

# THE *October 15, 2009* STANDARD BEARER

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Volume 86 ◆ Number 2

# Receiving a Hundredfold

*And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,*

*But he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.*

Mark 10:29-30

A rich young ruler came to Jesus inquiring what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus' response was that he must sell all that he had and give the proceeds to the poor. Then he would have eternal life. This was to impress upon the rich young ruler that if he would inherit the kingdom he must love his poor neighbor more than his riches. The young man departed, sorrowful. He could not at this time part with his riches.

*Rev. Slopsema is pastor of First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

Jesus used this as an opportunity to instruct His disciples. How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

In response Peter said, "Lo, we have left all, and followed thee" (v. 28). This was literally true. They had left family and vocation to follow Jesus as His disciples. Implied in Peter's statement was a question, which Matthew records in his gospel (19:27), "What shall we receive?"

Jesus' response to Peter's question is the subject of this meditation.

Those who leave all behind for His sake and the gospel's sake shall be handsomely rewarded. They shall receive a hundredfold in this life. And they shall receive eternal life in the world to come.

This instruction is important for us. The Christian life is often one of sacrifice. Many are inclined to compromise or even give up the Christian life because they deem the sacrifices

too great. But Jesus assures us that any sacrifice we make for the His sake and the gospel's will be handsomely rewarded—a hundredfold.



A necessary sacrifice!

Jesus spoke of leaving houses, or brethren, or sister, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for His sake and that of the gospel.

This is exactly what Jesus' disciples had done. According to Peter they had left all and followed Jesus (v. 28).

Notice, Peter spoke of following Jesus.

It was common in Bible times for a teacher to gain a following among the people. These would literally follow their teacher though the countryside, sitting at his feet for instruction, living according to his example and instruction.

Jesus also had His followers. Jesus, however, was not just another teacher. He is the Son of God come into our flesh as the chief prophet of God. During His earthly ministry there were the

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twelve disciples who followed Jesus wherever He went. There were others who did so less consistently. These others received His instruction and lived according to His commandments as His disciples. The twelve who followed Him daily had to leave all behind. They left behind houses and lands, brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers. They even left behind wives and children, by not marrying at this time.

This was all necessary for the sake of following Jesus.

The same holds true for us.

Although Jesus is no longer with us, we are still called to be disciples and followers of Him. One follows Jesus as disciple when he learns, embraces, and confesses the teachings of Jesus as revealed in Scripture. One follows Jesus when he follows the teachings and examples of Jesus by walking in the way of righteousness in the power of Jesus Christ. One follows Jesus when he serves Jesus Christ as Lord.

Such discipleship often requires one to leave many things behind. It may require one to leave his family, job, or home and to relocate to another part of the country as he heeds the Lord's call of service or as he seeks to join the true church of God. Discipleship may require one to break fellowship with sinful family members and leave them behind. Discipleship may require financial sacrifice to support the gospel, the poor, and the Christian school. Discipleship requires that one cast off all that offends, even that which is as important to you as your eye or your hand. Discipleship also brings persecution. Those who will follow Jesus will suffer persecution (II Tim. 3:12). And that often leads to the forfeiture of house and lands, even father, mother, brother, and sister for Christ's sake.



A rich compensation!

According to Jesus, those who sacrifice for Christ's sake shall be richly compensated by receiving a hundredfold in this life.

This seems almost too fantastic to be true. So Jesus confirms it with an oath. Verily (truly) I say unto you.

How is this to be understood?

We certainly are not to understand this in the strictly literal sense. Such an interpretation brings us to absurdities. How is it possible to have a hundred fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters? Shame on those televangelists who use Jesus' promise here to assure their listeners of a hundredfold monetary return on any contribution of money sent to their organization. This is nothing but fraud inspired by greed and filthy lucre.

Rather, we are to understand Jesus' words figuratively. The meaning, therefore, is that you will receive a hundredfold of the joy and pleasure that our homes, lands, and earthly relationships have ever given us. The earthly relationships of which Jesus speaks, as well as our houses and lands, are a source of great joy and pleasure to us. For that reason they are often difficult to

give up, even for the sake of Jesus Christ. What Jesus is saying is that whatever joy or pleasure we lose by leaving father, mother, brother, or sister for His sake, we will receive a hundredfold pleasure in return. It is very well possible that 100 is a symbolic number here expressing the idea of fullness.

How is this true?

For every earthly possession or relationship you sacrifice for Christ's sake and the gospel's, God will fill the void with the

riches of His love, fellowship, and care. This often happens as we turn directly to Him in our need and loss.

In turn, those who forfeit the joy of marriage or family for Christ's sake will find joy in new relationships with fellow saints who become to us a father, a mother, a brother, a sister.

