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Volume 86 ◆ Number 4

The Winter of Our Life*

*And even to your old age I am he;
and even to hoar hairs will I carry
you: I have made, and I will bear;
even I will carry, and will deliver
you.*

Isaiah 46:4

Winter! Once more a natural, physical, and earthly picture pointing to the spiritual aspect of our life. The Lord Jesus Christ often taught this way, for He stated that all things happen in parables. Therefore, we can look at creation and read that most elegant book and see spiritual truths.

We have looked at three seasons of our life so far, and now come to the fourth and final season. Traditionally winter portrays death. The ground is frozen and no longer yields her fruit. All plants are either dead or lying

dormant, waiting for the spring sunshine and rains. Yet, winter can be one of the most beautiful seasons of the year. One is filled with awe at the snow-covered mountains glistening in the sun. One marvels as he looks at the snow flakes, each one different from the other. There is something very cozy about a stormy day when activity virtually comes to a standstill, and one can stay in the house by the fire and curl up with a good book, or pop some popcorn, drink some hot chocolate, and play some games with others. A time also when one gets out the photo albums and reminisces about the past.

Solomon, under the inspiration of the Spirit, wrote about this season of our life in Ecclesiastes 12. In verse 3 he speaks of "the keepers of the house [that] shall tremble," referring to the arms. Also that "the strong men shall bow themselves," meaning the legs. Then that "the grinders cease because they are few," no doubt referring to the teeth as they begin to fall out. And "those that look out of the windows be

darkened," pointing to the eyes that grow dim.

He continues the picture in verse 4. "The doors shall be shut in the streets," indicating the ears or lips or both. Then "the sound of the grinding is low," making reference to the chewing. We might also add "slow." One "shall rise up at the voice of a bird." The aged are usually very light sleepers and are awakened by the slightest sound. And "the daughters of music shall be brought low," referring to the vocal cords.

In the next verse (5), he tells us that one "shall be afraid of that which is high." We know how the elderly are afraid of heights. "Fears shall be in the way." The elderly tend to shuffle along, fearful of anything in their path. "The almond tree shall flourish," pointing to the almond tree as it blossoms forth in a blaze of white blossoms portraying the hoar head of the aged. The weak and aching back is pictured in "the grasshopper [being] a burden." One who is elderly makes repeated reference to his aching back,

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* This Meditation is a transcript of the speech given by Rev. Miersma at the Seniors' Retreat in Estes Park, CO on October 5, 2009.

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no matter how light the burden. And finally "the desire shall fail." In the sobriety of old age the sexual desire fails, but also many other desires. One no longer has the desire to go out, especially at night. One is very content to stay at home in the comfortable confines of one's recliner with a good book.

Very comforting are the words of Isaiah as quoted above, "And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you."

What we see here is the manifestation of the unchangeable God. That He is unchangeable in Himself Scripture makes abundantly clear in such passages as Malachi 3:6, where we read, "For I am the LORD (Jehovah), I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." We read something similar in James 1:17, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

Nature adds to this testimony. In harmony with the theme of the retreat, "The Seasons of our Life," we see in nature the constant change from spring to winter, which in turn gives way to spring again to start the cycle anew. This has been happening for thousands of years. This was created by God in the beginning. In Genesis 1:14 we read, "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for seasons, and for days and years." So it has always been. The sun still shines, rising in the east in the morning, and setting in the west in the evening, every day since the beginning. And it will continue that way until Christ comes. In harmony with that, the oceans' tides rise and fall twice a day and the moon waxes and wanes.

Not only does God remain unchanged, but the Scriptures also remain unchanged. The Bible that instructed us as children and that we carried to Sunday School is the same Bible that we hold in our hands today and that we read as we sit in our beds in our old age. The promises of God revealed to us in these Scriptures, which cheered us in our youth and when we made confession of faith, continue to cheer us now when our eyes become dim with age.

This unchangeableness of God is also reflected in our worship. When we were young and were carried into God's house in the arms of our parents, we heard the psalms sung, the prayers offered to God, and the Word preached. Today we sing the same Psalms, pray the same prayers, and hear the same Word preached. All this is the same because our God is unchangeable.

Our God is unchangeable not only in His nature, but also in His dealings with us. As we saw in Isaiah 46, He will carry us the same, deliver us the same, and bear us the same as He used to. God's care for us is not limited to a certain age, but is limited to

His people, no matter what their age. The mercies shown to God's people in David's time are unchanged today as He deals with us. No doubt this is your experience and your confidence. What was true in your youth is still true today. That will be your testimony to the youth of today—to your children and grandchildren, who look up to you with respect.

The winter season of our life is a time of special memories. There are the joyous and happy memories. All the harvests that have been brought in. There were

the shoutings of the children as they rejoiced about you. We do not forget all the many worship services that we attended, the sermons heard, and the Psalms sung. Many were the deliverances that made you laugh for joy. When you look back you can string God's mercies together by the thousand. With David we can say, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

However, there are also many griefs that are remembered. We remember the bed of affliction, upon which were spent many hours of travail and pain. Many times one has gone to the side of the grave. There a husband has laid his wife, or the wife her husband. Or it may have been a child taken at a very young age. It may have been a youth in the very strength of his years. It may also have been many old friends that you have had in your home many times. In all this the conclusion is "even to old age God hath been the same, and even to hoary hairs He hath carried him."

We also look back and see all the sins that we have committed. We moan, "Oh, how have I sinned, in youth, in middle age, and even now when infirmities have gathered around me. How often have I forsaken God! How frequently have I wandered from Him. How often have I provoked Him. How constantly have I violated all I knew to be good and excellent. I can only wonder how it is that Christ could have preserved me so long. Truly, I can say, 'Even to old age He is the same, and even to hoary hairs He hath carried me.'"

Along with these memories, pleasant and unpleasant, the child of God in his old age has peculiar hopes. Your hope today is the same as when you first made con-

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fession of your faith, a hope “undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (I Pet. 1:4). The ground of this hope is nothing less than the blood of Christ. It certainly is not based on your long service, no matter how old you are, nor on your devotedness to God’s cause. Christ is the only basis also today at your present age. The reason for your hope is that God has given you the grace to believe. And the object of your hope is that final resting place in heaven in perfect fellowship and communion with our covenant God.

Another peculiarity of the aged is that of anxieties. The aged one is not so anxious about self anymore. He does not have the cares of starting in business, as he once had. Nor does he have to launch out children in business. His family is no longer at home to care for. But he casts his anxious eyes on his bodily frame. He cannot run as he used to. The noise of the grinders is low. His body begins to totter, to shake, and to quiver. He realizes that the earthly house of this tabernacle is about to be dissolved. Even your pained and worn-out body is proof of God’s everlasting love for you, for He is taking down your old tenement, stick by stick, and will build it up again in brighter worlds, never to be taken down anymore.

In addition to being anxious about the body, the aged is anxious for the mind. He forgets what took place a short time ago, but can remember clearly events that took place fifty or more years ago. But even though one forgets much of which he wishes to remember, he still finds that God is the same. One finds that God’s goodness does

not depend on his memory. And that the sweetness of God’s grace does not depend upon his palate. Even when his mind fails a little, God carries him down to his hoar head, his old age. To the aged, He is ever the same.

But the greatest anxiety is death. Young men may die, but old men must die. Even the Christian knows that he is not a long way from death, and there is a certain anxiety about that. In a few more years, or less, he must stand before his God. He does not wait as a man who thinks the coach is a long way off, but as one who hears the horn just down the street. But he has the sweet satisfaction to know that the nearer death is, the nearer heaven is, because God’s faithfulness is the same.

Finally, old age is a time of special duties. He has the duty of testimony. If you hear an older person talk, you pay more attention to what he or she says. Old men and old women should labor whenever they can to bear testimony to God’s faithfulness, and to declare that now also, when they are old and grey-headed, their God forsakes them not. We read God’s Word in Titus 2:3: “The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh

holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love

their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.” One can also give testimony through one’s memoirs.

Another duty is that of comforting. When the young come to

the old, the old say, “Do not fear; I have gone through the waters, and they have not flowed over me; and through the fire, and have not been burned. Trust in God; ‘for down to old age He is the same, and to hoar hairs He will carry you.’” How often have not your grandchildren come to you with one concern or another, and you were able to console them as none other can.

A further duty is that of warning. If an old man were to go out in the middle of the road, and shout out to you to stop, you would stop sooner than you would if a boy were to do it; for then you might say, “out of the way, you young rascal,” and go on still. The warnings of the old have great effect; and it is their peculiar work to guide the imprudent, and warn the unwary.

Therefore, dear readers, you who are now experiencing the winter of your life, do not let the young people catch you indulging in melancholy, sitting in your corner, grumbling and growling, but go about cheerful and happy, and they will think how blessed it is to be a Christian. If you are surly and fretful, they will think that the Lord has forsaken you; but keep a smiling countenance, and they will think the promise is fulfilled, “And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.”

Try to be of a happy temperament and cheerful spirit, for a child will run away from a surly old man; but there is not a child in the world who does not love his grandpa if he is cheerful and happy. Make yourself merry with the people of God, and try to live happily before men; for so will you prove to us that even to old age God is with you, and that when your strength fails, He is still your preservation. May God bless you, for the Savior’s sake.



Even your pained and worn-out body is proof of God's everlasting love for you, for He is taking down your old tenement, stick by stick, and will build it up again in brighter worlds, never to be taken down anymore.

Calvin as Model for Reformed Ministers Today (2)

In this anniversary year of John Calvin's birth, we hold forth the man of God as an example for our pastors. Pray for your minister, that he may offer his life to God's church as Calvin did. Few have the gifts and capacity of Calvin (although may God *give* us men of great gifts and ability!). But all can be useful in their place. Last time I showed that Calvin 1) was personally upright, 2) suffered willingly and patiently, 3) was a wise and sympathetic pastor, and 4) was devoted to the church's children.

