

# *The Standard Bearer*

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*Cover picture of Synod 2010 (l. to r.)*

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# Walking Worthy of Our Calling

*"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."*

*Ephesians 4:1-3*

**P**aul's epistle to the Ephesians is a good reminder to us that doctrine and practice go hand in hand, inseparably connected where the truth is embraced.

What tremendous blessings God has bestowed upon us! What tremendous blessings He has bestowed upon us as churches!

Those blessings began with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ choosing us in Christ even before the foundation of the world, in love predestinating us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, that the glory of His grace might be revealed and that we might be holy and without blame before Him. Carrying out that eternal decree of election, He sent His Son into this world, that we might have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

He has taken us who were dead in sin, totally depraved, and quickened us together with Christ. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

In chapter 3 the apostle had enlarged on this great mystery of Christ, concluding with a prayer for the church that the riches of these glorious truths and the

very life of Christ may be fully manifest in them. A bold prayer indeed, but a prayer offered in the confidence that God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, and that He will reveal His glory in the church "by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end."

Implicit in the *therefore* of Ephesians 4:1 is the connection back to those foundational truths of the previous three chapters. The apostle progresses from the development of doctrine to its practical application, showing us how those glorious truths come to expression in the Christian's life and in the life of the church. Doctrinal development and practical Christian living are inseparable.

As we stand before the convening of Synod 2010, I call your attention to our calling to manifest the unity of the Spirit in the body of Christ. We are to live in the light of the doctrines that we confess. It is incumbent upon us, therefore, to walk worthy of our calling, "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

## The General Principle

The apostle begins by setting forth a general principle of our Christian life. We are those *called of God*. The first thing that we are to remember is the special place God has given us in Christ Jesus. Let us stand in awe before that wonder. How foolish to look upon the place we occupy in Christ's church as if we were entitled, as if we have that place because of how "good" we are or how sound in doctrine. No; it's a wonder. That has been the emphasis from the beginning of Paul's letter.

God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. He has given us a place within His own family, adopting us in Christ as His own children. He has taken us who were dead in sin and has breathed into us new life. He has embraced us with His love. We are God's handiwork, the called ones!

---

*Rev. Key is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Loveland, Colorado.*

*This meditation is the text of the Pre-synodical Sermon delivered by Rev. Key on June 7, 2010, in Southeast PRC.*

The calling is that by which God Himself has made separation, powerfully and effectually giving us life out of death, and taking us into the fellowship of God through Jesus Christ. That calling is described in Acts 16:14 in terms of the Lord opening Lydia's heart, with the consequence being that she attended unto the things that were spoken by Paul and laid hold of them with a believing heart. Without that opening of the heart, the Word has no effect. But when the Lord opens the heart, He also works by the Word, drawing unto Himself.

So the Lord Jesus had also said in John 6:44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." We who are Christians are those who have been called out of the death and darkness of sin, and into the life of Christ and fellowship with God.

The apostle brings forth the idea of the calling, because there is a purpose unto which God has called us, which now becomes the focus.

We are to walk worthy of that calling. That is, our walk is to be fitting with the place that God has given us. Our lives must not be seen as clashing with the gospel. Rather, they are to adorn the gospel in a way that is fitting. Our lives are to make the gospel attractive, to adorn the doctrine of God, to draw attention to it in a positive way.

The word *worthy* speaks of weighing something in a balance, finding something of like weight and like value. In other words, to walk worthy of the calling wherewith you are called is to show a life that is characterized by a balance in doctrine and practice.

I have often described the Christian life as walking a balance beam. The truth of Scripture, the truth to which we hold as Protestant Reformed churches, is that of a very narrow way. There is no expression of the Christian life more balanced than that to which we hold as churches. It is really very beautiful.

But you also understand that we as Christians and as churches are always under attack. Satan comes after us with a multitude of enticements and sometimes with clubs, trying to knock us off balance. And if we fall off that balance beam to one side or the other, we end up in deep mire, a place where we don't want to be!

What the text points out is that we are not to be those who are "tossed to and fro," whose lives are out of balance. There must be stability in our lives, stability that comes from a balance in doctrine and practice. We are to live ev-

ery aspect of our lives in the consciousness of the glorious place God has given us among His redeemed.

But now having introduced the principle, the apostle goes on to show how this walk worthy of our calling must come to expression within the glorious body of Christ.

### The Primary Objective

The primary objective of our Christian life is found in verse 3, namely, "endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."

Central to our walking worthy of our calling is that we endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit.

To *walk* suggests movement, activity, and progress. The Christian life is not one of looking back and reminiscing. We don't crawl into a hole and hide. The Christian "reaches forth unto those things which are before," and "presses toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." There are always fresh perspectives of truth to be discovered and new experiences to be enjoyed as God leads us through our earthly sojourn.

But verse 3 takes that idea of walking and adds *endeavoring*. That is a word that speaks of pushing beyond our comfort zone, exerting ourselves with a single-minded focus and urgency in reaching toward the goal. In this calling wherewith God has called you, there is this to which you must diligently give yourself—and that is to keep the unity of the Spirit.

Now when we are told to keep something, that implies that we already have it. There is an essential unity in the church as a result of the inner working of the Holy Spirit. We have it as churches, as a denomination, because the Spirit of truth has laid the foundation upon which we stand together as one.

But we must endeavor to keep it. And that is *to guard*, *to hold fast*, *to preserve* that unity of the Spirit. After all, the expression of that unity is always fragile. Our adversary the devil is himself endeavoring to tear apart that unity. Schism and discord is the work of the devil, not of the Spirit. And how we have seen Satan's influences in our midst! The tongue flows like the open sewers of India, leaving in its wake not only an unbearable stench, but devastating disease. We have heard of, some have seen, the works of the devil on Facebook, sowing discord in the church.

What endeavoring is necessary on our parts, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace!

In the context Paul emphasized that especially with the new relationship between Jew and Gentile. With all the natural diversity that is seen among men, there is only one thing that works true spiritual unity, and that is the work of the Holy Spirit. What a blessing that we may experience this—also in our relationships with the fellow saints in Northern Ireland, in the Philippines, in Singapore, and elsewhere.

Now we must be careful that this unity is not a vague and hazy concept for us. If we are going to talk about *unity*, and if we are going to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit, this unity for us must be a true, spiritual unity. We find in the context of Ephesians 4:3 that this unity of the Spirit is a unity that results from all that the apostle has said in the first three chapters. We don't start with verse 3. We take into account the *therefore* of verse one, which ties this to the previous chapters. You can't have Christian unity unless it is based upon the great doctrines that the inspired apostle has outlined in the first three chapters.

Unity proceeds from and is based upon the truth of Scripture. The Holy Spirit, who works this unity, is the Spirit of truth. This unity comes to expression, according to the text, *in the bond of peace*. Where this unity is established, there is no schism, no separation from the body; but peace reigns. Peace is the fruit of the love that the Holy Spirit gives us when He takes us into the fellowship of God's covenant life and comes to expression, therefore, in love for His name, for His truth, for His Christ, and therefore love for the body of Christ.

Living in the bond of peace, we make every effort to guard the unity that the Spirit has wrought in our midst. When those who claim the name of Christ are allowed to do as they please, where the truth is watered down, there are the sure signs of coming strife and desolation. For there is no longer the unity of the Spirit.

At the same time, if my way of asserting that which I contend to be right means that I break the peace and bring disruption to the unity of the Spirit in the glorious body of Christ, I am not right. I have either failed to keep

the balance of the truth, or there is something lacking in my character. My way is corrupt.