Those parents who sacrifice for Christian school tuition will have the joy of seeing their children loving and obeying the Lord. The joy they find in their children will far surpass the joys of vacations and the higher standard of living they sacrificed for tuition payments.

Whatever joy and pleasure we lose for Christ's sake, the Lord will give us a hundredfold in return.

And remember that Jesus confirms this promise with an oath.

But there is more! Those who sacrifice for Christ's sake will be more fully compensated in the world to come in that they will receive eternal life.

Eternal life is the life of heavenly glory. It consists of living with God and enjoying Him fully as we serve Him in perfection, without the sins that plague us in this life.

The joy of eternal life far surpasses the hundredfold that we will receive in this life.

Of this life there is no end.

All who leave family and possessions for Jesus' sake shall receive this life.



A glorious incentive!

We must understand that this compensation that God gives for our sacrifice is a reward for faithfulness.

And it is a reward of grace.

There are two kinds of rewards. The one is of merit. This is a reward that you have earned

*As an incentive to faithfulness, God promises to compensate us handsomely.*

and thus deserve. The other is of grace. This is a reward that is given as an undeserved favor.

Certainly this compensation that God gives us for our sacrifices is not a reward of merit. Our act of self-sacrifice could never merit the great reward God gives to us.

The reward that God gives to those who sacrifice for Christ's sake and for the sake of the gos-

pel is a reward of grace. It is a reward that has been earned for us by Jesus Christ. It is given to us as an undeserved favor.

But it is given to us as an incentive.

To follow Jesus requires that we give up much.

As an incentive to faithfulness, God promises to compensate us handsomely.

Let us lay hold of this by faith, that we may follow Jesus as His disciples. When this discipleship requires, let us willingly forsake family and possessions for Jesus' and the gospel's sake.

That we may do so let us keep our eye on the reward.

A hundredfold in this life!

In the world to come, eternal life!



Editorial

Prof. Barrett Gritters

## Synod 2009's decisions regarding Article 21 of the Church Order (2)

**T**his past August, Synod 2009 concluded its work in answering protests, appeals, and an overture regarding Article 21 of the Church Order. Article 21 calls the *consistories* to "see to it that there are good Christian schools in which parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant."

In the last editorial, I summarized and explained synod's answers to these protests. Although I explained them, it is important that the decisions themselves be read carefully. (They are available to the PRC members from their consistory.) Synod was very careful in its language. Even though the advice that was adopted was not the fruit of a year-long study, it was the result of many days of work for five men appointed by synod. The advice was almost all adopted by synod. It maintained what Synod 2008 and Classis East had

already decided. The wording and some details were different, but the direction was the same. Synod identified the main issues involved and answered them in 11 major decisions.

The first six decisions (explained in the previous editorial) alternated between cautioning against error first on one side and then on the other:

1. The "schools" of Article 21 are the Christian day schools in which parents have their children instructed by others. Thus, Article 21 does not refer to Christian home schools.

2. Nevertheless, the covenant *demand* referred to in Article 21 is not the schools themselves, but the Christian instruction that is to be given.

3. It is the calling of each consistory member to uphold Article 21 by word and example.

4. Homeschooling itself "falls within the area of Christian liberty" because Scripture does not specify the precise manner in which parents give covenant instruction to their children.

5. Classis East was wrong, though, when it used "Christian liberty" as the basis for declaring that a minister's conscience gives him the right to homeschool, since a minister is limited in his conduct by the regulations of the Church Order.

6. In the specific case, the minister's reasons given for homeschooling (including criticisms of the Christian day schools) made it impossible for him effectively to carry out the mandate of Article 21. That is, he could not "believably...promote in his congregation those schools that were not good enough for his own children."

### Other objections

The above decisions of synod addressed the main issues. However, more objections were presented to synod than were treated in these main recommendations. The objections were, in the main, objections against aspects or implications of assemblies' previous decisions. Synod responded to these objections. Some of these

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*Previous article in this series: October 1, 2009, p. 5.*



issues repeat subjects already treated, but were judged important enough also to treat separately.

First, a claim was made that *classis and synod improperly added to the scriptural requirements for an officebearer*. That is, only the Bible, not an assembly, may spell out qualifications for a minister or elder. Synod's answer was that the protestants confused biblical "qualifications for office," which may not be added to, and other "requirements laid upon an officebearer by the Church Order to serve in our churches." Synod gave examples of other such requirements. Some are found in the "Call Letter" each minister receives. Unwillingness to carry out these requirements closes the door to the office. All churches have such requirements—written or unwritten, codified in a church order or elsewhere—willingly agreed to by those seeking office. This objection essentially was already answered in main "recommendation 5" when synod spoke of a man's conscience and the limits of the exercise of his liberty.