Fifth, Calvin was a zealous missionary. Yes, a zealous missionary.

If Calvin were alive today, I cannot imagine that he would not have been a member of a denomination's mission committee, on a local church's evangelism committee, or be begging the elders to allow him to do so.

Now, Calvin did not take a call to a mission field, become ordained as a missionary, or travel to the ends of the earth. Nevertheless, Calvin may be described as a missionary. He was as involved as any man could be in the worldwide spread of the gospel.

It's simply not true what many scholars of missions say about Calvin. One mission historian wrote: "We miss in the Reformers not only mission action, but even the idea of missions..."

because fundamental theological views hindered them from giving their activity and even their thoughts a missionary direction." Even Alister McGrath, popular writer on Christian history and doctrine, argued that Protestantism had little interest in missions and that "neither John Calvin nor Martin Luther had any particular interest to reach beyond the borders of Christendom." Of course, McGrath does not consider Roman Catholicism to be the great field for missions that it was. How many thousands and millions were dying spiritually in that fold?

From 1555 to 1562, Geneva's consistory minutes (the "Register of the Company of Pastors") show that Geneva sent out 88 missionaries, mostly to France, Calvin's homeland. Likely the number was far higher, since to record the names of the missionaries would be to risk their lives. Some sources show as many as over 100, in just one year, were sent out. "An army of missionaries [were sent] to Italy, Germany, Scotland, England, and especially to France."

They went out under the cover of night, and hid in attics and false rooms behind chimneys. They gathered in barns, open fields, or secluded caves. Small churches were organized. And with Calvin's good counsel by letter, signed often with a pseudonym, the churches multiplied! By his efforts, there were over 1,000 underground "church plants" (if you will) in France by 1560. Like the Israelites in Egypt,

"the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied and grew."

In 20 years, the number of Reformed churches in France increased by 800, from 1200 to 2000!

It was *dangerous* for these missionaries. Many were arrested and sentenced to death. The Academy of Geneva (Calvin's "seminary") became known as "Calvin's school of death" because so many graduates went out to martyrdom in France.

And critics say Calvin did not promote or engage in missions? They call attention only to the aborted effort to evangelize Brazil as evidence that Calvin and his Reformed friends were not missionaries?

Contrary to the claims of his critics, Calvin's doctrines of predestination and the sovereignty of God in salvation did not hinder him from being a zealous proponent of missions. In fact, they were the grounds for it. With approval he quotes Augustine that, because the number of the elect is unknown to us, our attitude in missions must be determined by the desire that all may be saved. "For as we know not who belongs to the number of the predestinated or who does not belong, we ought to be so minded as to wish that all men be saved." So far Augustine. Then Calvin comments: "So shall it come about that we try to make everyone we meet a sharer in our peace." Predestination—the reason Calvin did not engage in missions? Wrong, on both accounts.

Calvin's motives for missions are a warning to the Reformed pastor today who may be tempted to misapply the doctrine of predestination. A personal desire, welling up within those who have experienced God's grace, that also others should have this great blessing, drives a man to missions.

By these words [Isa. 2:3] he first declares that the godly will be filled with such an ardent desire to spread the doctrines of religion, that every one not satisfied [carnally satisfied, BG] with his *own* calling and his *personal* knowledge will desire to draw others along with him. And indeed nothing could be more inconsistent with the nature of faith than that deadness which would lead a man to disregard his brethren, and to keep the light of knowledge (of God) choked up within his own breast. The greater the eminence above others which any man has received from his calling, so much the more diligently ought he to labor to enlighten others.

Meditate, for a little while, on the implications of that.

Sixth, Calvin was a preacher.

An exegetical, doctrinal, polemical, passionate, and practical preacher.

Calvin was nothing if not a preacher. Calvin is preeminently a model for Reformed pastors today insofar as Calvin was a preacher. He knew what fed the flock, kept the wolves at bay, ministered to the lambs, gave muscle to the bones of the warriors...and skill to their hands. He preached with the unshakable conviction that the mouth of the minister was the mouth of God, as Bullinger put it: "The preaching of the Word of God IS the word of God."

So, besides preaching many times per week, he trained preachers. This pastor wanted to be sure the new pastors could train more preachers until the Lord returned. He knew that "it pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

He was *exegetical*: "Let those who desire to teach others well, appoint themselves these bounds, that they utter nothing but out of the pure fountain of the word."

His preaching was *doctrinal*: The Scriptures are profitable for doctrine! "An assembly in which the preaching of heavenly doctrine is not heard does not deserve to be reckoned a Church." He was not hesi-

tant to be *polemical*: "The pastor ought to have two voices; one, for gathering the sheep, and another for warding off...wolves." Calvin modeled *passion*: "It appears to me that there is very little preaching of a lively kind in the Kingdom." "Away with indolence and coldness in [preaching], for one that is cold will never be qualified for this office." Passion on the pulpit was one of the reasons that, although he did not require this of others, Calvin preached without notes. He wanted to speak to the hearts of the people, and from his heart. And how *practical* his sermons were. No one who has read the sermons of Calvin will deny that the preaching of Calvin was also eminently practical, addressed and applied concretely to the *practice* of Christianity. Even his doctrinal treatise, the *Institutes*, at times had more application than explanation. That was the mind and heart of this Minister of Geneva.

Seventh, John Calvin loved God.

Calvin was all that he was because he was devoted in love to His God.

Consider the other topics of our conference. Why was Calvin a reformer? Why an expositor and preacher of Holy Scripture? Why a defender of church discipline? A teacher of justification, predestination, the covenant? Then consider the areas I have mentioned. Why personally upright, a willing sufferer, wise and sympathetic pastor, teacher of covenant children, zealous missionary, faithful preacher?

Because he was a man fully devoted in love to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing else explains it. Nothing else would drive him to such lengths. A man's love for God will enable him to do everything.

Everything Calvin did manifested his love for God. Read his sermons, but do not fail to read the prayers that come after every sermon, and hear the devotion to the One who saved his eyes from tears, his feet from falling, who had set him free. Hear him cry out for mercy, plead with God to use the word to bless the flock, glorify Him. See his dedication to the exposition of the Psalms, because, of all things, the child of God is called to worship and prayer.

Cor Meum Tibi, Offero Domine, Prompte et Sincere.

If I were ever to write a biography of John Calvin and say in it what most impressed me about this man, I would say what every believer would want said about himself after his death: He loved God. Higher praise than that I cannot give to a man: He loved God.

When you die, what will they say about you? About me? Oh, may the lives of Reformed pastors lead the people to say, "He loved God."


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Nearing death, Calvin said (and every believer with even a hint of a tender heart chokes to read it):

In the name of God, I, John Calvin, servant of the Word of God in the church of Geneva... thank God that He has shown not only mercy toward me, His poor creature, and...has suffered me in all sins and weaknesses, but what is much more, that He has made me a partaker of His

grace to serve Him through my work.... I confess to live and die in this faith which He has given me, inasmuch as I have no other hope or refuge than His predestination upon which my entire salvation is grounded. I embrace the grace which He has offered me in our Lord Jesus Christ and accept the merits of His suffering and dying, that through them all my sins are buried; and I humbly beg Him to wash me and cleanse me with the blood of our great Redeemer...so that I, when I shall

appear before His face, may bear His likeness. Moreover, I declare that I endeavored to teach His Word undefiled and to expound Holy Scripture faithfully, according to the measure of grace which He has given me.

After Calvin died, his old friend Farel said: "Oh, how happily he has run a noble race. Let us run like him, according to the measure of grace given us." 

Letters

Anonymous Mail

I just wanted to write a quick e-mail re your comments re anonymous letters (October 1, 2009, p. 7). I must say that this is sound advice, and one that, by His grace, I will be putting into practice.

I do have one item for thought—there is a form of anonymity today that is very easy in which to participate: usernames. Today, through facebook, twitter,

xanga, and a host of seemingly endless avenues of comment, many today participate in routine anonymous commentary, all the while never using their real names, only their username. Many build up quite the on-line persona. The lure, seemingly, is that "well, nobody can really know who I am." Many bold, and often hurtful, things are said behind *this* wall of anonymity.

I know that there have been individual articles in the *SB* re some aspects of the electronic world with which we are faced. It might be interesting to see a series on issues such as this, with comments re our "electronic ethics" as Reformed Christians.

Just a thought.

Lee Finley,
New Philadelphia, OH



Special Article

Rev. Chris Connors

John Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination (2)

In the first part of this presentation at the Calvin Conference sponsored by the Protestant Reformed Seminary (cf. November 1, 2009 *SB*, p. 68), Rev. Connors outlined Calvin's doctrine of Predestination. Now he turns to:

Calvin's Challenge to the Church

1. Calvin challenges us to be committed to predestination as a truth we receive from God through His word.

Calvin did not just teach a doctrinal *system*—he experienced the reforming power of *sola scriptura*. Consequently, he models what happens when a mind well versed in Scripture and enlight-

ened by the Spirit submits itself under God speaking in the word; and he challenges us to do the same—in a most practical way. This is what made Calvin such a catalyst for thorough-going reform.¹ And this is what it still

¹ On Sunday, August 16, 2009, an ABC radio program was dedicated to a discussion of John Calvin's life and influence. It was stated, and agreed by the panel, that "without John Cal-

Rev. Connors is a pastor in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia.

takes to stand fast in the truth of predestination, against the tide.