Understanding those things and the corruption of our own natures, we see that more must be said.

### The Careful Manner


To walk worthy of our calling involves walking in a careful manner, as we read in verse 2: "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love."

The first two words here speak of our own disposition or attitude. We have to examine our own attitudes as we come together as delegates to this year's synod. We are called to walk "with all lowliness and meekness."

Lowliness is an attitude of humility, the opposite of all aggressiveness and selfish ambition that would tear at the unity of the Spirit. Lowliness seeks to listen to others. It is at the root of being "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19). *Meekness* accompanies lowliness. It refers to a certain gentleness.

But the manner of walking worthy involves more than just our own attitude; it also involves our living relationship to others. So we are called to walk worthy of our calling, "with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love." Both of these virtues reflect upon the fact that there are always weaknesses within the body of Christ on this earth. We have to suffer long with the weaknesses of others. And when we may be tempted to react by speaking evil or saying something not conducive to edifying, we must forbear by enduring over against the temptation. Live as those concerned about keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

But notice the apostle's further addition—"with longsuffering, forbearing one another *in love*." If we love one another, we will be longsuffering and forbearing toward each other, because we have each other's interests at heart.

Indeed, in this week we have the welfare of the churches at heart. Let's endeavor, therefore, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. May our obedience be manifest unto all. 

*Unity proceeds  
from and is based upon  
the truth of Scripture.*

# Report on Synod—Significant Decisions

**T**hough the agenda of this year's synod was not as large as last year's synod, due to the issue of controversy dealt with last year, this is not to say that this year's agenda did not have its weighty issues, issues that gave occasion to no little debate on the floor. At synod's conclusion, all agreed there had been no lack of deliberation on various matters ranging from the rewording of the constitution of the Contact Committee adopted last year, to debating whether the time was ripe to divide our denomination into three classes, replacing the present two-classes division of 50+ year standing.

On Monday evening, June 7, the delegates gathered at Southeast PRC for the pre-synodical service. Rev. S. Key, president of Synod 2009, used as his text Ephesians 4:1-3, exhorting the delegates to strive "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," which is possible only when we are governed by a spirit of lowliness and meekness, which leads to "forbearing one another in love." The delegates in their deliberations gave evidence of taking the exhortation to heart.

We note that this 'call to worship' was well attended, the audience nearly filling Southeast's auditorium. The delegates were encouraged by this interest in synod's work.

Though hosted by Southeast, synod convened for its business at First PRC. Southeast's building lacks sufficient rooms for the various com-

mittees to meet and prepare their advice. Eastside Christian School, next door to First Church, served this purpose well.

Synod 2010 dealt with its business under the capable leadership of its president, Rev. R. Van Overloop. Rev. C. Haak was elected vice-president. Revs. Doug Kuiper and G. Eriks served capably as clerks.

## Theological School

Much of synod's first three days was devoted to the oral examinations of Mr. Daniel Holstege (a son of our Southeast congregation) and of Mr. Martin McGeown, a member of our sister congregation in Northern Ireland (NI), Covenant PRC. Synod approved of their examinations with gratitude to God and expressed thankfulness to our professors for this evidence of faithful instruction. Mr. Holstege was declared candidate for the office of the ministry of the Word and Sacraments in the PRC, eligible for call on July 10. Because Mr. McGeown was being examined on behalf of our sister church in NI, synod only declared Mr. McGeown to be *worthy* of candidacy. Mr. McGeown's council in NI will make the final decision concerning his being declared candidate (which we understand at the writing of this report has occurred). Plans are for the brother to be ordained as missionary to the Republic of Ireland, with his

work centering in Limerick, where an energetic Reformed fellowship composed primarily of university students has been meeting the past couple of years.

Monday evening, July 14, a good-sized crowd attended the graduation exercises of the two young men. Prof. Barry Gritters spoke on "Jehovah Against the Shepherds," using Ezekiel 34 as his text. At synod we were 'graced' by the presence of a representative of Covenant PRC of NI, Elder Brian Crossett. At the graduation he spoke a few well-chosen words, conveying greetings from our fellow saints in NI and expressing their heartfelt appreciation for the ongoing help they receive from the PRC, especially in training their seminarians.

That said, we note that another of their young men, Mr. Francesco de Lucia, has been accepted into our seminary and will begin his studies this fall. The brother, converted from Roman Catholicism, comes originally from southern Italy and hopes in time to return to his native country to preach the true apostolic gospel of sovereign free grace and to be used to establish the Reformed faith in Romish Italy.

Joining him in the class of 2014 will be one student from the Protestant Reformed Churches, Mr. Joshua Engelsma, of our Hope, Walker, congregation. The number of vacancies in our churches, togeth-



er with the number of our ministers on the plus-side of 55, underscores our need to encourage more young men to prepare themselves for the gospel ministry.

Two important decisions were made that bode well for our seminary through the next decade. First, synod granted Prof. B. Gritters permanent tenure. The professor has completed seven years of excellent instruction in Practical Theology and Old Testament Studies. He accepted the reappointment.

Second, synod reappointed Prof. Ronald Cammenga, this time to a two-year term. He has completed already five years in the chair of Dogmatics and Old Testament Studies, doing excellent work, and is on schedule to complete his Master's Thesis sometime next year. He also accepted reappointment.

### Contact with Other Churches

The Contact Committee (CC) of our churches remains busy. The CC reported a "significant advance in the relationship with the CERC of Singapore—the CERC Session desires to move toward developing a sister-church relationship with us." Synod approved the CC's work with the CERC in Singapore, authorized it to continue to work towards this goal, and approved the CC's continued efforts to obtain ministers to assist Singapore in its needs for 4-6 week periods.

After lengthy discussion synod authorized the CC to accept an invitation from NAPARC (North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council) to send observers

to their meeting in Pompton Plains, NJ, November 16, 17, 2010. This is not the same as membership in the organization and at this point commits us to nothing long term. NAPARC is a gathering of eleven of the most conservative of the Reformed and Presbyterian denominations of our day, several of which are struggling with the leaven of the Federal Vision error that has infected them to one degree or the other. The value of this contact and opportunity will be reviewed at next year's synod.

Of great interest to the delegates was the report of contact made with us by a group of six Reformed congregations in Namibia, Africa, a group of small congregations who have reached an impasse over fundamental doctrinal issues with their present denomination, the Reformed Church of South Africa (GKSA). Synod approved the sending of a delegation of Profs. Dykstra and Gritters from June 17 to July 8 to discuss with their elders and two ministers what we have in common, where we differ, and the possibility of developing closer ties in the future. Undoubtedly more information about the contact will be passed on through these pages once the professors have returned.

There were two protests in response to changes made in the constitution of the CC by Synod 2009, changes made in wording in the section dealing with Corresponding Relationship. One protest objected to our entering into a formal relationship with the EPC of Australia altogether, due to significant differences between us. The other protest arose out of a desire to return to the

constitution's original wording. Both protests were rejected. However, synod did mandate the CC to suggest changes to clarify certain points of its constitution and report them to Synod 2011.

### Overture re Three Classes

An issue of significance for all of our churches is an overture from our Faith Council that the time has come to divide our churches into three classes. Classis East has already dealt with the overture and, in a close vote, rejected it. In simple terms, the two perspectives can be summarized as "If it isn't broke, why try to fix it?" The two classes system has for over 50 years served us well. To which the response is, "But even things not broke, if out of date, can be improved." The argument is that three classes will serve our churches better, especially at the synodical level, where delegates from two classes would be able to render advice on the appeals that come from the third classis.

