, say the dispensationalists, is when the signs of Christ's coming will take place.

God, they say, must first finish His work with the church, and take her to heaven. Only then will He return to His work of saving Israel. And saving Israel, they argue, is what God will be doing during this seven-year period. He will use the Antichrist's persecution of Israel to get Israel to see their sins and turn to the Messiah. In this way, supposedly, Israel will be converted, so that they will be eagerly awaiting Christ when He returns.

That is the way typical dispensationalists argue. In that way they effectively strip the church of the signs Christ has given her to comfort and encourage her in the last days.

The “proof” that the church has no signs

Having made this distinction between two great days in the future—the day of the rapture and the day of our Lord's return—dispensationalists proceed to teach that

² The passage as it is translated in the KJV speaks of the covenant lasting for one week. Dispensationalists maintain that this “week” refers to a seven-year period.

although there are signs that will precede the day of our Lord's return, there are no signs that precede the day of the rapture:

Unlike passages that deal with the second coming of Christ and trace the tremendous world-shaking events which shall take place in the years preceding it, the Rapture of the church is always presented as the next event and, as such, one that is not dependent on immediate preceding events.³

Walvoord says the rapture “is always presented as the next event.” By this he means that whenever the rapture is referred to in Scripture there is never any reference to any signs preceding it.

But how many passages are there that explicitly refer to the rapture? Walvoord is implying that there are quite a few. Yet in the context he does not refer to a single passage other than 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17. There are certainly many passages that speak of the day of our Lord's return. But there are not many passages that speak specifically of the rapture that will take place on that day.

It is true, of course, that this one rapture passage does not make any reference to any signs that will precede the rapture. But the fact that this passage does not make any reference to such events does not mean that they will not occur. They simply were not listed in this specific passage.

There are a number of passages elsewhere in Scripture that refer to the signs that precede the day of our Lord's return. This specific passage did not have that as its purpose. This passage was to serve to assure God's people that all believers—the living and the dead—will meet Christ together when He returns. So if we consider this passage in its context, we will not be surprised when we find that it does not contain a list of the precursory signs.

The importance of watching the signs

In Mark 13:37, our Lord made a specific reference to the fact that the calling to watch for these signs comes not only to some, but to all. It is not only the Jews, but also the Gentiles that have this calling to watch. Dispensationalists are effectively teaching that the church does not need to watch. They will never see these signs. But

³ John F. Walvoord, *Every Prophecy of the Bible* (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1999), 481.

Christ said this command comes not only to some, but to all.

Christ is calling us to watch for Him by watching the signs of His coming. This passage from Mark 13 is one of those places where we find a detailed list of the signs of our Lord's return. It is right after listing them that He commands His disciples, and us, to watch.

It is important for us to behold these signs. One who has been fooled by dispensational teachings would be likely not to recognize the Antichrist when he does arise.

Let us say, for example, that a Reformed believer was

talking to a dispensationalist after the Antichrist had risen to the height of power. The dispensationalist would argue that the man could not be the Antichrist, because the church was still on this earth. Not watching for the signs, he would be oblivious to what was taking place.

We must not sleep. We must not be persuaded by those who would put us to sleep. Rather, we must remain awake and alert in these last days, thinking often of the words our Lord has spoken:

And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch (Mark 13:37). 

The Book of Ecclesiastes: Introduction (1)

God gave us the book of Ecclesiastes to instruct us in spiritual wisdom as those living in a world fallen in sin and under the curse. He gave it by one who was old and endued not only with the wisdom of age and experience, but with the wisdom that only the Spirit of God can give. The Preacher searches the life of man under the sun, giving us to see with spiritual understanding the way of that life and its value and meaning in a world subject to vanity because of sin. In many ways the book addresses especially the young man and woman taking their place in the affairs of life and beginning life's journey (Eccl. 11:9; 12:1). Its purpose is not so much to give what is mistakenly called practical instruction or to show how to do something, but rather to give true practical wisdom by giving us to see the realities of life with spiritual discernment. The word of God in the book would give us glasses to see the reality of life under the sun.