Fully as far, but no further than the word. That was Calvin's rule. Faith follows Christ *fully as far, but not one step beyond*. Perhaps the best way to show how completely he submitted to that rule, and how firmly he required others to do the same, is to cite a passage from one of his sermons:

Let us know that our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us, that we cannot do amiss to harken and open our ears, to inquire and search after what it has pleased him we should know: but let us take heed that we go not beyond it: for there is no rage so great and outrageous, as when we will know more than God shows us.... Let us therefore keep this mean: that is to say, to hearken to that which God propounds unto us: and as soon as he shall once shut his mouth, let us have all our understandings locked up and captive, and let us not endeavour to know more than he shall have pronounced to us.... And when we shall be...[troubled] tormented, let us have recourse unto God: that is to say, let us hearken to that which is shown us in the holy Scripture, let us pray that God will open our ears and our eyes, to the end we may understand his will. And further, we have this; it behooves us altogether to rest therein, and to be quiet. For there is no cause of disputing any farther, when God has once pronounced his sentence.²

Do you believe God speaking in the word—or do you not? Faith must go *as far as, but no further*. That is a constant refrain in Calvin. He repeats it so of-

ten that you get the impression Calvin didn't expect anyone to agree with what he taught about predestination unless this way of relating to the word was first fixed in the heart. And especially when he must touch upon a "perplexing" point, he locates his hearers inside this principle by reiterating it before, during, and after what he has to say!

Now, that principle cuts both ways revealing either faith or unbelief. To those who deny predestination because it raises "questions concerning the judgments of God which are incomprehensible, and which are of so high and profound matter, that the Holy Spirit has to teach them," Calvin says, "instead of curious searching, we must adore them!" (*Sermons*, p. 52). "Let us not be ashamed to be ignorant of something in this matter wherein there is a certain learned ignorance" required. "We cease to speak well when we cease to speak with God" (*Institutes*, 3.23.5). So, *not one step beyond!*

And at the same time, Calvin judged it to be false humility, dishonoring to God, and detrimental to God's children to draw back from predestination as if it is a reef upon which we might be shipwrecked. And he chides the "teary modesty" of the "insipid cautious ones" (*Calvin's Calvinism*, p. 150) who want to hide what God teaches men to believe. He believed they made themselves wiser than God, for implying that the Spirit had let slip something by mistake that was injurious to His church. To such like, Calvin says—*fully as far as he leads!*

The "insipid cautious ones" of our day may not take refuge in Calvin's calling reprobation "the dreadful" decree. McNeill has it right when he explains that "Calvin is awestruck but unrelenting

in his declaration that God is the author of reprobation."³ By all means, let us be awestruck, but let us not be dumbstruck. The heirs of Calvin will surely be interested in the *unrelenting* bit also! Calvin's doctrine of predestination includes, indeed demands, just such subjection to God speaking in the word. For Calvin, denial and/or suppression of predestination was a display of *unbelief!*

2. Calvin therefore holds a challenge to the churches to teach and preach predestination.

Calvin's conviction was that, "The doctrine of election ought to be preached constantly and thoroughly." And when it comes to those who "carp, rail, bark or scoff at it," Calvin challenges us to remember that, "if their shamefulness deters us, we shall have to keep secret the chief doctrine of the faith, almost none of which they or their like leave untouched by blasphemy" (*Institutes*, 3.21.4). Predestination is *not* an addendum to the gospel—nor is it something to be hidden from the world in case it causes offense! Predestination is in Calvin's judgment *the chief doctrine*. His challenge to the churches is this: *If opposition to predestination can drive you into an embarrassed silence—there is nothing you will ultimately stand on.*

It is telling to see what Calvin associates this with. What if someone opposes the doctrine of the Trinity? he asks. Or what if someone guffaws at your belief that only a little more than 5,000 years have passed since creation? Calvin's words were prophetic! Before theistic evolution could be entertained, the churches drew back from the predestinating God of the word.

Calvin reminds us that, "God's truth is so powerful, both

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but let us not
be dumbstruck.*

vin, the world we live in would be a very different place."

² Calvin, *Sermons on Election and Reprobation*, p. 30, see also pp. 28, 29, 31, 36, 37, 52, 53, 54; and in the *Institutes*, 3.21.3.

³ McNeill, *Institutes*, 3.23.7, note 17.

in this respect and in every other, that it has nothing to fear from the evil-speaking of wicked men" (*Institutes*, 3.21.4). For the church to suppress and hide predestination because of what men might think or say, is *unbelief*! That is Calvin!

If we would stand with Calvin, we will need to say: "Let those deride us who will, if God but give His nod of assent from heaven to *our* stupidity (as men think), and if angels do but applaud it" (C.C., p. 84).

3. Finally, Calvin challenges us to embrace predestination as gospel truth—and to preach and teach it for the good of God's elect, and the glory of God's name.

Calvin firmly believed that without the truth of predestination we are "blind to the three great benefits of salvation, namely, God's free grace, God's glory, and sincere humility" (*Institutes*, 3.21.1). Predestination grounds the gospel in grace, and humbles us all under the reality that "there is nothing but his mercy alone" (*Sermons*, pp. 41, 42). Furthermore, out of election in Christ flows all comfort to believers—and they may not be robbed of the inheritance God has given. Predestination unto life in Christ Jesus holds us at the foot of the cross!

And because that is so, Calvin has a caution. He insists, with Augustine, that, "those things which are truly said can at the same time be fittingly said" (*Institutes*, 3.23.14). What did he mean by "fittingly said"? That is a subject worthy of a paper in its own right. But the way he put his *Institutes* together, and what he writes therein, show us clearly enough.

In the *Institutes* he models what he means when he leaves his formal treatment of predestination until Book Three. When we might expect him to deal with predestination under Theology,

he leaves it until towards the end of his treatment of the way of salvation. Calvin first leads us through faith as a gift of God, through regeneration and effectual calling, into *union with Christ*. Then, only when he has shown us that *in Christ* we are made partakers of the benefits of salvation, Calvin introduces us to predestination!

I find in Calvin three primary reasons for this order. First, he believed that the *natural place* for predestination to arise, as Paul shows in Romans 9, is in answer to that crucial question: Why, when the gospel is preached to all, do only some believe? Second, he believed firmly and passionately that predestination must *never* be preached in such a way that it sends sinners directly to God's secret counsel to discover their election. For preaching to do that, says Calvin, would be to, "cast men into the depths of a bottomless whirlpool to be swallowed up; then he tangles himself in innumerable and inextricable snares; then he buries himself in an abyss of sightless darkness" (*Institutes*, 3.24.4). If we would teach men how to sail the ship of faith so as to avoid this rock, "against which no one is ever dashed without destruction," and to do so safely, calmly, and pleasantly, then "let this therefore, be the way of our inquiry: to begin with God's call, and to end with God's call" (*Institutes*, 3.24.4). He refers to the effectual call that unites the soul to Christ by faith.

And that is his third reason: election must be *revealed to and ratified in* the soul—by faith. It is only to believers, indwelt by the Spirit of His Son, that God gives that power to become the sons of God, and to cry Abba, Father.

Therefore, if we would preach predestination as Calvin would have it preached, then one thing must be made so perfectly clear that there is not so much as a hint of its opposite left in the minds of our hearers; that is, knowledge of God's electing love can be had in no other way than by faith in Jesus Christ. Preaching must call sinners to "Christ as the mirror wherein we must, and without self-deception may, contemplate our own election" (*Institutes*, 3.24.5).

Thus, predestination demands that sinners be called to faith in Christ alone. That is what preaching is for—it is to unite the elect to Christ by faith, build them up in Christ by faith, and bring them safe home to Christ through faith!

Predestination is, therefore, the great encouragement to preach.

Calvin saw that predestination grounds the gospel message in God's sovereign mercy, and directs sinners to Christ alone. And this is so far from militating against the preaching of Christ to all men, that it beggars belief that the charge is ever made!

Predestination lets the gospel of God loose as the power of God to all those who do believe. It sends

the gospel to call every sinner to believe in Christ as the Savior of unworthy sinners of every sort. It has a Divine promise that is grounded in eternal election to encourage and enrich whosoever believes! And it sends it forth with confidence—absolute and unshakable confidence—for it places the preacher in the midst of a fallen world, like Ezekiel called to declare the word of God in the valley of dry bones. Can these bones live? The irresistible grace of unconditional election is able to make them live! GOD


Calvin saw that predestination grounds the gospel message in God's sovereign mercy, and directs sinners to Christ alone.

can do it—and He will, for all His elect! GOD will call His elect to life through the gospel. That is the encouragement to preach! That is the basis of missions! That is the encouragement for us to witness and share the gospel with our neighbors, to teach and nurture our children—to bring

the word as elders in admonition and discipline! Christ will make His sheep to hear His voice!

That is the good news! God is still God!

Thanks be unto God, who always causes us to triumph in Christ, and makes manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in

every place. For we are the savor of death unto death, and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ (II Cor. 2:14-17). 

The Mission Labors of John Calvin

The sixteenth century saw a Roman Catholic focus on overseas missions that had no parallel. The Catholic Church aggressively promoted its false doctrine throughout the known world, making use of the sword as its chief evangelism tool. Opportunities that were available to the Roman Catholics in terms of traveling with and living under the protection of explorers and commercial companies were not available to their Protestant counterparts. As a result, the Reformers of the sixteenth century are often accused of failing to be mission minded.

But we contend that the Reformers were mission minded, even in the face of tremendous opposition. God used the Reformation to initiate Bible translations, to bring thousands of people out of darkness into the light of the truth, and to spread the gospel throughout Europe and even to America. The Reformation itself was a massive domestic mission movement, with

at least one important foreign element. This was evident especially through the work of John Calvin.

It is falsely claimed that the theology of the Reformers limited the vision of their missionary labors. First, it is said that the Reformers interpreted the great commission of Matthew 28:19, 20 as applying to the New Testament apostles alone. Second, the accusation is made that the doctrine of election made missions unnecessary since God had already chosen those whom He would save.

Regarding the great commission, the argument of the Reformers was not intended to undermine the necessity of present missions. Both Luther and Calvin (see his commentaries on Isaiah 12:5; 45:23, and Matthew 24:14, 19) spoke of the necessity of the gospel being preached to all nations by the church of their day. It is important to understand the context in which the Reformers presented their argument regarding the great commission. They were taking issue with the Roman Catholic doctrine of apostolic succession, which stated that the succession of bishops, in uninterrupted lines, is historically trace-

able back to the original twelve apostles. Luther and Calvin insisted that the apostolic age was limited to the time of the apostles and ceased at their death. Into that discussion they brought the teaching of Matthew 28:19, 20 to argue that the apostles were given and had begun that commission.