Second, a claim was made that *Classis East overstepped the bounds of its authority* when it passed judgment on the validity of the minister's actions of withdrawing all his children from two good Christian schools and homeschooling them. The objection claimed that the assemblies violated the autonomy (self-rule) of the local congregation. That is, classis and synod have very limited spheres of authority, and had no business judging in *this* sphere. Synod's answer was in the form of three main grounds: 1) the consistory itself made the matter the business of classis; 2) Classis did not violate the autonomy of the local congregation but simply exercised jurisdiction that the Church Order (Art. 36) gives it; and 3) that membership in a denomination of churches

involves mutual supervision and oversight, which is not hierarchy but what all expect as members of a denomination. The "autonomy of the congregation" must not be understood to mean that a congregation is independent. Reformed church government judges the principle of denominational unity as important as local autonomy.

Third (objection #3), a claim was made that *classis and synod improperly involved themselves in a matter that belonged exclusively to the authority of the parents*. That is, does an ecclesiastical assembly have any business at all in the realm of *parental* responsibilities? Synod referred back to her previous decisions: the question was *not* that of the authority of a *parent*, but that of the actions of a *parent* who was an *officebearer*, committed to meeting the obligations of the Church Order. Also, synod explained that the church has an obligation to oversee the spiritual welfare and training of covenant children.

Fourth, a claim was made that *Classis East improperly publicly questioned the effectiveness of the minister* (objection #4). Here, synod agreed with the objector. Classis East should not have made its investigations and conclusions *public*. Classis was not wrong in raising with the consistory the question of the pastor's effectiveness, but caused unnecessary offence in making the evaluation public.

#### An overture

Finally, synod answered an overture that asked for a change in the wording of the Church Order, so that it would add to the expression "good Christian

schools" the words, "be they parental communal schools or parental home schools." Thus, the overture proposed modifying Article 21 to put home schools on a par with the Christian day schools. Synod's answer, first, was that the five grounds for the overture did not support the proposed change. More importantly, synod defended the wording of Article 21 for two reasons: the calling of the *covenant community* and the importance of *trained teachers*. It was apparent, though, that *everything* synod had already adopted in its main recommendations loomed large in the minds of the delegates when rejecting the overture.

#### Conclusions

Some likely will label synod's decisions imbalanced. But the churches may be grateful that synod kept its balance in dealing with a very emotional, personal issue that holds major significance for a body of churches.

First, the churches have adopted a strong call to covenantal, parental, Christian education. Consistent with Reformed history, the elders are to promote vigorously the good Christian schools. There is need for this in these last days. Covenant youth are threatened in a multitude of ways. God forbid that we lose our schools, or our support for them.

May no member, in any way, diminish the support these schools require. May all members, young and old, join the school societies, and give liberally so that the tuition does not go out of reach for God's people. May deacons labor mercifully, opening wide their hearts (and hands!) to the members whose

...the churches may be grateful that synod kept its balance in dealing with a very emotional, personal issue that holds major significance for a body of churches.

tuition bills are great and cannot make ends meet. And may our good God be merciful to our children, and to the churches, by preserving among us these invaluable institutions. And may He bless our homes, our parents, and the teachers who labor on our behalf.

Second, the support of the good Christian schools is not a blind support of just any Christian school, or all the Christian schools. Implied in synod's decisions is the calling for elders to urge parents to establish, support, and maintain *good* Christian schools. If the schools lack or fail in any way, let the elders take the lead in their own lives as members of the school societies, and then use their office to call all the parents to make the necessary improvements. May no member, in any way, shield the schools from legitimate criticism. May our God open the hearts of the faithful school board members,

who sacrifice themselves for the covenant cause, to be willing to listen, wise to judge, and able to vote with their biblically-formed consciences.

Third, synod's decisions do not discourage homeschooling where there is not a good Christian school, or when there are special circumstances. A man who homeschools his children in these cases is not ineligible for serving in office. As synod expressly stated, homeschooling may in fact be the best choice where there is not a good Christian school option. The decisions of synod do not condemn homeschooling. Homeschooling is not wrong. Clear enough. But if a good Christian school is available, the elders of the church will discourage homeschooling, urge the members to use the good Christian school, instruct them in the reasons for its preference, and use the schools themselves.

Fourth, the Protestant Reformed Churches are not alone in these convictions. They are not the only denomination that has special requirements for her officebearers regarding Christian education. A local Christian college requires that its professors use the local Christian schools for their children. More significantly, until very recently an area United Reformed Church had "local regulations" that required every elder to use the good Christian schools that the church supported.

Though it was very distressing to deal with such differences of opinion, I pray the Lord will use the decisions of Synod 2009 for the peace of the churches. Precious peace and unity. More so, may He use the two years of deliberation, and the fruit of those deliberations, to maintain His covenant.

And let all the consistories see to it....