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With the intention of turning to this word of God by way of exposition over a period of time in this column, we would, first of all, have clear in our minds two issues: first, who the author is, and then secondly, the theme of the book. Both these elements are important. There are commentaries on the book that depart from the plain statement of the book that the "Preacher" is king in Jerusalem, namely Solomon. Attributing the book to an author after the captivity, as they do, reshapes its contents and its theme. Both elements have been ably explained on the pages of the *Standard Bearer* many years ago. The identity of the Preacher by whom God gave this word is explained by Rev. C. Hanks, writing at the time of the Second World War in the *Standard Bearer*, volume 20. His article is quoted below in full.

—TCM

The Author of Ecclesiastes

It has always been a safe and established rule to determine the author of a certain book of Holy Writ, if at all possible, from the book itself. What surer guide could we have than the Word of God, which is its own indubitable testimony of its infallibility?

Applying this rule to the book of Ecclesiastes, it hardly seems possible that anyone should as much as question the fact that Solomon is its author. The first chapter expresses this very definitely. Its opening statement reads: "The words of the Preacher, the Son of David, king in Jerusalem." Although he calls himself the Preacher (*Koheleth* in the Hebrew, *Ecclesiastes* in the Greek, from which the book derives its name) he adds that he is the son of David and king in Jerusalem. Verse 12 adds to this: "I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem." And verse 16 continues: "I communed with my own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem; yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge." To assure ourselves that this could refer only to Solomon, we need but compare it with I Kings 3:12, where the Lord addresses Solomon, saying, "Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee."

If more proof were needed, we could refer to the second chapter, the verses 4-9:

I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruit: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.

Comparing this with what is written of him both in Kings and in Chronicles we can only conclude that no one else but Solomon could be the Preacher, who concludes in chapter 12:8-10 by saying:

Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity. And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.

Considering all this we can safely conclude that the Preacher is none other than king Solomon, whom the Lord granted riches and wisdom in abundance. We can even conclude that he wrote this book in the evening of his life, after he had experienced all that life could offer to one in his position, and after he had tasted to the full the realities of those things of which he wrote.

Yet, with all this overwhelming evidence before them, the Bible critics, almost without exception, are well agreed that Solomon could not possibly be the author of this book. They quite unanimously insist that some other person, at a much later date, either collected various proverbs of Solomon into one book, or wrote the entire book under the assumed name of the Preacher, as if he himself were king Solomon, "reproducing the thoughts and experiences of the memorable personage, Solomon" (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*).

Entirely ignoring the divine inspiration of the Scriptures and ruthlessly exalting their own opinion above the testimony of the Word itself, they reduce this book to the level of a mere piece of fiction.

Their main objection to recognizing Solomon as the author of Ecclesiastes is, as they say, that the style of the book is of a much later date, when the Hebrew language was interspersed with many Aramaic words and expressions. This objection is based on the assumption that Solomon could not possibly have made acquaintance with those Aramaic terms which they find in the book. Yet it hardly takes into consideration that as king, the like of whom could not be found, with all the building which he had done, he must have had exceptional amount of contact with the nations round about. Granting that there are many words in Ecclesiastes not found in the earlier writings of the Old Testament, this is still no reason to deny the testimony of the book itself that it was written by Solomon. The style and language must be that of Israel's great king.

The other objections bear even less weight. It is objected that Solomon would never have said: "I, the Preacher, was king over Israel." He might have said, 'am king,' but never 'was,' because he remained on the throne until the day of his death. But this objection is more fancied than real. Must we assume that he could not possibly have said that he was king over Israel unless he had abdicated the throne? The only correct explanation is that he appeals

to his rich experience as Israel's anointed king in giving his estimate of life, as he does in the first chapter.

Again, it is objected that Solomon would never have said that he was "king over Israel in Jerusalem," since he had no knowledge of kings over Israel who had not reigned in Jerusalem. The assumption is that only one who was acquainted with Israel's later history would emphasize that Solomon was king in Jerusalem instead of in Samaria. Also the objection is raised that, since Solomon had not proceeded from a long line of kings, he could not have spoken of "all that were before me in Jerusalem." These last two objections may well be considered as "begging the question." Taking for granted that the author was acquainted with Israel's later history, it is a simple matter to arrive at the conclusion that must first be proven. There is, on the other hand, every reason to accept that the theocratic king of Israel, conscious of his high calling and having his throne in the Holy City, would not hesitate to mention this in introducing himself to his readers. Nor is it strange that he would say that his wisdom exceeded "all that were before me in Jerusalem," since God Himself had said, "I have given thee a wise and understanding heart, so that there was none like thee before thee." He is simply stating that God's promise was fully realized.