Secondly, both Luther and Calvin rejected the accusation that the doctrine of election made missions unnecessary. Luther zealously preached and taught the gospel to those in bondage to the Catholic faith. Luther was instrumental in getting the Bible back into the hands of the German people in their own language. Hundreds and thousands of people who previously had never read the Bible now came into direct contact with the word of God.

John Calvin wrote that the view that election makes missions unnecessary fails to do justice to the preached word. God uses the preaching of the gospel to draw His elect to Him. Since we do not know where the elect are, the gospel must be preached as widely as God by His good pleasure gives opportunity. Quoting Augustine, Calvin writes in the *Institutes*,

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3.23.14, "For as we know not who belongs to the number of the predestined or who does not belong, we ought to be so minded as to wish that all men be saved." John Calvin demonstrated a mission-mindedness that the Reformed churches embraced and preserved.

Calvin, as the most mission minded of the Reformers, was directly involved in both domestic and foreign missions. Calvin trained and sent hundreds of pastors/missionaries to various countries in Europe. He also commissioned and sent missionaries overseas to establish a colony and evangelize the native Indians of Brazil.

Let us first look at Calvin's domestic missions, especially in terms of France. In 1555 there were only a few Protestant churches in all of France. Within seven years there were over two thousand churches, most of which were indebted to John Calvin's labors. How could this come to pass?

As the books of Martin Luther trickled into France during the early days of the Reformation, a considerable movement began through the secret reading of these volumes. The Roman Catholic Church dominated France, and the persecution that came upon those who defected from Catholicism was fierce. Many Reformed people, most from well educated, upper middle class families, fled France and other parts of Europe and came to Calvin's home of Geneva, making Geneva, literally, a refugee center.

Many of the men felt called to continue the work of the Reformation, so Calvin set up a theological school in order to train many of the refugees for the ministry. Calvin provided a

thorough, intense training, which prepared these men to be expository preachers of the gospel.

It is difficult to know for sure how many missionaries were sent back to France, because the persecution hindered the keeping of open records. We know for certain that, from 1555 until 1562, eighty-eight Frenchmen were trained as preachers and sent from Geneva back into France. Some historians claim that in the year 1561 alone an additional one hundred forty men were sent out, as requests for pastors came to Geneva from all over France.

Fred Koster writes: "The mission activity that emanated from Geneva under Calvin's inspiration was itself of monumental proportions. It was perhaps the greatest home missions project that history has yet seen since the time of the apostles" (Fred H. Koster, "Missions—The Heidelberg Catechism and Calvin," *Calvin*

Theological Journal, November 1972).

Calvin, knowing the persecution that they would face, demanded that these men not only be equipped with the necessary theological training, but that they also possess the necessary stamina and courage to face martyrdom. We know that at least nine of these men gave their lives as martyrs.

Using the work of Calvin as the means, God brought about extraordinary growth in His church. By 1562 there were 2,150 Protestant churches in France. Eventually there would be over two million Protestants out of the French population of twenty million. And this church growth took place in the context of tremendous oppression. In the year 1572 alone 70,000 Protestants were killed in France.

As God gave him opportu-

nity, Calvin also undertook the difficult labor of foreign missions. The oceans during the time were ruled by the fleets of Spain and Portugal. Only Roman Catholic priests and monastic orders were allowed the right of travel in order to evangelize the new world. It was not until after the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 that other countries were able to travel the waters with freedom.

However, a Frenchman named Nicolas Durant de Villegagnon, a classmate of John Calvin in Paris, decided on a daring adventure. He decided to travel to Brazil in order to establish a French colony that might provide relief for the Protestants who were being persecuted in France and Spain. With the blessing of Coligny, the Grand Admiral of France, and Henry II of England, Villegagnon sailed on November 10, 1555 and reached Rio de Janeiro after four months.

Soon after setting up a fort he sent back to Coligny for reinforcements and asked for ministers to evangelize the natives. Coligny contacted John Calvin, who was overjoyed at this opportunity to spread the gospel to America. Calvin presented the request to the church at Geneva and two ministers and eleven lay persons committed to the mission. They sailed for Brazil in September of 1556. The two pastors, Pierre Richier and Guillaume Chartier, began to organize a church in Fort Coligny as soon as they arrived and with joy and thankfulness to God held their first communion service in Brazil in March of 1557.

All did not go well with the young church, however. Soon Villegagnon began to interfere in the church by demanding practices that were in line with Roman Catholicism. Villegagnon treated Calvin's emissaries harshly and began to talk of John Calvin as a heretic. Some of the men were able to return to Geneva, but oth-


...both Luther and Calvin rejected the accusation that the doctrine of election made missions unnecessary.

ers were killed by Villegagnon or made slaves. Villegagnon returned to France for supplies in 1560 and the Portuguese attacked and destroyed the fort, thus bringing the French colony in Brazil to an end.

From every earthly perspective, the Genevan mission to Brazil was a complete failure. There were no converts, and many men lost their lives. There was frustration with the language barrier and the spiritual blindness of the natives.

However, letters exchanged between the missionaries and Calvin revealed faithfulness on

the part of those who labored in that faraway land. There was progress in learning the language and communicating with the Indians. Lessons were learned as to the customs and religion of the Indians and were recorded for future endeavors. Most importantly, even though there were no recorded conversions, the men wrote with optimism regarding the power of the gospel of grace to penetrate the hearts and change the lives of the Indian cannibals. The reason for failure was not a lack of hard work and effort as much as, in God's good providence, a lack of time to labor.

We can rest assured that the work was not a failure, even though its value may not be revealed until we get to heaven. The Reformation Church sounded the word of God not only throughout Europe, but all the way to Brazil. The word accomplished its purpose. John Calvin and the church in Geneva faithfully took advantage of the open door God had given to the New World. Sacrifices were made for the sake of the gospel. And the work that God started through John Calvin would be continued by his spiritual sons in God's good time. 

All Around Us

Rev. Nathan Langerak

■ The Oppositions of Science Falsely So-Called

In an astoundingly candid article in the *Grand Rapids Press* entitled "150th birthday of 'On the Origin of Species' prompts area colleges to assess Darwin's impact," the author of the article exposes the dominance of Darwinian evolution on Christian college campuses. The title is a reference to the book *On the Origin of Species* by the unbeliever Charles Darwin, in which he rejects the history of creation as it is given in the Scriptures and instead teaches what has become known as the theory of evolution by natural selection. The article demonstrates that Darwin's book and not God's Book controls the science curricula. A few quotes

from these professors will establish the point.

For us, it's a fundamental guiding principle for understanding the diversity of life on the planet.... How all these species got here—the best explanation for that is the theory of evolution (Thomas Bultman, chairman of the biology department, Hope College, Holland).

All of our coursework is constructed around that as a central foundation, of how we see the biological systems (Neil MacDonald, chairman of the biology department, Grand Valley State University, Allendale Township).

It's the central theme.... In any biology program, you couldn't teach it without weaving in the theory (Gregory Forbes, professor of biological sciences, Grand Rapids Community College).

The way we teach...is very much influenced by Darwin's theory. Evolution is the paradigm out of which we teach biology (David Warners, biology professor, Calvin College).

While it is not surprising that at the secular universities evolution is the regnant theory in the science departments, it is surprising that Darwin's theory dominates the science curricula of the area Christian colleges. According to professors in these Christian universities, it dominates to such an extent that it is the "paradigm out of which we teach biology," and, "it is the fundamental guiding principle for understanding the diversity of life on the planet...how all these species got here."

This evolutionary paradigm, however, causes a "great deal of frustration" among the students who enter these Christian colleges with a creationist—biblical—worldview. Such frustration is understandable. One would think that at a college that bears the name Christian and Reformed the biblical account of creation would be taught and the world's account of evolution would be exposed as unbelief. The problem,

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though, we are assured by Hope College biologist Thomas Bultman, is not Darwin's erroneous theory of evolution, which has been baptized by these Christian colleges and is taught by the science departments as gospel truth,

But much of the controversy...is rooted in how Christians interpret the book of Genesis. Many view it as a literal account of creation, which is a mistake.... "It's not a story about how the world came to be," he said, "but of what our place in the world is."

Evidently also the Holy Spirit was mistaken when He said about that account of creation in the Law that God created in six days (Ex. 20:11); in the Psalms, that by Word of the Lord were the heavens made (Ps. 33:6); when He asked Job where he was when He laid the foundations of the earth (Job 38:4); when He said that by faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God—and specifically denied that things that are seen were not made by things that do appear (Heb. 11:3); and when He warned believers that in the last days, scoffers would arise who would say that all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation (II Pet. 3:4).

The pressing question for the professors and universities, though, is: How do we staunch defenders of Darwin at the Christian universities deal with these students who come with this "mistaken" view of Genesis—and of the rest of Scripture? Mr. Warners of Calvin College tells us that this is done "sensitively." Supposedly that means that "sensitively" the students who come believing that God's word is true—He framed the worlds by His word in six literal days, and not by the evolutionary process over

millions of years, and who think that God's word is the fundamental principle to understand creation—sensitively they have that "mistaken" notion eroded in their minds by being immersed in evolutionary theory as the fundamental guiding principle for understanding the diversity of life on the planet.

Darwin's evolutionary theory is science falsely so-called that profanely and vainly babbles against the word of God. By his unbelieving theory Darwin intruded himself upon the domain that belongs exclusively to God's revelation in Scripture. According to Scripture, "by 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" (Heb. 11:3). By faith in God's word—by faith alone—the origins of the world are known. The origins of the world cannot be known at all by scientific speculation or investigation. Submitting to that knowledge the Christian can diligently investigate God's world and explain it logically and coherently. This is the true science, and not a science falsely so-called that contradicts the word of God.