However, as far as this writer is concerned, the first question that needs to be asked is not, to what extent will such a change benefit *synod*, but will such a division, and the resulting shrinking of the sizes of our classes, be of benefit to the *classes*, and therefore to the churches they represent. It is well to keep in mind that it is at the classical level that controversies and serious issues that divide congregations first come for adjudication, which weighty decisions in past decades have met with blessed results. That said, synod, wisely to our mind, did not decide on the issue at this session

but adopted a motion to "...forward Faith's overture to Classis West for its deliberation and ask that Classis West forward its judgment to Synod 2011. Ground: Before synod makes a decision of this magnitude, Classis West should have opportunity to speak to the overture."

### Other Protests

Six other protests were also treated. Two were against the decision of Synod 2009 in its application of Article 21 to the calling of members to send their children to our good Christian schools. Both protestants argued that their particular concerns were not answered. Their protests were rejected.

Two appellants protested against the suspension and deposition of one from office. With sorrow synod rejected the protests, concurring with the verdict of the officebearer's consistory and decision of Classis West.

There were two protests arising out of a recent use of Article 12 and a consistory being instructed to work with its pastor to convince him of the need to resign from the ministry and seek a secular vocation. The protest against the application of Article 12 to that particular case

was upheld. The protest against a consistory ever taking the initiative in bringing Article 12 to a minister's attention for his serious consideration was rejected.

### Varia

Good reports from the various mission fields, foreign and domestic, were received with thanksgiving and approved. With gratitude synod received the report of the addition of a new sister congregation, Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD. Rev. A. Brummel, who had been serving as missionary there, accepted their call to be their pastor. Edgerton was thanked for its faithful labors as supervising consistory and church. Synod decided not to call at this time a home missionary to the West to replace Rev. T. Miersma, now pastor in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada.

Synod 2010 also had a pastoral side. Synod expressed its heartfelt Christian sympathy to Prof. Dykstra, his wife, and family in the death of a grandchild dying just a week or two short of full term. Prof. Dykstra was absent for the majority of synod tending to the funeral of his grandchild in Hull, Iowa.


Expressions of prayerful concerns were also expressed to Rev. J.

Slopsema, who had to step aside as delegate due to a recurrence of heart arrhythmia. (Interestingly, the young minister who replaced him, Rev. A. Lanning, recently had Rev. Slopsema as his mentor during his internship. So, perhaps only a little was lost in the substitution.)

As well, expressions of prayerful concerns were sent to Pastor Lau, of the Covenant ERC of Singapore, who continues slowly to weaken following his liver-lung transplant of a couple of years past. A gracious letter of response speaking of his gratitude to God for the Lord's use of the PRC in Singapore and his prayers for a fruitful outcome to our working towards full sister-church relationship with his beloved congregation was received from our esteemed brother.

The synodical assessment per family for 2011 was set at \$940, a \$17-increase over last year. We now number 1,912 families (23 more than last year).

Synod accepted the invitation of Grandville PRC to host Synod 2011.

That the Lord bless the decisions of Synod 2010 to foster unity, peace, and the spread of the gospel is our prayer. 

## LETTERS

### Bible/science clash?

In the *Standard Bearer*, volume 86, pages 272, 320, 324, the clash between science and the biblical accounts is evident. Being a person for whom science was easier to grasp than history and politics, I like to defend the integrity of scientists. Take the laws of kinematics and gravitational pull for example, the understanding of which has

enabled humanity to visit the moon. Take the laws of electronics and magnetism, the understanding of which has provided communication media and data processing. Nobody will deny the law of mathematics that one plus two equals three.

A clash between science and the biblical presentation of the shape of the earth occurred in the time of Coper-



nicus, Galileo, and Kepler. Nobody thinks anymore that the earth is a flat surface with four corners, but a sphere instead.

What to think of this clash? What must a Christian, specifically a Christian scientist, think of this clash? In my university years there was a course devoted to this question.

In the course of life I have come to see that there are two Bible texts that are of fundamental importance. One is in Romans 8: "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is *seen* is not hope: for what a man *seeth*, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we *see not*, then do we with patience wait for it." The other is in Hebrews 11: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are *seen* were not made of things which do *appear*."

Now, without any controversy, science is based on *observation*. Thus there are two kinds of reality. The one kind of reality is based on what we as finite human beings can see or observe, and is scientific; and the other kind of reality is beyond the scope of science, and includes hope, faith, immortality, etc.

Very well known is the astronaut who was in awe of God's creation and read Psalm 8, and the cosmonaut who was disappointed not to have encountered God in space. Only one knew of a reality beyond what he observed, beyond science.

In passing, I like to mention something that should befuddle any human being. We live in a universe that is infinite. Even if scientists would be correct that the universe would be limited, then one would immediately ask what is beyond the boundaries. For the human understanding, it is impossible to grasp this infinity that yet is incontestable, but created by God.

In my opinion the common mistake is to insist that science has to agree with biblical revelation. Thus the biblical revelation is forced upon science, or in unbelief the biblical account is adjusted to suit the scientific model. But as the quoted Scripture passages indicate, by doing this, we force two realities upon each other, namely the scientific reality that is based on finite human understanding and observation, and the reality that is beyond science.

And the plain truth is that these two kinds of realities often do not agree. Let me mention a few instances. The

shape of the earth, mentioned above, is one. Another one is that three nights and three days comprise a time span of 72 hours mathematically; but likely Jesus was in the grave for 60 hours, which would translate into three nights and two days. Scientifically it is impossible to conceive how Jonah survived this time span within the whale without oxygen, submersed in digestive fluids. Scientific questions would arise how Noah could be with all of the world's species in a single boat, with one small, closed window at the top, having food supply and waste disposal facilities for a whole year. And yes, how can it be that there is night and day, evening and morning, darkness and light since the first day of creation, whereas scientifically this is dependent on the orbital position of the light-giving sun that was not created until the fourth day?

Therefore it is best, not to discredit science, but to acknowledge that science is limited to what finite human beings can see and observe. This implies that a scientist who makes statements of a religious or irreligious nature, such as Darwin did, is exceeding the boundaries of his scholarship.

Only in faith can we accept that the earth has four corners; that Jesus was in the grave for three days and three nights; that God, who created the infinite universe, can sustain Jonah in a whale, can sustain the ark for a year, can change the laws of gravitational pull to make the sun stand still at will, can change the speed of light at will, can make one plus two to equal one, and can change a mortal, corruptible being, sown as a seed, into immortality and incorruption. And, yes, this almighty God created in six days, but does this have to be scientifically proven? Were these six days scientific days?

I find it remarkable that the fourth, fifth, and sixth day provide populations for what was created three days earlier. The sun, moon, stars of the fourth day populate the entity of light of the first day. The fowl and fish of the fifth day populate the firmament and waters of the second day. The land animals and insects of the sixth day populate the dry land of the third day. And man of the sixth day may eat of the vegetation of the third day. Thus there is definitely a structure in the Genesis account, but it is not the structure of science.

Jan Reckman  
Aylmer, Ontario

## Response:

Thank you for reading the *Standard Bearer* and for your letter regarding the important issue of the relationship between Scripture and science.

First, I wish to point out that none of the three articles you refer to attack the integrity of science as a field of study. Science is indeed a legitimate and often very exciting field of study and discovery, as you suggest. Therefore science is taught in our Christian schools, and children of the covenant are heartily encouraged to pursue various callings in the scientific realm if they display an aptitude for that field of study. I believe that you and I would be in agreement in our positive assessment of science.