Having established in our own minds that Solomon is the author of this book, it raises the interesting question, Is Solomon also among the prophets? We know that no one could hold any office in Israel unless he was anointed of the Lord. Anointing spoke of the fact that God had ordained and called him to a special office, and that God also qualified him through the Holy Spirit to fill the office to which he was appointed.

We also know that Solomon was anointed to be king over Israel, and that he had been endowed with the special gift of wisdom as theocratic king. The Lord had granted his request when he asked for wisdom to judge the people with an understanding heart, "that I may discern between good and bad, for who is able to judge this thy so great a people." This wisdom was not a mere natural gift, or bent, but a special gift of the Holy Spirit to qualify him to the office to which God had called him.

But Solomon received even more than he had asked. Ecclesiastes informs us that this wisdom qualified him to be a preacher as well as a king in Israel. He writes (1:16),

"Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem; yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge." And again in chapter 2, verse 9, "Also my wisdom remained with me." As in his conclusion (12:9), "Because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs."

This fact is the more significant because the office was generally imposed on separate individuals in the old dispensation. Although the threefold office of prophet, priest, and king is essentially one office, as is evident from Adam in paradise, in Christ in His threefold office, and in the office of believers today; yet the Old Testament prophet was no priest, and the priest was not a king, according to the general rule. But Solomon presents himself to us as the Preacher-King, who had been endowed with the Spirit of wisdom, not only to rule the people as their king, but also to instruct them as their prophet. A fact which clearly emphasizes that the threefold office is essentially one, even as it was perfected in Christ, the Anointed of God, *par excellence*.

The message of the Preacher carries a special appeal to us in our day because it is so exactly the opposite from all present-day philosophies which boast of the wisdom and culture of the world. One keynote rings through the entire book, that all things, outside of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, are subject to vanity. God's curse rests upon the world of fallen mankind, and man himself bows under the bondage of corruption and death. There is nothing new under the sun, nothing that is not branded with death, nothing that is not subject to vanity. Even joy and mirth are empty madness, and natural wisdom brings grief, while all labor is vexation of spirit. The creature runs in a treadmill as in a "vicious circle." All man's skill and ingenuity, his discoveries and inventions, his labor and his progress end in destruction. War—peace—depression—war stalks man's path wherever he turns. All that is and all that cometh is vanity. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, all is vanity.

This is the conclusion of the whole matter, "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." —C. H. 

Evangelism Activities

The consistory of the Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD recently formed an Evangelism Committee to serve on behalf of their consistory and congregation. The consistory appointed five men to that committee, and they held their first meeting on September 13.

The congregation of the Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA sponsored a special lecture on Friday evening, September 17. Rev. W. Bruinsma, our denomination's missionary to Pittsburgh, PA, was the guest speaker. Rev. Bruinsma spoke on the topic, "The Witness of the Reformed Believer." Rev. Bruinsma was also invited to preach once the following Lord's Day.

Covenant of Grace PRC has also put together a new welcome-packet for any visitor who may attend Covenant's services. This packet contains an information card, two introductory pamphlets, and an informational DVD.

For some time now the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI has had an on-going contact with Rev. Paul Raj and fellow saints in Vellore, India. A recent Georgetown bulletin contained a brief update on that work. The congregation hopes to be organized sometime this fall. At organization, they look forward to receiving ten confessions of faith, and performing fifteen baptisms. The name they have chosen for their

future congregation is the Reformed Christian Church of Vellore, India. Georgetown's India Committee is presently investigating ways of support for Paul Raj's ministry, either through an assistant, or by improving their means of transportation, or possibly by a trip to India sometime in the near future.

Congregation Activities

The consistory of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI gave their approval to the formation of a new Bible Study for the residents of Sunset Manor, a nearby retirement home. This study was intended primarily for PR members living at Sunset, and will be led by Faith's pastor, Rev. A. Lanning. The Bible Study hopes to meet every other week. Their first meeting was held on September 14, with a brief meditation on Psalm 73:23-28, after which the members were to choose a portion of Scripture to study for the season.