The article shows, too, that unbelief about the origin of the world and the diversity of species is pervasive in the science departments at these Christian colleges. Since we understand the origin of the world by faith alone, to teach that the origin of the world is by evolution is unbelief in God's word.

Let students and parents know that at these Christian colleges they must "keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called" (I Tim. 6:20). Evolution is the paradigm out of which they will be taught science.

■ Defense of Marriage

The push to legalize homosexual marriages and the fight to define marriage as between one man and one woman is repeatedly in the news as the two sides clash at the ballot box, in the courtroom, and in the media around the country. On May 26, 2009 the California Supreme Court upheld Proposition 8, which enshrines in the California Constitution that, "only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California" (<http://caag.state.ca.us/>). According to a recent *World* magazine article, our President, Mr. Obama, at the annual dinner for the Human Rights Campaign, "pledged to appeal the Defense of Marriage Act." This is the bill passed in September 1996 that defines marriage as a legal union between one man and one woman for purposes of all federal laws, and provides that states need not recognize a marriage from another state if it is between persons of the same sex. Mr. Obama additionally made this promise to the attendees of the Human Rights Campaign dinner: "You will see a time in which we as a nation finally recognize relationships between two men or two women as just as real and admirable as relationship between a man and a woman" (worldmag.com/2009/10/12/obamas-pledge-to-redefine-marriage).

The attempts to legalize homosexual marriage, or to roll back the laws already passed, as Mr. Obama has pledged to do, are the objects of a great deal of protest and hand-wringing among evangelicals. The fight to defend marriage is the new crusade.

Marriage is a creation ordinance of God, and the state therefore has the duty before God and for its own welfare to uphold this ordinance of God. The state that refuses to uphold marriage undermines, by God's own just judgment, its own foundations. As such, then, we have no com-

plaint against propositions to define marriage legally.

What is strange in this furor over homosexual marriage is the anger and outrage of many evangelicals. This is strange because the controversy over homosexual marriage is an evil fruit of the abandonment of God's definition of marriage by the toleration and advocacy of divorce. Those who joined in dismantling and defiling marriage by the sin of divorce, which the LORD hates (Mal. 2:15), now are outraged that marriage is being given to homosexuals. Those who have defended the right of a man or woman to have two or more spouses by divorcing one and marrying another are now up in arms about homosexuals wanting to marry. Those who are silent about divorce and remarriage are loud in their protests against homosexual marriage.

Let the opponents of homosexual marriage also be enemies of divorce!

Repeal the no-fault divorce laws. Let us see that put on a ballot initiative. Let that be written on blogs, and posted on the Internet, and be the subject of editorials in magazines, and the title of books.

In the churches themselves, preach the truth that the LORD hates putting away. Teach that divorce destroys children. Teach, instead of explaining away, the Lord's own teaching in the Gospel accounts about marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

Let churches discipline and excommunicate those living impenitently in the sin of divorce and remarriage.

Stop fellowshiping with those divorced and remarried.

And be willing to suffer as the prophet John the Baptist suffered for the word and testimony of Jesus Christ about divorce. The divorced Herodias was at war with the prophet—he was

put in prison and beheaded on account of that evil woman—because he told Herod that it was not lawful for him to have his brother Philip's wife (Mark 6:18).

While we are not interested in fighting the world's culture wars, we do have a profound interest in God's good institution of marriage and in testifying against its abuse and defilement by homosexual marriage—and divorce and remarriage. Let this be the message of the church.

■ Pay the Piper

It is the longstanding position of the Protestant Reformed Churches that union membership is evil in the light of Scripture's teaching with regard to the oath, with regard to the duty of the worker to submit to the God-ordained authority of the employer, and with regard to the violence and rebellion of which unions are guilty and of which every member of the union makes himself guilty by his membership.

This ought to make the cover story in the October 24, 2009 issue of *World* magazine of interest to the Protestant Reformed Churches and the Protestant Reformed working man. In her article, "Save the Unions: The big business of big labor backed by big government," Emily Belz writes,


After doling out \$450 million in 2008 to elect Democrats in Washington, unions are looking for payback.... Unable to keep union membership from long-term decline, big labor is counting on a friendly administration and Congress to make workplace changes in its favor. And this is bad news for many of the independent business owners who drive economic growth.

The unions have piped and now they must be paid. They have piped the virtues of their friends to the tune of some \$450 million,

and now they want their friends to pipe their virtues, preferably in the form of tough laws enforcing the rights of unions. This is bad news for business owners.

It is also bad news for the Protestant Reformed working man who will also feel the pressure. This is especially true in the hard-hit construction sector of the economy. According to the article, "Construction businesses were some of the first to feel the economy's free fall but haven't been the first to recover. Nationally, the unemployment rate in construction is at 16.5 percent, compared to the overall unemployment rate of 9.8 percent."

A sign of this new climate favorable to unions is an executive order encouraging federally funded projects over \$25 million to be given to union companies. One such project is the \$35 million Job Corps Center in New Hampshire that was recently commissioned by the Department of Labor. "Only unionized construction workers will be allowed on the site, according to restrictions the federal agency imposed on the project." There will undoubtedly be other signs of this in the construction industry and wherever the unions will have their presence felt.

This and other pressure from unions is unjust suffering for the Christian working man who will not join the union because it is against God's word. God's word also comforts the Christian working man in this suffering, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh...ye have heard of the patience of Job, and that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5:7, 8, 11). 

What to Think

In these ungodly times when many of us are facing the difficult task of rearing covenant children and young people, there arise in our minds many questions.

One question many ask is, "Must we teach our children *what* to think...or *how* to think?"

Is it right and proper to teach them to think like we do? Or would that be we infringing on their rights and freedoms? Are we restricting their pursuit of happiness by imposing our way of thinking on them?

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6).

"My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding" (Prov. 2:1-3).

The Bible indicates that we must tell our children, starting at a very early age, *how to evaluate* the various ideas and choices bombarding them with more and more regularity. This instruction must be clear and repetitive. Young children must memorize and learn what to think, what to write, how to act. We as parents must show them what to think about various religious teachings and moral

choices that they face. This must be done by guiding them to the correct biblical response and we must not be satisfied with answers merely rooted in our tradition or cultural biases.

We clearly are called to teach those in our charge *what* to think about the myriad of choices facing them and the numerous ideologies that are presented as scientific fact in our society today. Our young children must especially be taught what to think about God, their neighbor, and their responsibilities toward both. Children must memorize their catechism and learn the Bible in both home and school.

We who are parents have the right to teach our children what to think, what to write, and how to act. We are not invading their privacy or trampling their human rights by demanding that they think and act the way we tell them. Their privacy belongs to us; we are responsible to God for their upbringing.

However, the popular mindset of the day, which permeates the mass media and educational worlds, would demand otherwise. These groups state emphatically that we must be more permissive parents and allow more freedom of thought and action, without imposing any moral obligations or biblical mandates upon any individuals, including our children.

Authors like Rousseau, John Stuart Mill, Friedrich Nietzsche, Margaret Mead, and Sigmund

Feud have had a profound impact on the moral climate of our time. They assert that humans are amoral and that morals erected by man in the name of religion are keeping our society in a state of unnatural angst. Always in the name of "science," these sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, and the like attempt to bring some credibility to their godless philosophy. You will find that this type of pseudoscience is the handmaid of all of the false ideologies of our times. Politics, the mass media, and public education are the devices that carry out the ideologies of these execrable authors.

Rousseau's famous argument that man is best in his natural state has been reflected in the writings of all of these popular nineteenth and twentieth century authors. They insist that if our children or students are asked to follow our way of thinking when it comes to choices of music, entertainment, friendships, sexual

purity, fiscal responsibility, etc., it will create a state of tension and unnatural anxiety within them. The worldly philosophers, psychologists, and the like, particularly stress sexual freedom in their writings. These books are written in ways to appeal to the prurient interests in our society. It is exactly that ideology that has permeated our culture and is the

We who are parents have the right to teach our children what to think, what to write, and how to act.

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reason for the sexual bacchanalia that our society now faces

But alas, we would be trampling individual rights! To speak out against certain behavior could even be considered “hate speech” (a topic left for another article). If one were publicly to condemn certain types of sexual behavior, such as homosexuality, he could be charged for “hate crimes” in some parts of the world today.

The only perversion in modern society is to say that there is perversion.

The Bible on the other hand would disagree. “In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion” (Rom. 1:27–NIV).

These worldly writers, who have influence in much of our society today, would have us not teaching our children what to think, but merely how to think on their own and how to come to their own independent conclusions—not affected by our biblically centered biases, but based on their natural instincts and feelings. With this arrangement then, they would have ultimate freedom to express their deepest freedoms and be truly happy.

They would argue that we must be more permissive as churches, schools, and parents, merely facilitating learning, not imparting wisdom and truth to our students. Adults should not view their role as one of leading children to the truth and helping them come to a final decision on things, but rather one of facilitating their making of their own decisions on the basis of their natural feelings. Mead, for one, suggests that we mitigate the strong role of parents and teachers traditionally thought of in our culture and allow children to decide everything for themselves.

The general permissiveness

and casualness of our society toward parenting and schooling reflects this way of thinking. It is manifested in the casual dress and attitude that prevails today, and in the causal way many go about addressing and viewing authority.

How to Think

But telling them *what* to think is not the final answer to the question.

“To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels” (Prov. 1:4-5).

We must also teach our children *how* to think antithetically. They should not be taught how to think in the way these authors would suggest. Rather, they should be led in how to think about things from the viewpoint of a thankful Christian life. As they think about what the truth is, how they should act, etc., they should think about how they can express their thankfulness to God for salvation full and free through Christ. As they mature, we must begin explaining more and more why we think the way we do and let them think more and more on their own. If our thoughts are biblical, our children will make them their own. That is the reality of the covenant.