The integrity of scientists, however, is another matter. The integrity of a scientist cannot be judged on the basis of brilliance displayed in his particular field. Albert Einstein was no doubt a brilliant physicist, evident in his theory of relativity. There is also no doubt about his lack of integrity, or better, his depravity, evident in his rejection of Scripture as the standard of truth. Scientists are, like everyone else, by nature totally depraved and lack integrity. The only scientists who have integrity are those who have been washed from their sins by the blood of Christ and have been regenerated by His Spirit. Through the life of Christ working in them, regenerated scientists display their integrity by submitting to the Word of God as the revelation of infallible truth, even if in their scientific endeavors they find evidence that seems to contradict the truth of Scripture.

This leads me to your assertion that there are two realities: one reality that unbelieving scientists are able to perceive, and another reality they are unable to perceive. There is actually only one reality—the reality of Jehovah, the living God, who created and who sustains the heavens and the earth. This reality is known to all men. It is not true that Darwin and other unregenerated scientists (including the one astronaut to whom you refer) are simply ignorant of the reality of God's existence. They know God exists (Rom. 1:20). Their denial of God and of the truth of Scripture is not rooted in ignorance but in stubborn, wicked unbelief. Unless unbelieving scientists are regenerated and given faith they will never understand the reality of all things as it is revealed in Scripture.

Faith is necessary for understanding the relationship between Scripture and science. Those who have faith see

no “clash” between the two. The Bible alone is the infallible Word of God, and the Bible alone is the standard for faith and life. Therefore, in answer to one of your questions, no, the Bible does not need to be substantiated by science. What the Bible says must be accepted as the truth. By faith believers accept, as you point out, all the miracles of Scripture, including the creation of the world in six 24-hour days on the basis of Genesis 1, without the least bit of concern that such faith cannot be substantiated by science and will even come under the attack of unbelieving scientists. Therein lies the age-old clash, not between the Bible and science, but between faith and unbelief.

Sincerely in Christ,  
Rev. Clayton Spronk

## SEMINARY GRADUATES

Martyn McGeown, Daniel Holstege



Dan with fiancée Leah Regnerus



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Rev. Eriks, and Rev. Haak*





SYNOD

# 2010



Martyn McGeown

Dan Holstege



SIANS, 4

h- I THEREFORE, the prisoner  
of the Lord, beseech you  
that ye walk worthy of the  
vocation wherewith ye are  
called,  
2 With all lowliness and  
a meekness, with longsuffering  
gift forbearing one another  
in love;  
3 Endeavouring to keep  
unity of the Spirit in the bo  
less of peace.  
4 There is one body, and  
is Spirit even as ye are call





# The Anti-Hierarchical Article

“No church shall in any way lord it over other churches, no minister over other ministers, no elder or deacon over other elders or deacons.”

Church Order, Article 84.

## Introduction

The “Anti-Hierarchical Article,” as it has often been called, has a long and honorable history in the Dutch Reformed churches. It was the very first article of the Church Order drafted by the very first regular synod of these churches, the Synod of Emden, 1571. For logical reasons, it was later moved to the section of the Church Order dealing with discipline. And the article does indeed serve as a fitting conclusion to the whole of the Church Order. Nevertheless, if the Protestant Reformed Churches were ever of a mind to revise the Church Order, serious consideration ought to be given to reinstating this article to its original position at the head of the entire Church Order. So fundamental is this article, so dear to Reformed officebearers and Reformed churches is the principle behind this article, so hard-fought was the battle to overthrow the tyranny repudiated by this article, that it deserves to be considered the crown of the Church Order.

The principle underlying Article 84 also stands as the basis of Article 17. In the midst of its treatment of the special offices in the church, Article 17 affirms equality among the officebearers:

Among the ministers of the Word equality shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their office, and also in other matters as far as possible, according to the judgment of the consistory and, if necessary, of the classis; which equality shall also be maintained in the case of the elders and the deacons.

Article 84, however, goes beyond Article 17. Whereas

Article 17 is primarily positive, Article 84 is negative. Article 17 mandates that there shall be equality among officebearers. Article 84 warns against the dread evil of hierarchy and prohibits any “lording it over.” Whereas Article 17 concerns officebearers, Article 84 goes beyond officebearers and includes churches.

Article 84 reflects the Reformation’s repudiation of the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church. The Reformation threw off the “lording it over” of one church—the Church of Rome. And the Reformation threw off the “lording it over” of one officebearer—the bishop of Rome, the pope. The Reformers had experienced firsthand the horror of hierarchy. They had witnessed a hierarchy that protected heretics and persecuted to the death faithful officebearers. They had witnessed a hierarchy that protected immoral and violent clergymen, clergymen who should have been stripped of their offices, just as this same hierarchy countenances the most immoral conduct of its clergy today, including the gross evils of pedophilia and homosexuality. They had witnessed a hierarchy that promoted unquestioning allegiance of the members of the church, and burned those who dared to raise voices of protest. They had seen the church shrivel and nearly die under the stranglehold of wicked, self-seeking clerics. And they would have none of it.

The church lives under the one and only universal Bishop and Head of the church, Jesus Christ. Under Him no congregation is of greater importance than any other congregation. Under His rule, no officebearer is of any higher authority than any other officebearer.

Article 84 is not merely the trumpet blast of the church against hierarchy. It is the trumpet blast of the church against Antichrist. Hierarchy in the church serves Antichrist. It served the spirit of Antichrist in the days

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of the Reformation. And in the future, hierarchy will serve *the* Antichrist. There is a day coming when all the churches and all officebearers will relinquish their authority to one who will rule over them all. The modern ecumenical movement aims at this—all the churches and all religions united under one religious head. As in the days leading up to the Reformation, so in these coming days, the churches and religious leaders will willingly give up their authority to this dominant figure. His religious predominance will belong to the delusion perpetrated by the Antichrist. And as in the days prior to the Reformation, this delusion will stand in the service of the lie.

Let the churches be warned! Let the Reformed and Presbyterian churches be warned! Let the Protestant Reformed Churches be warned! Let us value the anti-hierarchical article! And let us exert ourselves to see to it that hierarchy does not creep into the church of Christ.

### Historical Background

Already the Convent of Wezel, 1568, indicated its sensitivity to the threat of hierarchy in the church. Although not a synod in the true sense of the word, this gathering of Reformed officebearers met in Wezel, Germany because of the threat of persecution that still existed in the Lowlands. There are several warnings against hierarchy sprinkled throughout the articles adopted by this convention. Chapter 4, Article 7 warns that elders must not “lay claim to any authority nor to any liberty to lord it over” other elders or ministers, and that they must be on their guard “that they not introduce any laws according to their own whims....” In that same chapter, Article 9, the elders are admonished that “they ought to be fully aware of the fact that it in no way pertains to their office to establish [arbitrary] rules or to exercise [arbitrary] authority, be it over the minister of the Word and their fellow officebearers, or over the church....” In Chapter 5, Article 19 the Convent decided: “We are however of the opinion that no authority...ought to be granted to the classis assembly over any church or its ministers unless this church agrees with this of its own accord lest the church be robbed against its will of its rights and authority.” In Chapter 8, Article 20 it was decided that meetings of the classes should “not always be held in one and the same place, but rather as often as possible in different places, first of all to prevent domination of one church over another....”