A recent bulletin from the Lynden, WA PRC reminded their congregation that in our increasingly busy lives we need times of fellowship together. And what better time to do that than on the Lord's Day "for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12). So on the first Sunday of each month (through May) a soup luncheon will be provided for the congregation after their morning worship service further to support and promote that fellowship.

Rev. Doug Kuiper, pastor of the Randolph, WI PRC has agreed to teach a class for adults on the Canons of Dordt this year during the society Bible study season. Early plans called

for two meetings in September, followed by once a month after that.

While filling a classical appointment to our vacant congregation in Edgerton, MN, Rev. R. Kleyn, pastor of the Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA, gave a short presentation on the congregation in Spokane.

The congregation of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA was invited to attend a Sunday School program and singspiration following their evening worship service, August 29. This program marked the end of Hope's Sunday School season.

At a congregational meeting held September 16, the congregation of the Loveland, CO PRC gave approval for a committee on future expansion to begin the work of bringing their property, together with that of the school, into conformity with current zoning laws, and straightening the property lines between the two parcels.

Young Adult/Young People's activities

The young adult society of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA enjoyed a potluck and bonfire at the mountain cabin of one of their congregation's members on September 10. Members were asked to bring a dish to share and their own chair. Everything else, including marshmallows, was provided.

The Young People's Society of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC sponsored a car wash on Saturday morning, September 18, at a nearby Taco Bell restaurant. We were near Kalama-

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

zoo that morning, and dodged rain drops. Hopefully the weather was good enough there for a successful fund-raiser.

Mission Activities

The consistory of the Berean PRC in Manila, the Philippines, has been studying, since January, various aspects of a future request for a sister-church relationship with the PRC. In order to keep their congregation involved and informed about this effort, and since the congregation needs to approve a future request before it is sent, the consistory approved that Rev. Smit provide some instruction on the subject of sister-church relationship on the Sundays during

the Reformed Doctrine class-times. The first lecture was planned for September 19.

Denomination Activities

The Hope Heralds men's chorus completed their summer season of singing at West Michigan area rest homes and manors with an area-wide concert at First Jenison CRC on Sunday, September 12, followed by a concert at the Kalamazoo PRC on September 14, and a concert in the Indiana area on September 19.

Seminary Convocation took place on September 15 at the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI. Prof. B. Gritters spoke on the topic, "The Minister As Physician." The semi-

nary was open after the convocation to allow everyone opportunity to see the newly renovated classrooms. There are currently five students attending seminary classes, and three senior students serving internships through December.

Minister Activities

Candidate Dan Holstege has accepted the call to the Holland, MI PRC.

Rev. D. Kuiper declined the call he received from the Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI.

We can also report that Cornerstone PRC in Dyer, IN, has called Rev. C. Haak; and Wingham PRC, in Ontario, CN, has called Rev. A. Lanning. 

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wedding Anniversary

■ We rejoice with our parents, grandparents, and great grandparents,

BERNIE AND RUTH LUBBERS,

who will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on November 2, 2010. Happy anniversary Dad and Mom, Grandpa and Grandma. We thank God for the many years He has given you together. For His abundant grace and mercy through the joys and sorrows you have received from Him. Psalm 103:17: "But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children."

- ❖ Jerry and Bonnie Lubbers
- ❖ Linda Lubbers
- ❖ Bruce and Deb Lubbers
- ❖ Gord and Sue (in glory) Lubbers
- ❖ Ed and Melanie Hekstra
- ❖ Ken and Machele Elzinga
- ❖ Brad (in glory) and Heather Lubbers
- ❖ Doug and Lisa Lubbers

25 grandchildren
40 great-grandchildren

Byron Center, Michigan

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Loveland PRC express their sincere Christian sympathy to Mrs. Eileen Van Baren in the death of her husband,

MR. FRANK VAN BAREN.

We pray that the Lord will comfort her in her loss. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:1, 2).

Rev. Steven Key, President
Robert Brands, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of the Faith PRC express their Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Kurt Kaptein and family, Mr. Jon Hanko, and Mr. and Mrs. David Zandstra in the passing away of their mother and grandmother,

MRS. WINIFRED ZANDSTRA.

May the family find their comfort in the gospel of Christ crucified and raised and confess with the psalmist, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever" (Psalm 23:6).