As our children get older, we must also prepare them more and more to think on their own. Covenant parents and teachers in the good Christian schools must guide the young maturing Christians in decision making. This instruction must demonstrate and model how to apply the Bible to their decisions, and the folly of depending on their natural feelings. We can still give direction,

and help them pull their ideas together into a conclusion, but not immediately feed them the right way to think.

There should be a gradual change that comes naturally with maturity. Parents and teachers may find that some need more help coming to the correct biblical decisions later in life than do others. We should not assume that once a child reaches a certain age he or she will not need our guidance.

If our children are not weaned from our telling them *what* to think, and are not given the skill of *how* to think and apply the Bible, they will be left with cold formalism. By making all decisions for them on how they should act or think, we will eventually lead them to a religious setting of formalism. We run the risk of this if we don’t adequately explain our reasoning and guide them into biblical decision-making of their own as they mature. The way we think and act must be a matter of the heart.

To facilitate this, the young people must be well read on the different ideologies expressed by these authors, and know why the universal tolerances of all stan-

dards they posit are unacceptable for Christians. They must practice this decision-making by searching the Bible, thoughtful writing, active discussion, spirited debate, and prayer, often led by a competent adult

who can guide young Christians on their path to good thinking.


By the time they reach college and/or when they leave the nest, they had better know *how* to think and not just *what* to think. Our young people must be able to discern between bad thinking and good thinking and be able to foresee the results of going along with false thinking. We obviously can trust them more and more as they show this maturity. Trust,

*As our children
get older,
we must
also prepare them
more and more
to think on their own.*

but verify, as President Reagan stated about the Russians. We not only have the right, but also the responsibility, to check our children's e-mails, log into their facebook accounts, and demand that they stay home at night at least during the week, where we can spend time with them. This is a difficult task for all parents because of our own weak flesh, which makes us not want to fight

these battles or makes us too busy really to guide our young people in what they should think and how to think about various things.

We as parents and teachers are not able to teach our children what to think and how to think on our own. We must, of course, depend on the work of the Holy Spirit in our renewed covenant children. We have faith that God

will preserve them despite our feeble attempts at teaching them what to think and how to think in a time of moral relativity and overall casualness that has permeated even the church world in these end times. May God give us an understanding of the times in which we now live, so that we can better rear the covenant seed and future leaders of the church here below. 

Origins of the PRC

Rev. Andy Lanning.

Henry Danhof (7) *Deposed and Cast Out*

When we last left Henry Danhof, he was making a promise to the delegates of the Christian Reformed Synod of 1924. His promise was occasioned by the synod's adoption of the theory of common grace as binding doctrine in the CRC. Almost before the ink of that decision in the synodical minute book was dry, Danhof submitted a document of his own. As we rejoin him now and peek over his shoulder at this letter he submitted, we find in it his conviction that his and Rev. Hoeksema's statements were in harmony with Scripture and the confessions, and that the three points of common grace were not. And then this concluding promise:

In as much as this is my deepest held conviction, Synod will surely understand me when I

declare at this time that I believe it is my calling before God and the churches not only to protest formally against these synodical decisions, but I also hope to take practical measures against them, both as a delegate from Classis Grand Rapids West and as one of the two brothers who are condemned in relation to the above-mentioned three points. Honesty demands it is my duty to say so.¹

This was no rebellious threat on Danhof's part, as if he were raving in stubborn insubordination against the synod. Rather, his promise came at the end of a cool-headed and well-reasoned demonstration that the three points of common grace were not Reformed. And if they were not Reformed, how could any Christian Reformed minister in good conscience tolerate them? Danhof's promise was simply the honest, inevitable conclusion of his Reformed and biblical convictions.

Henry Danhof was as good

as his word. The "practical measures" he had promised in July were immediately forthcoming in his preaching and his writing. He had always preached that God's grace was for His people alone, and he continued to do so. But Danhof now began a regular program of writing as well. Along with Rev. Herman Hoeksema and Rev. George Ophoff, Danhof became co-editor of the *Standard Bearer*, with the first issue appearing in October of 1924. In this paper, the three ministers explained the errors of the three points of common grace as adopted by the Christian Reformed Synod.

Henry Danhof's preaching and writing did not go unnoticed. Several consistories in Classis Grand Rapids West were of a mind that Danhof should be required publicly to agree with the three points of common grace. But instead of approaching Danhof's consistory in the First CRC of Kalamazoo, the consistories went directly to Classis West. They entreated classis to press Danhof for a statement whether or not he agreed with the three points. Classis Grand Rapids

Rev. Lanning is pastor of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan.

Previous article in this series: September 1, 2009, p. 471.

¹ CRC Acts of Synod: 1924, Article 149, p. 199 (Henry de Mots, trans.).

West met on January 13, 1925, and sent the following order to Danhof's consistory:

The Classis of Grand Rapids West hereby requires you to require of your minister: 1. That he declare himself unequivocally whether he is in full agreement, yes or no, with the three points of the Synod of Kalamazoo *Acta Synodi* 1924, Article 132, page 145 to 147. 2. An unconditional promise that in the matter of the three points he will submit (with the right of appeal) to the Confessional Standards of the Church as interpreted by the Synod of 1924, i.e., neither publicly nor privately purpose, teach or defend either by preaching or writing any sentiments contrary to the Confessional Standards of the Church as interpreted by the Synod of 1924 and in case of an appeal that he in the interim will acquiesce in the judgment already passed by Synod of 1924.²

When the consistory of First CRC Kalamazoo received this order, they had a decision to make. Would they require their minister to make such a promise? The consistory was in agreement with Danhof's position on common grace and did not see how they could demand of him the promise that classis sought. The consistory also detected an assumption on the part of classis that Danhof was sinning by publicly opposing common grace, but no specific charges of sin were being brought to their attention. Therefore, the consistory responded that they would not put classis' demands to Rev. Danhof. Instead, if classis had a charge of sin against Kalamazoo's pastor, they should make that charge to the consistory so that it could be dealt with properly.

Classis Grand Rapids West

² Herman Hoeksema, *The Protestant Reformed Churches in America* (Grand Rapids: First Protestant Reformed Church, 1936), p. 231.

met again to deal with Kalamazoo's response. Henry Danhof was a delegate. The classis agreed that it did not really have any accusations to bring against Danhof, but that classis still wanted Kalamazoo's consistory to enforce the orders they had been given. Danhof sat and listened to the discussion as it went back and forth. He observed as classis drew up a letter to Kalamazoo with the same orders as before. When it was all finished, he asked for the floor. Solemnly, he informed the classis that he would resign from the ministry of the Word at his next consistory meeting. Later, Herman Hoeksema would speculate that Danhof was trying to protect his consistory from any more attacks by Classis Grand Rapids West. Perhaps Danhof thought that with him out of the way, classis would leave the consistory of Kalamazoo in peace. As it turns out, classis had no such intentions. As soon as classis heard that Danhof was going to resign, it declared that Kalamazoo's elders would then have to submit to the two demands previously given.

Whatever Danhof's motive may have been in announcing his intent to resign, he followed through on it at the next consistory meeting. When the men were all assembled, Danhof asked permission to resign from his office as minister. The consistory refused to grant Danhof's request. So Danhof tried again. And again the consistory refused. As an anniversary book of First CRC Kalamazoo states, "For the sake of peace, our pastor asked, repeatedly, permission to resign; but the Consistory declined the offer."³

Classis Grand Rapids West

³ "Twenty-Five Years of Service and Fellowship: Reverend H. Danhof, 1918-1943," in the *Silver Anniversary Program of the Protestant Reformed Church of Kalamazoo* (1943), p. 13.

was losing patience with Kalamazoo and its pastor. Because the consistory refused to press classis' demands upon him, classis approached Danhof directly with its two requirements. Danhof responded that classis was overstepping its bounds. If the classis had suspicions or accusations to bring, then let them be brought. But until the consistory received such charges, Danhof and his consistory would not place themselves under the two demands of the classis.


This, the classis deemed to be insubordination on the part of Rev. Danhof and his consistory. On January 24, 1925, "without any further deliberation," classis "proceeded to depose, first the Consistory and thereupon the pastor of Kalamazoo I."⁴ Rev. Danhof had been removed from the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church.

Classis Grand Rapids West appointed Rev. G. J. Haan, minister of the Second Christian Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, to preach in Kalamazoo I the following Sabbath, since Danhof had been deposed. However, Danhof felt the classis to be in grave error, and was concerned about what would happen to the members of his congregation. It was no mere personal slight that prompted Danhof to take the following actions, but a concern for Christ's sheep. He secretly arranged with the consistory and congregation for the worship service to begin half an hour earlier than normal. Several of the young men of the congregation agreed among themselves to sit in the front rows of the sanctuary as a kind of bodyguard for their minister, should anyone try to stop him from preaching. Imagine Rev. Haan's surprise when he arrived at church only

⁴ Herman Hoeksema, *The Protestant Reformed Churches in America*, p. 244.

to find Rev. Danhof in the pulpit and the service well underway. Unable to do anything else, he

turned around and went home. Thus Rev. Danhof, although having been removed from the min-

istry in the Christian Reformed Church, kept his pulpit and congregation. 

When Thou Sittest in Thine House

Mrs. Janice Miersma

Royal Children: Clothed with Humility and Honor

Hemlines rise and fall, waistlines ascend and descend, necklines descend and then plunge. How do royal children, and perhaps especially royal daughters, run through this fashion gauntlet? Parents must teach the royal children whom God has entrusted to their care to navigate this danger-fraught course. As royal children we wear distinctive garments, the finest in the kingdom. Does the way we dress reflect our spiritual garments as children of the great King?

When we examine the clothing of the royal children, we begin with the opposite of clothing—our nakedness and what it pictures to us. Using a KJV concordance I found 104 references to “naked” or “nakedness,” not one of them with a positive connotation. Nakedness is associated with shame and disgrace, with captivity. Nakedness cries out for covering. Strikingly, part of the shame of the cross, the shame for our sin that Christ took upon Himself, was this: “I may tell all my bones; they look and stare upon me.”