It was the Synod of Emden, 1571, the synod of “The Netherlands Churches that are Under the Cross,” that made the anti-hierarchical article the very first article of its Church Order.

No church shall lord it over another church, no minister of the Word, no elder or deacon shall lord it over another, but each one shall guard himself against all suspicion and enticement to lord it over [others].

It was the Synod of Dordt, 1578, of which synod the well-known Peter Datheen was the president, that placed the anti-hierarchical article at the end of the Church Order. The very last article of its Church Order, Chapter 6, Article 11, was:

No church shall in any way lord it over or have the upper hand over other churches, no minister over other ministers, no elder or deacon over other elders or deacons, but rather each one shall be on one’s guard against all cause and suspicion of this, although from duty of love one church not only may but also should admonish another, one minister another, etc.

The Synod of Dordt, 1581, abbreviated the anti-hierarchical article somewhat and placed it next-to-last in its Church Order.

No church shall in any way lord it over other churches, no minister over other ministers, no elder nor deacon over other elders and deacons.

The article passed unchanged into the Church Order adopted by the Synod of Middelburg, 1581. Related to the article, a question was put to the synod: “Whether it would be good...to appoint Inspectors or Superintendents” into the churches of the classes. The answer of the synod was a resounding “No.” “It is unnecessary and dangerous.” Clearly the synod viewed the appointment of classical inspectors or superintendents to be a definite step in the direction of hierarchy. From the Synod of Middelburg, the anti-hierarchical article entered unchanged into the Church Order adopted by the great Synod of Dordt, 1618-19, and from Dordt into our present Church Order.

## Parity of Officebearers

Behind the sharp warning of Article 84 is the fundamental biblical principle of the parity, that is, equality of officebearers. Within a congregation, the officebearers are of equal authority. No minister has greater authority than any other minister, no elder has greater authority than any other elder, and no deacon has greater authority than any other deacon. What applies in the congregation applies also within the classis and the denomination.

The parity of officebearers is reflected in Reformed (Presbyterian) church government. At the local level, each officebearer has one vote in the consistory, council, and deacons meetings. At the classis, each consistory's delegates have equally one vote. And at the meeting of the annual synod, each classical delegate casts one vote.

What we must be convinced of is that the great evil against which Article 84 warns is an ever-present evil threatening the church of Christ in the world. What we must be convinced of is that our own churches must be vigilant against the evil of hierarchy. For the evil of hierarchy is a sin that has its root in the human heart—*our* hearts. The root of hierarchy is the pride that lives in the depraved nature of us all and in the depraved nature of every officebearer. Pride always seeks itself. Pride always exalts itself at the expense of the other. Pride always seeks to control, to manipulate, and to dominate. That simply is the nature of the savage beast that lives within every human heart. We seek influence. We seek power. We seek recognition from others. We seek to be “the voice” at the church assemblies to which all others listen. We are all by nature Diotrefes, “who loveth to have the preeminence” (III John 9).

The evil that threatens officebearers also threatens congregations. It is a danger that the larger congregations in the denomination regard the smaller congregations as inferior. It is a danger that the older, long established congregations regard the younger, more recently established congregations, as not having yet arrived. It is a danger that a congregation supposes that orthodox and

the Reformed tradition end with them, and to regard the other congregations of the denomination with suspicion. And ministers and officebearers may feed this spirit of superiority.

Away with this spirit of pride in officebearers! Away with this spirit of pride in congregations! Away with this spirit in the assemblies!

The remedy to hierarchy is humility! The humility that recognizes that what we are and what we have, we are and have by grace. The humility that seeks the other before self. The humility that aims at serving, not at being served. The humility that listens to the other and supposes that the other may have something to say from which I can learn. The humility that seeks not the exaltation of self, but the glory of God. Humility—that

is the safeguard to hierarchy in the church. God grant us, officebearers, congregations, and denomination, that humility.

Although Article 84 is a sharp warning against hierarchy, the article must not be misconstrued. The article may not be appealed to in support of independencism. The Church Order is not taking back in Article 84 what it has previously said about the lawful authority of the broader assemblies. Not at all. The very language of the article makes this

plain. For the article warns against “lording it over,” that is, tyranny, not the lawful but the unlawful exercise of authority. Neither does the article repudiate the lawful authority of the classis over the consistory, and the synod over the classis. This lawful authority has been carefully defined and circumscribed by the Church Order, especially in Articles 31 and 36. Those articles stand in all their force. What Article 84 rejects is the unlawful “lording it over” of one officebearer over his fellow officebearers and of one church over other churches. That is the detestable sin of hierarchy. And this is the sin, in its spirit and in its manifestations, of which Reformed churches and Reformed officebearers are sworn foes. That is Article 84, the anti-hierarchical article of the Church Order. ∞

*The root of hierarchy  
is the pride that lives  
in the depraved nature  
of us all and in the  
depraved nature  
of every officebearer.*

# Bible Study...Together

**Y**oung people and young adults in our Protestant Reformed Churches, you have a tremendous gift! That gift is the ability to discuss the Scriptures intelligently and rationally with your fellow young people, your parents, and others in the church of Jesus Christ.

Do not take that gift for granted, but give thanks to God for it.



To help appreciate this gift, you might consider a couple of miserable alternatives. For example, you could be a true believer in a false, apostate church. Somehow, in that case, God was pleased to make you one of His children, giving you a lively interest in and desire to know Him as He has revealed Himself in His holy Word. You open up that Word. You read it, you study it, you meditate upon it. Your language reflects that knowledge. You expect others around you, even in your own church, to be excited about the truth. But when you talk to them, you are met with the opposite reaction. Some have no interest at all. They react as if you are speaking in another language to them. They shrug their shoulders. Others might show interest for a while, but you soon realize they have no idea what you are saying. They are interested only in your zeal and delight, wanting to feel the same way that you feel. But from still others you receive a strong negative reaction: contempt and ill will! You feel their scorn and ridicule. Born again? Know-it-all! Fundamentalist!

Another alternative to your blessed place in your church among your fellow-believers is to be totally alone in your love for God's Word. You have that Word, you have plenty of materials to read and study, and your fellowship with the Lord is strong. But you have not a single soul with whom you might share your love for God's Word. No one with whom you can speak. No one to whom you can listen.

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There may be some readers of this periodical who are in such a state. They feel lonely, and they may even weep when they read the above. They will also tell you what a gift the Lord has given you. Listen to them! Treasure that gift, and treasure it by *using* it.



You have Bible studies in your church. Such study begins in Young People's Society, which is followed by a Young Adults group of some kind. Then there are the Bible study societies for men, for women, for couples of the church, and for the older saints. It is a beautiful thing to see flourishing Bible studies in our churches. They signify spiritual growth and vitality in our churches. On the other hand, a lack of participation in Bible studies shows a grave weakness in churches and among the members. It can betray a kind of legalism: meeting only what is a standard requirement—church attendance. As a child of God you naturally desire growth in the knowledge of your heavenly Father shown in His Word. In love you will seize opportunities to grow in that knowledge. You will also seize opportunities to be helped in that growth by your fellow saints. And you will seize any opportunity to help your fellow saints in their growth.

Similarly, think about *what kind* of Bible study will help you grow in this knowledge of God. Not the kind of Bible study in which the members sit in the room or around the table in stony silence, when questions hang in the air for seconds that seem to stretch out into minutes, or when members' names are called and the response is a downward look or a shrug of the shoulders or an "I dunno." Nor is Bible study helpful when the leader feels obligated to fill the silence with his own voice. That is a Bible *lecture*, not a Bible *study*. When the members of the society can carry on a discussion, a lively, thought-provoking discussion, there is a proper Bible study. Where discussion leads to members' new appreciation for Bible passages, there is a proper Bible study. Where there is growth in the faith and in the living knowledge of God's Word, there is a proper Bible study.