Rev. Andrew Lanning, President
Richard Flikkema, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of the Faith PRC express their Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Doug Griffioen, Mr. and Mrs. David Griffioen, Mr. Jeff Griffioen, Miss Emily Griffioen, Mr. and Mrs. Steve Griffioen, Mr. Todd Griffioen, Mr. and Mrs. Nate VanMeeteren, Mr. and Mrs. David Zandstra, Mr. and Mrs. Chad Rus, and Mr. and Mrs. Matt denHartog in the passing away of their mother and grandmother,

MRS. ANNE GRIFFIOEN.

May the family find their hope in the promise of the resurrection and confess with the psalmist, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Psalm 17:15).

Rev. Andrew Lanning, President
Richard Flikkema, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Mr. and Mrs. Society of Southwest PRC expresses its sincere Christian sympathy to Bern and Linda Zandstra in the death of Bern's mother,

MRS. WINNIE ZANDSTRA.

Psalm 116:5: "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints."

Beth Westra, Secretary

Wedding Anniversary

■ On October 13, 2010, our parents, **JOHN and JUDY BOUMA**, celebrated their 40th Wedding Anniversary. "I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever; with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations" (Psalm 89:1). We are so thankful for the godly example they have shown us.

- ❖ Brent and Shari Dommissie
- ❖ Brent and Shelli Klamer
- ❖ Sheila Zylstra
- ❖ Jason and Michelle VanderMeulen
- ❖ Amy Bouma
15 grandchildren

Hudsonville, Michigan

Wedding Anniversary

■ On November 7, 2010 our parents, **BRUCE AND DEBRA LUBBERS**, will celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary. We pray that God will continue to bless them in their marriage together. We thank our heavenly Father for the godly example they set for us.

"Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table.... Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel!" (Psalm 128).

- ❖ Jon and Melissa Lubbers
Travis, Braden, Connor, Mekenzie
- ❖ Josh and Sara Lubbers
Kelly, Jacob, Nicholas, Alayna,
Lucas
- ❖ Joe and Stacey Lubbers
Maggie
- ❖ Rick and Carmen Mingerink
Hailey, Jack, Noah
- ❖ Josh and Carrie Meulenberg
Byron Center, Michigan

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and Congregation of South Holland PRC express their Christian sympathy to Mrs. Carroll Holleman and family in the death of Carroll's husband, their father and grandfather,

MR. EGBERT HOLLEMAN,

whom the Lord took to glory on June, 12, 2010. In our sorrow may they and we find comfort and hope in the Word of God. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you.... And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

Rev. N. Langerak, President
Mr. Ed Stouwie, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, Michigan express its deepest sympathies to our brother Steve Flikkema and his family in the loss of his dear mother,

MRS. ELAINE FLIKKEMA.

It is our prayer that Steve and his family may be comforted by these words found in Isaiah 40:31: "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

Rev. Carl Haak, President
Jerry Kuiper, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council of Southwest PRC expresses sympathy to fellow officebearer Elder Bern Zandstra and his family in the death of his mother,

MRS. WINIFRED ZANDSTRA.

May they find their comfort anew in the promise of Jesus in John 11:25: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Rev. Arie denHartog, President
Don Doezema, Clerk

Wedding Anniversary

■ On October 29, 2010 our parents and grandparents,

JIM and BEV LANGERAK,

celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary. We thank our heavenly Father for their many years of godly instruction and love, and for the sacrifices they have made for us through the years. And we pray for the Lord's continued blessing on them in the years to come. "Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts" (Psalm 145:3, 4).

- ❖ Steve and Brenda Langerak
Daniel, Tyler, Brianna, Aaron,
Larissa, Stephanie, Brendan
- ❖ Mark and Liz Langerak
Meghann, Kayley, Trevor
- ❖ Scott and Sharla Moelker
Erica, Branden, Daren, Jorden, Rylee
- ❖ Jamie and Mary Langerak
Anna, Zachary, Jadon
- ❖ Brad and Esther Langerak
Carter, Aubrey, Luke, Ava
- ❖ Kelly Langerak

Walker, Michigan

Reformed Witness Hour

November 2010

Date	Topic	Text
November 7	"Peace Shall Destroy Many"	Daniel 8:23-25
November 14	"The Great Tribulation"	Matthew 24:9, 10, 20, 21
November 21	"Satisfied with Marrow and Fatness"	Psalm 63:3-5
November 28	"Gathered Unto Armageddon"	Revelation 16:10-16