Over against this idea of nakedness, Satan, the world, and our own sinful flesh proclaim the glory of nakedness. We can see this already in ancient civiliza-

tions, particularly in the classical Greek culture, which found great glory and beauty in the human form uncovered, especially the male form. This glory in the naked human form was reborn at the time of the Renaissance and has continued and developed to our day.

The human body as it came from the hand of God was indeed a thing of marvelous beauty, one of the things of which God said that it was very good. But marred by sin, which affects us in our whole nature, body and soul, that beautiful body now must be covered. The only exception to this is in marriage. By implication, we learn from Leviticus 18, where all the sinful uncoverings of nakedness are detailed, that between a husband and wife there is a proper and necessary uncovering, that the intimacy of the union of Christ and His church may be expressed.

Having seen that our nakedness must be covered, we find that our first instinct is to find our own clothing: fig leaves (Gen. 3), filthy rags (Is. 64), or spider webs (Is. 59), all of which are completely inadequate to cover us in the sight of God from the shame of our own spiritual nakedness before Him (Rev. 3:17, 18). Perhaps this is what has led to the obsession with and glorying in clothing that we see through all ages, causing both men and women to desire to outdo one another in the luxury

of their garments, to make more elaborate clothing, and to set and follow fashion trends. But spiritually, we cannot cover our own nakedness. It is impossible. How then can we be covered?

Only God can provide this covering, as He did for Adam and Eve in their fallen state after their fig leaves failed to cover them. God gives us many beautiful promises concerning the way in which He will clothe us: “garments of salvation,” “the robe of righteousness” (Is. 61:10), the “garment of praise” (Is. 61:3). Scripture repeatedly refers to being clothed with these, especially in reference to the priests, which, as a New Testament kingdom of priests, we are. In fact, in Exodus there is a lengthy description of the garments that were made for the high priest so that the Old Testament saints could see by them the beauty and glory of their Savior to come. Here is the only covering for our spiritual nakedness and shame: the blood and righteousness of this blessed Savior. His beauty and glory become ours as a people who “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 13:14) by faith.

What does all this have to do with how we dress? Our salvation begins on the inside, in how we see ourselves by nature, how we see the salvation that God has given us in Christ, and how, delighting in it, we live out of it in every area of our lives. When we are clothed with humility (I Pet.

Mrs. Miersma is the wife of Rev. Thomas Miersma, pastor of Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada.

5:5), we see ourselves as spiritually naked and truly know the shame of our sin and sinful nature. Further, knowing our utter inability to clothe ourselves, we desire and delight in the honorable garments, the fine linen, the robes of salvation, which God has provided for us in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Because He has given us these garments, we glory in them and strive to wear them in a way that will bring glory to Him.

Just as the knowledge that marriage is a picture of the living union between Christ and His church will work itself out in our marriages, this knowledge of our spiritual garments will work itself out in how we dress.

Now Scripture does not give us rules and regulations regarding what we wear. It doesn't give us a Reformed uniform. It sets forth certain principles, the most explicit of which is found in I Timothy 2:9, 10: "In like manner, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, and gold or pearls or costly raiment; but (which becometh women professing godliness) through good works." To adorn has the idea of "set in order," which would imply that we give thought to what we wear, that we seek to be neat and orderly in our dress. "Modest" comes from the same root word in Greek and has the idea of being both orderly and becoming. We don't dress ourselves as if what we wear doesn't matter at all. There is no place for a dowdy false asceticism. Thayer defines shamefacedness as "a sense of shame or honour, modesty, bashfulness (reluctance to draw attention to oneself), reverence, regard for others, respect." Sobriety is soundness of mind (spiritually), self-control or self-

restraint. These characteristics are exactly the opposite of what the fashion trendsetters of this world proclaim: "Look at me! I'm beautiful. I'm sexy."

Paul is not saying that Christian women may not arrange their hair in attractive styles or wear nice clothing, but because their chief adorning is good works, they will not want to focus a great deal of their time, attention, or money on these things, but rather on a life of godliness. Hours at the mall, in the closet, in front of the mirror will make it impossible to adorn ourselves with good works such as prayer and meditation on and study of

God's word, visits to the sick and aged, opening our homes to the poor and strangers in our midst.

The woman of Proverbs 31 applies this practically. She wears fine, well-ordered clothing but has provided it for herself in the way of diligence and thrift, not by wasting the substance of her husband. She adorns her life with good works by stretching out her hands to the needy. The life of godliness is the Reformed uniform.

Another principle is found in Deuteronomy 22:5: "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God." What is the principle here? Our dress should reflect a clear distinction between the sexes in the culture in which we live. In ancient Israel, both men and women wore robes. In China, women wore pants and men wore robes. In modern North America, Europe, and other cultures heavily influenced by them, while both men and women wear pants, generally speaking, only women wear skirts (kilts being a rare exception). But

even when the outward form of clothing is similar, women and men should dress in such a way that there is no confusion of the sexes. God made us to be distinct, and this distinction must be maintained.

There are also other more general principles that the child of God who is clothed with both humility and honor will apply to himself or herself. If I am clothed with humility, I will think of others when I dress, not seeking their approval so that I must follow certain fashions, but being concerned, especially when I go to God's house to worship, that I dress in a way that shows reverence for God and respect and consideration for others. I take the time to groom myself and to dress neatly and in a way that will not distract others from the worship of God. I do not conceive of myself as a mere individual but as a member of the body of Christ. I will remember that everything I do affects the body and represents the body. If I seek to live out of the principles of Romans 14:7-13, will I dress in such a way that I would be a stumbling block, an occasion to tempt others to sin, whether by immodesty or by excessively elaborate clothing? Especially as women, both as young women and as mothers who would teach our daughters to walk in love with fellow members, we will dress so that we do not cause the men in the church to have to avert their eyes continually to avoid temptation.

In thinking about this article, I googled the word modesty and came across a website that contained an article in which a young man confessed that he dreaded spring because he would once again be assaulted with the view of so much female flesh that he would have to spend all his time looking at the concrete. This was not a Christian website. If even unbelievers or nominal Christians can find this increasing exposure

*...knowledge of
our spiritual garments
will work itself out
in how we dress.*

of nakedness disturbing, how much more ought we humbly to consider others when we dress and teach our children the principles of dress?

Representing Christ's redeemed and sanctified bride in this world, we will not seek to ape the world in its constant pursuit after changing fashions, nor will we adopt a regulation uniform, whether burkas or headscarves. Living in the world, we may use the fashions of the world just as we do its other cultural products, but we will not be ruled by them and we will always test them against the scriptural principles we have seen. This is true not only for our daughters, but also for our sons. Because of the increasing lack of true manhood, men today ape women in their pursuit of style, often styles that express rebellion (by sloppiness and an "I don't care" look), and yes, immodesty. If you (male or female) must constantly be hiking up your pants to keep them from sinking below the critical line, something is wrong.

Just as a bride will seek the glory of her husband, so we, as the bride of Christ in the world, will seek to adorn our confession in the way we dress.

Sometimes objections to modesty are raised: "We're not Anabaptists," or "We're not prudes." Charles Spurgeon, in his *Morning and Evening*, said, "Things doubtful we need not doubt about; they are wrong to us. Things tempting we must not dally with, but flee from them with speed. Better be sneered at as a Puritan than be despised as a hypocrite." Because cultural customs change and develop, standards of modesty are far different today from what they were in the past. While this is

true, we must not use that as an excuse to allow more and more flesh to be exposed, or for our clothing to become tighter and tighter. Once the camel has his nose in the tent, will we notice as he gradually and increasingly intrudes his presence?

In the world today, we are assailed with the shame of nakedness exposed in the grocery store, along the roadside, and in our own homes. We become hardened by the constant parade, from magazine covers to billboards, from television commercials to Internet pop-up ads. We lose our spiritual sensitivity. We lose our modesty. Young women are bombarded with the idea that the way to attract a man is to dress in such a way that more and more flesh is revealed. This


means of attraction also feeds the innate female desire for attention and admiration. Women of the world seek by their seductive dress to gain power over men who would otherwise tyrannize them. This is the

message of many women's magazines, and "romance" novels, of movies, television programs, and advertisements. But what kind of men will our young women attract if they heed this Eve-like desire to be "wise in their own eyes"?

Young children can learn the principles of modesty. "Begin as you mean to go on." If you would not want your sixteen-year-old to wear a certain style, don't dress your three-year-old in it. Young children seem "innocent," but they need to learn modesty at a young age. If an activity (like swimming or track) requires brief or form-fitting clothing, plan carefully so that exposure is limited. Use cover-

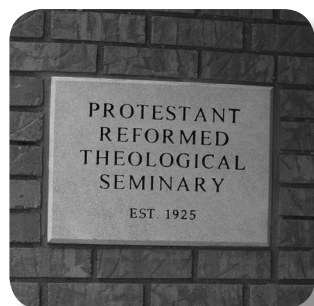
ups. While we need not hide the fact that women and men have different shapes, Christian modesty will always keep the shame of nakedness in Scripture in mind in its dress. Perhaps an activity is itself a legitimate one, but if it will tempt our child to immodesty or to be comfortable before others in immodest clothing, we will forego it. If Jesus tells us to pluck out an eye or cut off a hand if it offends us (places a stumbling block or impediment in our spiritual way), surely we can give up something that is far less valuable to us than our right eye or hand.

We must be aware of the programs our children are watching, the books and magazines they are reading, the websites they are visiting, the chats they are enjoying. Satan, our adversary, is hard at work by all these means, seeking whom he may devour. Let's not just say, "You can't wear that!" but rather talk to our daughters about the motivation to modesty, about the need to walk in spiritual separation, not only from the world, but from the worldly influences that enter the church. As Christian fathers let us teach our sons to prize modesty, not admiring the immodest women of the world. Let's encourage our sons in their dating and courtship to seek such modesty and to compliment the young woman who dresses attractively but modestly.