Who is responsible for this proper Bible study? It is not the leader's responsibility first of all. Nor is it second, or third. In first and second and third place that responsibility is *yours*. Where young men and women come to Bible study prepared, motivated, and eager to discuss, good results are all but guaranteed.

First, you must be mentally and intellectually prepared for discussion. There are two parts to preparation. The first part is easy to miss because many overlook it. The first part of any good preparation is to ask the right questions of any given passage. Do not suppose the passage is going to say what you think it is going to say. You can easily jump to an erroneous conclusion. Or your pride might keep you from understanding the passage in such a way that would bring you to your knees. Additionally, a passage might tell you of your calling, the responsibilities of which you want to avoid. A passage might confront you with a sin that you wish to harbor in your life or heart. You can ask of a passage: how does the Word of God confront me here? What does the Spirit tell me in this passage? Required here is a prayerful, submissive approach to the Word.

Preparation also involves concentrated study. Read the passage, taking note of its context, even the context of the book of the Bible in which the passage is found. Looking at the passage itself, think about the relationships among the words and phrases. What truths do they represent? How do they bring these truths to bear on each other? What is described? How is it described? What truth or what doctrine does the passage address? What light does it bring to this truth or doctrine, or what facet of this truth does the passage touch?

Make sure that your study of God's Word includes two characteristic attitudes about each passage you study. First, ensure that you are in submissive awe and wonder toward it. Your study ought to give you a deeper respect for the Word. You can ask yourself, what wonder of God's glory or of salvation is brought out by this passage? Or: how does this passage bring glory to God's holy name? The second characteristic attitude ought to be deeper devotion and love for the Word of God that you have studied. If you have truly learned something new about your heavenly Father, you will certainly have a greater delight in the Word. Having these attitudes will strengthen your ability to participate in Bible studies.



Next is your actual, live participation in Bible study. Participation requires two things: good listening and good speaking. Of the two, good listening is more important. Good listening will make you a good speaker. If you do not listen, you will not be able to speak properly. If you listen carefully to the questions that are asked, and to the answers of others, you will promote good understanding and knowledge. Ask yourself whether you really understand what another is saying? The alternative is wholly unproductive in Bible study: people only talk past or over each other. Misunderstandings due to poor listening easily squelch participation and growth. Growth in knowledge of God and His Word is threatened.

Important also is how you give answers to questions. Speak clearly, loudly enough to be heard by the other participants. Speak succinctly and avoid needless repetition. For every statement that you make, you should add a reason or ground for that statement. Make sure your "what" is followed by "because" or "how." Demonstrate what you are saying by an appeal to the context, the language, or other Scriptures.

As you answer, show that you are open to correction, especially from the leader of the study. Do not be demeaning or belittling in your comments. Instead be respectful of others' comments—even if you believe them to be wrong. Humility and meekness in your speech will strengthen good, solid discussion. Also, expect a certain give-and-take in a discussion. Be prepared to concede your point. Certainly you need to be ready to be corrected by the Word! You must also be able to be corrected by others when they talk about the Word and what it means.


In participation, be ready not only to give answers, but also to ask questions. Ask good questions and you can expect good, helpful answers. Those answers will be helpful to you and to the other participants. By asking good questions you will also help your fellows to think about a passage more thoroughly and gain a better understanding of Scripture.

In your discussion avoid certain pitfalls in the comments you make. There are certain phrases that you should work to avoid saying. Do not say, "My Bible says..." when you are referring to marginal notes in

your Bible. Make it clear that you are not quoting Scripture itself. Another pitfall to avoid is saying something like, “I just feel that....” You may have even strong feelings about something, but that kind of speech is not helpful for discussion. Your fellows will not want to argue about your feelings, lest they hurt them. That kind of language also tends to suppress debate, as it is difficult to debate feelings. It is better to say, “I think that....” Another phrase that ought to be avoided is, “What is this passage saying to you?” That phrase has the same tendency to stifle discussion. It implies that the passage can be saying something different to you than it does to me. The goal should be to reach a common understanding of the passage.

Avoiding these pitfalls will help keep your attention on what you are studying, the Word of God. Avoiding them will also keep your discussion on the right track: leading to the truth of God’s Word and seeing yourself in the light of that Word.



With these points in mind, expect to receive much from each other in your Bible studies. Expect also to give much to each other. Look for the strengthening of your faith and the faith of your fellow saints. Then you will have every reason to be grateful to God for this blessed gift: Bible study! 

## The Dispensational View of the Rapture (3)

# Deliverance out of “the Hour of Temptation”

**T**he dispensational view of a pretribulation rapture is rooted in the erroneous idea that God has two separate peoples (Israel and the church), and that His second people (the church) must get out of the way before God will return to dealing with His first people (Israel). In fact, Dispensationalists will admit that if God really does have only one people, then there is no way to defend the pretribulation-rapture position.

They say this because they know that Scripture states explicitly that there is an elect people who will be gathered *after* the tribulation (Matt. 24:29–31):

*Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her*

*light.... And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

It is undeniable that this passage speaks of an elect people who are going to go through the coming tribulation, and who will be gathered by the angels *after* that tribulation is over. But if there is *only one* elect people, then it must be the church that is referred to here as going through that tribulation. Dispensationalists try to get around this passage by arguing that there are two different peoples of God, and that it is Israel—not the church—that is the elect people referred to in Matthew 24.

This two-peoples-of-God idea is one of the errors that blinds many people when it comes to the interpretation of prophecy. Those who hold to this error assume that passages which speak of salvation for *Israel* (or for *Jacob*, or for *Jerusalem*, etc.), must not be referring to the church. Such passages become clear, however, when we adopt the biblical principle that God’s promises are

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always to Christ (Gal. 3:16), and thus to all those who have been chosen to be in Christ (Gal. 3:29).

Having considered this already, let us move on to consider some of the other common arguments used by Dispensationalists to support a pretribulation rapture.

### Deliverance out of “the hour of temptation”

A proof text commonly cited by Dispensationalists is one that speaks of God’s church being delivered from the hour of temptation:

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from *the hour of temptation*, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth (Rev. 3:10).

The “hour of temptation,” say the Dispensationalists, refers to the coming Great Tribulation, and the promise that believers will be kept from this hour is proof, they say, that the church will not have to go through this coming time of tribulation.

The text speaks literally of being delivered “out of” the hour of temptation. The preposition translated “from” literally means “out of.” So the idea is that, although God’s people are indeed going to enter into this hour of temptation, God will certainly preserve them while they are in it, and will eventually bring them out of it. The trial will be used by God to purify the church, and she will emerge purified after the trial is over.

There are many other passages that speak of God’s people being delivered “out of” times of persecution:

Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him *out of* them all (Ps. 34:19).

Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but *out of* them all the Lord delivered me (II Tim. 3:11).

Looking at these—and many other similar passages that could be quoted—it is easy to see that Scripture does not teach that we will be kept from persecution. Rather, the Bible teaches that we certainly will have to go through many times of trials and persecutions, but that our God will deliver us “out of” them all.

Even the Dispensationalists interpret promises about

being delivered “out of” a time of persecution in this way, when it serves their purpose. Consider the following verse that we looked at in a previous article:

Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it (Jer. 30:7).

Dispensationalists say that this verse speaks of a future time of tribulation that Israel will have to go through, and that then God will deliver them “out of” it. Thus they interpret this passage in a way that is not consistent with the way they interpret Revelation 3:10.

Dispensationalists are inconsistent when they say that Jeremiah 30:7 refers to a time of trouble that Israel *will* have to go through, and that Revelation 3:10 speaks of an hour of temptation that the church *will not* have to go through. Being delivered out of a “time of trouble” (Jer. 30:7) and out of an “hour of temptation” (Rev. 3:10) are obviously quite similar. Yet Dispensationalists interpret the first passage to mean one thing and the second passage to mean exactly the opposite.

### Comparing promises to two churches that existed at the same time

Another way to see clearly the correct interpretation of the phrase “keep thee out of the hour of temptation” is to consider side-by-side what our Lord said to the church in Philadelphia and what He said to the church in Smyrna. The first passage below—which is the one we have been considering—was written to the church in Philadelphia. The second passage was written to the church in Smyrna. Of the seven churches mentioned in the first three chapters of the book of Revelation, these two churches were the most faithful. They were found on earth at the same time, and the words Christ spoke to them were quite similar:

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown (Rev. 3:10–11).

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou



faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

The church at Smyrna is told that she is going to go through a time of great tribulation, even unto physical death. Yet God promises to bring the church through this time of trial, so that she will emerge victorious. The time of the trial will be limited and short (symbolized by ten days), and the church will receive the glorious crown of life that Christ has purchased for her.

If this is what Christ promised to one faithful church (the church at Smyrna), does it make any sense to say that He would promise something very different to another faithful church (the church at Philadelphia)? These two churches existed at the same time, and to both of them Christ speaks of a time of great tribulation that is coming soon. Why would He tell the church at Smyrna that she definitely *is* going to go through that tribulation, and then tell the church at Philadelphia that she *is not* going to have to go through it?

Rather, we must see that these two promises are parallel to one another, and that we should consider them together. After all, God's promises are to the entire church of Christ. So the promise to the saints in Smyrna is also a promise to the saints in Philadelphia, and vice versa.

Considering them together, we see that both promises speak of God's people going through a brief time of great tribulation, and of God delivering His faithful saints out of it. And both churches are encouraged by a reference to the glorious crown of life that God's people presently have and that they one day will fully receive as a gracious reward.

### **A deliverance promised to saints that have long ago entered glory**

It is important to remember that this promise was given originally to saints who lived some two thousand years ago. God said to them personally:

Because *thou* hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep *thee* from the hour of temptation... (Rev. 3:10a).

God here is promising the members of the church in Philadelphia that they personally are going to be delivered out of a time of temptation. Yet Dispensationalists claim that this verse refers to a rapture that would not take place

until long after the saints in Philadelphia had entered heavenly glory. That would mean that the deliverance promised here really was not for the saints at Philadelphia at all. The verse is being explained as though it read: "Because *thou* hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep *others* from the hour of temptation."


We also have here an example of how Dispensationalists take a prophecy and make it out to be a mere prediction about some future event. But a prophecy—such as the one in Revelation 3:10—is more than this. God here is making a promise not only about the distant future, but also about the immediate present. In other words, this prophecy—like all prophecies—includes a promise to the specific people that originally received the revelation.

God gave His promise to the saints in Philadelphia, and that promise He fulfilled. These saints, along with the saints in Smyrna, went through an hour of great persecution. They were not "raptured" before that persecution began. They went through that hour and suffered for a short period, while their enemies tempted them to deny the truth. But God promised to deliver them out of that time of persecution. And out of it He did deliver them.

### **A promise concerning deliverance today and in the future**

The deliverance promised to the church in Philadelphia is promised to us still today. Many will be our afflictions and persecutions, yet out of them all our Lord will deliver us. In fact, it will be through such tribulations that we will be led by the Spirit to enter more consciously and willingly into the kingdom of our God (Acts 14:22).

This will be true also in the days of the Great Tribulation that is still to come. The time of persecution that the saints in Philadelphia went through pointed forward to a future tribulation that will be greater than all before it. Yet out of this tribulation also God's people will be delivered. Great will be the tribulation; but great also will be the grace that God's people will receive.

Knowing this we go forward without fear. God is faithful. Out of the hour of temptation He will deliver us. That we must never doubt. He has always delivered His people in the past. He will certainly continue to do so in the days ahead. 

May 12, 2010

Hope Protestant Reformed Church

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, May 12, 2010 at the Hope PRC in Walker, MI. All the churches were represented by two delegates. Rev. A. Sprinisma was the chairman for this session.

Two agenda items occupied the time of this classis: 1) The report of the Study Committee to advise classis on what procedure to follow when a minister resigns from the Protestant Reformed denomination, and 2) The report of the Classical Committee regarding their inquiry into whether Grace PRC gave proper admonition to Rev. M. Dick upon his leaving.

The study committee to bring advice regarding resignations advised that classis not adopt a written procedure to follow when a PR minister leaves our denomination for another. Because circumstances vary in every case, the committee advised that consistories should be allowed

discretion in dealing with these circumstances as they arise. Classis adopted this advice.

The Classical Committee advised classis to declare that Grace PRC's consistory failed to admonish Rev. Dick regarding his responsibility to uphold the vows he made as a member and minister of the PRC and regarding the spiritual dangers to him and his family by the doctrinal and practical errors officially held by the denomination to which he transferred. Classis did not adopt this advice.

Classis was in closed session to consider a discipline case.

Classis granted classical appointments to Cornerstone, Holland, Kalamazoo, and Trinity. A request was made to Classis West for help to supply the pulpit of Cornerstone.

The expenses of classis amounted to \$493.50. Classis will meet next on September 8, 2010 at the Byron Center PRC.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk

## NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

## MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER

**Evangelism Activities**

The Evangelism Committee of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC encouraged their congregation to get involved by asking friends, family, co-workers, or any others God had placed in their paths, to a Spring Lecture on Friday, May 21, at their church. The topic was "Beyond a Shadow of a Doubt," and the speaker was Prof. R. Dykstra. He spoke on the assurance of how God takes care of His people with everyday matters.

Rev. R. Kleyn, pastor of the Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA, spoke at a lecture on May 21 sponsored by their Evangelism Committee. Rev. Kleyn spoke on the subject, "What Is a Reformed Church?"

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

The Evangelism Committee of the Loveland, CO PRC recently informed their congregation of their brand-new web site located at [www.lovelandprc.org](http://www.lovelandprc.org). Besides a new look and easy-to-use links, the site also has an archive of Loveland's sermons that you can listen to or download at your convenience.

The Evangelism Committee of the Hudsonville, MI PRC has once again made available a rack of pamphlets that are perfect for introducing the Christian and Reformed faith in the workplace. This workplace evangelism kit contains various introductory pamphlets that fit well on a ledge or coffee table in reception areas. Local restaurants, doctors' offices, waiting rooms, and other social areas also provide an excellent opportunity to capitalize on people's desire for something to read. Hudsonville

has advertised this helpful tool to all of our PR churches.

**Mission Activities**

On Friday and Saturday, May 21 and 22, Rev. W. Bruinsma, our denomination's missionary in Pittsburgh, PA, spoke at a conference north of Cincinnati, Ohio. There were four speeches on the points of Calvinism. Friday night Rev. Bruinsma gave one of the speeches on the subject, "The Christ of Unconditional Election." On Saturday morning he gave another one of the speeches on the subject, "The Christ of Preservation and Perseverance."