We will encourage one another in this wearing of the garments of salvation by guarding our children against the false adornments of the daughters of Zion (Is. 3), by reminding them as royal children to know their shame by nature, to rejoice in their glorious salvation in Christ, and to walk humbly as the bride of their Savior in the midst of a shameless world, "shining as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." In this way, God will build His church and bless us in our generations. 

*...we may use
the fashions
of the world
just as we do
its other
cultural products,
but we will not
be ruled by them....*

At its meeting in early June, Synod 2009 approved a long-range plan to remodel the facilities of the Theological School. Synod also approved Phase I of this project to be completed during the summers of 2009 and 2010 at a cost of \$248,000 to be paid for



(before)



exclusively with existing and new donations. The Building Committee is pleased to report that construction for 2009 is now completed and was



(after)

finished on budget and on time for classes to begin. We also thank the many Protestant Reformed contractors and tradesmen who made this possible. Work

this summer included a new front entrance, landscaping, walkway, new work-room, and offices for the secretary and registrar. For those who were unable to view the completed remodeling during the recent John Calvin conference, pictures before and after are provided here.

The Lord willing, the balance of the Phase I work will be complete next summer. It will involve a rearrangement and remodeling of the classrooms, and preparation work for future relocation-construction of new lounges, kitchen, and bathrooms (Phase II). At the

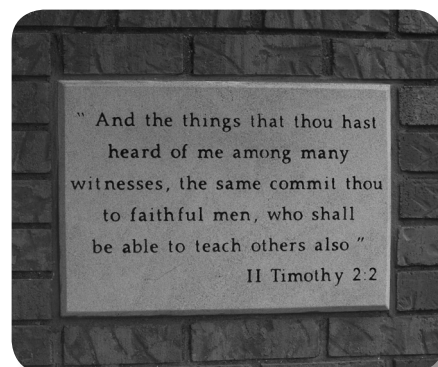


(after – office)



(after – front entryway)

Building Committee (616-890-2545).



Report of Classis West

Classis West met in special session on October 21, 2009, to examine Mr. Cory Griess, who had accepted the call to Calvary PRC of Hull, IA. Calvary PRC hosted this meeting of Classis, which was held in the facilities of the Hull PRC. Rev. R. Kleyn presided over this meeting.

Already on Tuesday night the delegates and synodical deputies gathered in the sanctuary of Hull

PRC to worship our God, and to hear Mr. Griess preach his specimen sermon on Isaiah 55:1-2, under the theme "God's Marketplace for the Soul." Having heard this sermon, Classis judged that Mr. Griess demonstrated the ability to exegete Scripture and to preach to the edification of God's people.

After examining Mr. Griess in all points of dogmatics, knowledge of the Scriptures, knowledge

of the confessions, controversy, and practica, Classis approved his examination and advised Calvary PRC to proceed with his ordination to the ministry of the word and sacraments. His ordination service was scheduled for Thursday, October 22.

Classis receives the gift of another pastor, as does Calvary PRC, and as must the denomination, with thanksgiving to God,

who gives pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-12).

Classis acted favorably regarding Classis East's request

that Classis West assist in supplying the pulpit of Cornerstone PRC, by appointing three men to preach for Cornerstone during December and January.

The expenses of this classis totaled \$10,590.58.

God willing, Classis West will meet next in regular session on March 3, 2010, in Loveland, CO.

Rev. Douglas Kuiper,
Stated Clerk, Classis West



News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Mission Activities

Pittsburgh, PA is a city built on steep hills, and when too much rain falls in a short period of time it can cause extensive property damage due partly to erosion. Such was the case this summer when our Pittsburgh Mission church and parsonage suffered major water damage, which required correction and reconstruction on two concrete and stone-block retaining walls that ran along the driveway of the house next to the church building. The week of September 14 the DMC sent a number of landscapers from the West Michigan area who donated their time and efforts to make those repairs. Some more work still needs to be done, but funds are available to complete the project. The efforts of these volunteers saved the mission much money, and their expertise should stand the mission in good stead for years to come.

Rev. Richard Smit, our denomination's missionary to the Berean PRC in Manila, the Philippines, had the opportunity to speak at the Thursday evening Bible Study meeting of Pastor Andre's flock in Batesan Hill on September 10. Rev. Smit was asked to speak on the topic, "What does it mean to be Protestant Reformed?" Another speech was planned for that same Bible study on October 22. This will be the next speech in a series that will attempt to answer

the overall question, "What does it mean to be Protestant Reformed?" This speech will focus on the doctrinal heritage of the PR Churches. Rev. Daniel Kleyn, who will be visiting the mission about that time, planned to present that lecture. The future plan is to provide three more speeches addressing other aspects of the PR heritage (worship, church government, and daily life applications) in November, December, and January, the Lord willing.

Sister-Church Activities

On October 1, Rev. Angus Stewart, pastor of the Covenant PRC in Ballymena, Northern Ireland, gave a lecture on divorce and remarriage at Abbots Cross Congregational Church. A week earlier, September 24, Rev. Stewart spoke on the subject, "Guidance: How do I know God's Will for my Life." Rev. Stewart promised to look at questions like, What about buying a house, marrying, or getting a new job? Is it a matter of hearing God's voice or receiving a sign? What does the Bible teach?

Evangelism Activities

The Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA invited their community, by word of mouth, radio, and flyers posted throughout the community, to a Seminar on "Biblical Principles for Personal Finances," given by their pastor, Rev. Rodney Kleyn, on Friday evenings, October 2, 9, 16, and 23, D.V.

We can also report that Covenant began broadcasting their services live over the Internet at www.reformedspokane.org on September 27.

Congregation Activities

As part of their celebration of 55 years of existence as a congregation, the Kalamazoo, MI PRC sponsored a Community Open House on Saturday, September 26. Neighbors of Kalamazoo PRC were invited to come and have a look at the little church at the end of Green Acres St, say hi, enjoy lunch, and become better acquainted.

On September 15, Rev. Garrett Eriks, pastor of the Hudsonville, MI PRC, celebrated ten years in the ministry. To commemorate that event, the congregation of Hudsonville was invited to stay for coffee after their evening service on October 4 to thank their pastor and his wife personally for their faithful service to their congregation and denomination.

Members of our churches around the Chicago, IL area were invited to a concert by the Hope Heralds, a male chorus from the Grand Rapids, MI area PR churches, at the Cornerstone PRC, Dyer, IN on Sunday evening, September 20.

The members of First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI were invited to their annual Fall Fellowship Dinner on September 22. Their pastor, Rev. James Slopsema, gave a ten-minute talk to encourage First in their Bible and catechism studies for the year. Everyone—older, younger, and in between, was encouraged to make an extra effort to come out for this time of fellowship with others in their church family.

Earlier this year we reported that the Providence PRC, currently meeting at Heritage Christian

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

School in Hudsonville, MI, had plans to purchase property in the Bridelwood residential development in Jamestown Township, south of Hudsonville, for a possible future building site. At a public hearing on August 18, opposition to that possible purchase was overwhelming, as neighbors in Bridelwood expressed concerns over increased traffic, a parking lot, light pollution, and the developments' change. Bridelwood has about 110 homes, and the acreage where Providence sought to build was in the last phase of that development. Then on September 21, with the results of the August public hearing still fresh in their minds, the Jamestown Planning Commission unanimously nixed the request to adjust development rules for the Bridelwood neighborhood. Doing so would have allowed Providence to build on that 8.5 acres. Consequently Providence has let the land

go back to the seller, and they will continue looking at other options.

Denomination Activities

On September 24 the Reformed Free Publishing Association held their annual meeting. This year's meeting was at the Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI. Rev. G. Eriks spoke on "Read Any Good Books? Reformed Books in the Reformed Home."

The Senior Singles Fellowship met for dinner at the Hudsonville, MI PRC on September 24. Following the meal, Rev. Daniel Kleyn gave a presentation concerning the work that the PRC is doing in the Philippines and the preparations he is making to begin missionary work there.

School Activities

The Free Christian School in Edgerton, MN invited parents and teachers to its Fall PTA meeting on October 2. Rev. Allen

Brummel spoke on the subject, "Diligence and Distraction."


Minister Activities

Rev. Doug Kuiper received the call from the Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL to serve as their next pastor.

Rev. Thomas Miersma accepted the call to serve as pastor to the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada.

Rev. James Slopsema declined the call he received to serve as the next pastor of Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI.

Rev. Carl Haak declined the calls he received from First in Holland, MI and Cornerstone PRC in Dyer, IN to become their next pastor.

Rev. Clayton Spronk also declined the call from the Byron Center, MI PRC to serve as their next pastor. 

Announcements

TEACHERS NEEDED

The Protestant Reformed School in Wingham was unable to hire teachers to fill its classrooms last year. Therefore we have changed our plans and are hoping to open for the 2010-11 year, D.V. We are seeking a teacher/administrator for a class of 9 students in grades 7-12. Teaching will be assisted by online curriculum for the upper grades. We are also seeking an elementary teacher to teach a class of 16 students in grades K-6. Volunteer assistance will be available. For more information please contact board vice president Mr. Harvey Kikkert at (519)523-4823 or email hkikkert@hurontel.on.ca.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Hull PRC express their sympathy to the widow, Mrs. Martha DeJong, and the families of Gerben DeJong, Alden DeJong, and Dave Wiersma in the death of their husband, father, and grandfather,

MR. THOMAS DE JONG.

"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Rev. Steven Key, President
Mr. Loren Gritters, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council and congregation of Grandville PRC express their Christian sympathy to those members who mourn the loss of loved ones. Ken and Dorothy Vink and family in the death of Dorothy's brother,

RALPH VANDER LEE.

Andy and Shannon Bylsma and family in the death of Andy's sister,

CHRISTINE LINKER.

May they find comfort knowing that those who die in the Lord "are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant" (Hebrews 12:22-24).

Rev. K. Koole, President
Herm DeVries, Vice-all