Rev. D. Kleyn and Rev. R. Smit, our denomination's two missionaries in the Philippines, presented lectures to contacts in Bacolod City on the island of Negros on May 21. The conference in Bacolod City was the express desire of contacts there

since last year. Rev. Kleyn and Rev. Smit presented some of the same speeches that they gave at an earlier conference on April 29-30 about Reformed church government and the particular grace of God. Rev. Smit returned to Manila on Saturday morning, but Rev. and Mrs. Kleyn traveled to Inayauan to visit the Reformed Free Church there. He accepted the offer of their pastor, Rev. E. Rosal, to lead the worship services there on Sunday.

Seminarian Vernon Ibe, with his wife and young son, left in early June to spend the summer at home in the Philippines.

Under the supervision of our two missionaries and the seminary professors, Mr. Ibe will be leading services both in Manila and in Gabaldon, teaching catechism classes, and participating as much as possible in the work of the congregation.

### Sister-Church Activities

Rev. A. Stewart, along with his wife, Mary, and Francesco deLucia, traveled to Italy the first week in June, arriving first in Naples and then traveling on to Avellino, where Rev.

Stewart planned to give two lectures on Predestination and Assurance to a small group there, with Mr. deLucia doing the translating.

### Congregation Activities

Once again this summer the members of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI have the opportunity to enjoy an Adult Sunday School class. This class began the first week of June and was scheduled to run for eight weeks. This year's theme: "Great Moments in Church History." Eight men from the congregation volunteered to lead a class. It should be a most interesting and edifying hour.

On Sunday morning, May 16, Prof. R. Dykstra preached his final Heidelberg Catechism sermon at the Byron Center, MI PRC. Prof. Dykstra had supplied their pulpit on a regular basis during their vacancy, usually preaching every morning from the Catechism. To mark that occasion, a brief farewell was planned for that morning after the service.

A concert hosted by the Majestic Brass, together with Eric and Christa Phelps, was given on May 16 at the Hudsonville, MI PRC. Special

numbers were also presented by the Young People's Societies of Grace, Hudsonville, First in Grand Rapids, and Trinity. A collection was also taken to defray convention costs for these four societies.

The Grandville, MI PRC hosted this spring's annual Psalm Choir program on Sunday evening, May 9. Always a nice way to bring the Lord's Day to a close.

### Minister Activities

On May 23 Rev. A. Spriensma was installed as the fourth pastor of the Byron Center, MI PRC. May 30 Rev. A. Brummel was installed as the first pastor of the newly organized Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD.

Rev. C. Haak declined the call from the Kalamazoo, MI PRC; Rev. G. Eriks the call from Cornerstone PRC in Dyer, IN; and Rev. A. Lanning the call from First PRC in Holland, MI.

Rev. J. Laning accepted the call to the Hull, IA PRC.

Rev. G. Eriks received the call from the Edgerton, MN PRC; and Trinity PRC in Hudsonville extended a call to Rev. J. Marcus. ☞

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Wedding anniversary

■ On June 18, 2010, our parents and grandparents, **RONALD and NANCY HANKO**, celebrated their 35<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Psalm 90:12).

- ✿ Jennifer Hanko
- ✿ Ryan and Becky Hanko  
Abigail, Ethan, Ava
- ✿ Wayne and Sarah Courtney  
Connor, Erin
- ✿ David and Jessica Vermeer  
Sean, Hanna, Brendan, Ashley
- ✿ Herman and Lindy Hanko
- ✿ Neal Hanko
- ✿ Scott and Rosanna Ferguson
- ✿ Edward Hanko

Lynden, Washington

### Classis East

■ Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 8, 2010 at the Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church, Byron Center, Michigan. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 8, 2010.

Jon J. Huisken  
Stated Clerk

### Notice

■ Classis West of the PRC will convene at the Hull PRC in Hull, IA on Wednesday, September 1, 2010, at 8:30 A.M. In conjunction with this meeting of classis, an officebearers' conference is being planned for Tuesday, August 31. Any who intend to submit material for the agenda of classis are asked to notify the stated clerk of this at your earliest convenience, and to have all material in his hands by Monday, August 2, 2010. Delegates or visitors who will need lodging or transportation should notify Hull's clerk, Mr. Don VerMeer, at (712) 725-2505 or at [donver@mtcnet.net](mailto:donver@mtcnet.net).

Rev. Douglas Kuiper, Stated Clerk



## OFFICEBEARERS' CONFERENCE CLASSIS WEST OF THE PRC

Hull, IA - Tuesday, August 31, 2010

### The Divine Act of Creation

*By the word of the LORD were the heavens made;  
and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.*  
Psalm 33:6

9:00 A.M. - Keynote Address

#### **Ex Nihilo: The Reformed Confessions on the Doctrine of Creation**

Rev. Nathan Langerak, Pastor,  
South Holland PRC, South Holland, IL

10:30 A.M. - Breakout Sectional

#### **The Witness of the Old Testament to Creation Ex Nihilo:**

##### **A. The Law and the Prophets**

Rev. Douglas Kuiper, Pastor,  
Randolph PRC, Randolph, WI

##### **B. The Poetic Books**

Rev. John Marcus, Pastor,  
First PRC, Edmonton, AB

12:00 P.M. - Lunch (freewill offering  
to defray expenses)

1:00 P.M. - Breakout Sectional

##### **A. Creation and Christ**

Rev. Thomas Miersma, Pastor,  
Immanuel PRC, Lacombe, AB

##### **B. Survey of the Ecclesiastical Scene Regarding Creation Ex Nihilo**

Rev. Allen Brummel, Pastor,  
Heritage PRC, Sioux Falls, SD

2:45 P.M. - Conclusion

##### **"When I consider":**

##### **The proper effect of the doctrine on the child of God**

Rev. Martin VanderWal, Pastor,  
Hope PRC, Redlands, CA

All past and present officebearers,  
as well as all other interested people, are invited to attend.

### Wedding anniversary

■ On June 20, our parents,

**RICHARD and DONNA CAMPBELL,**

observed their 35<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. We are grateful for the godly instruction they have provided and the many sacrifices they have made, especially for the cause of our Christian education. They have taught us to look to our heavenly Father with confidence and conviction and to rest our trust in Him alone. "The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage" (Psalm 16:45, 6).

✿ Jay and Lora Kalsbeek

Tristan, Monte, Cedric, Seth, Blake

✿ Kris and Jaime Campbell

Austin, Kayla, Raymond

✿ Adam and Alicia Santisteven

Jaylynn

✿ Clint and Janelle Summers

Clint, Mackenzie

Loveland, Colorado

### Notification of Candidacy

■ All Protestant Reformed congregations are hereby informed that the 2010 synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America has declared Mr. Dan Holstege a candidate for the gospel ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches. Candidate Holstege will be eligible for a call on or after July 10, 2010.

Mr. Holstege's address is:

1459 Spaulding Ave. SW, Grand Rapids, MI 49546

Phone: 616-285-9073

E-mail: danholstege@sbcglobal.net

Don Doezeema, Stated Clerk

### Reformed Witness Hour

July 2010

#### Date

July 4

July 11

July 18

July 25

#### Topic

"Freedom"

"Living in the Power of God's Promises"

"The True Christian Life"

"The Golden Key of Prayer"

#### Text

Romans 8:2

Hebrews 13:5, 6

II Timothy 4:7, 8

Jeremiah 33:3