## News from the Seminary

September 15, 2009

I write this news on September 15, after one full week of classes in this new semester. The starting date this year was late. Both the extended session of Synod 2009 and the seminary's Calvin Conference in late August led the TSC to approve a starting date two weeks later than normal. But the year has begun, and begun well, under God's blessings.

The highlight of the summer was our Seminary-sponsored Calvin Conference in commemoration of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of John Calvin. For over a year preparations were made for this significant event. Southwest PRC (Grandville, MI) is to be recognized for their fine work in organizing most of the conference as the seminary gave them direction.

Speakers were four professors (R. Cammenga, R. Dykstra, D. Engelsma, and B. Gritters), one minister from the PRC (S. Key), one from the Covenant PRC in Northern Ireland (A. Stewart), and one from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia (C. Connors). Each presented a speech on some aspect of Calvin's life and teachings. There will be a

lengthier report of the conference coming soon. An abbreviated form of each speech will be included in an upcoming issue of the *Standard Bearer*. The seminary's *Journal* plans to print the entire text of the speeches in the next two issues. (If any reader of the *Standard Bearer* is interested in receiving the *Journal*, please write to Prof. Cammenga at the seminary's address.)

I noted at one time during the conference that our guests came from at least 15 different states, 3 Canadian provinces, the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Australia. The seminary is grateful to God for the opportunity to sponsor such a conference, which drew in the smallest meeting some 300 eager participants, and in the evening speeches, over 1000.

But now the seminary's work of instruction has begun. And with a significantly expanded entry-way and remodeled front offices, as can be seen from the



picture. The Theological School Committee completed the construction in time for classes to begin without any distractions. Thanks to the TSC's building committee and to all who were involved in the significant project. And thanks to the many donors who made the significant addition to the seminary possible. Please come to visit the seminary if you are in Grandville and witness the important work done in our very attractive and comfortable facility.

Missing from class this semester are the two fourth-year students, who are training under the supervision of an experienced pastor in an internship. Seminarian Daniel Holstege of the Southeast Grand Rapids PRC serves in the Randolph, Wisconsin,



*Dan Holstege  
in Randolph*

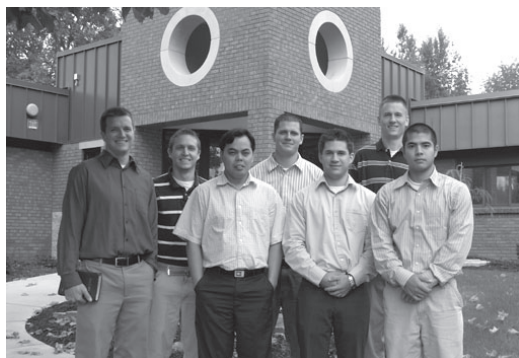
PRC, under the mentorship of Rev. Doug Kuiper. Seminarian Martyn McGeown of the Covenant PRC in Northern Ireland serves under Rev.



*Martyn McGeown at Southwest*

Arie denHartog in Southwest PRC, Grandville, MI.

Third-year students have been licensed to speak a word of edification in the churches. Nathan Decker, Brian Huizinga, and Jonathan Mahtani were absent from their home congregations much of the



summer because of the large number of requests for supply. They and we (professors) are thankful for the opportunity

to preach in the churches, sometimes all over the US and Canada, and experience the beauty of the communion of the saints. All of us preached so much we are eager to see the saints in our own congregations again.

Our second-year student is Stefan Griess, from Loveland, CO, PRC. And our first-year students are Karl Dykstra from the Southeast PRC, Grand Rapids, MI, and Erik Guichelaar, from Wingham PRC, Ontario.

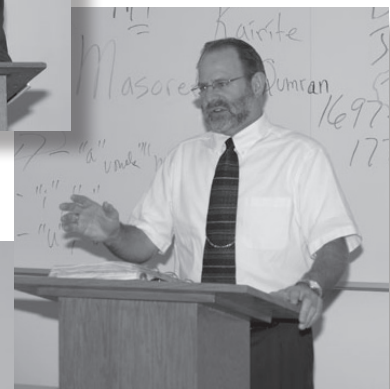
This fall, as the seminary tries to do at times, we have invited to speak for us a guest lecturer, a noted historian, Mr. Robert Swierenga. Prof. Swierenga, now research historian at Hope College, has a special interest in the Formula of Subscription, and on October 2 will speak on its history in Dutch Reformed churches.

The professors treasure their work—teaching, mentoring students, developing courses, writing for the *Journal* and *Standard Bearer*, lecturing for special

occasions, and assisting in the area churches as they are able. The work of the Lord here is a great work. We pray daily for the churches,



*Professor  
Dykstra*



*Professor Cammenga*

the pastors, the elders and deacons. Please remember us in your prayers too.

And again: pray that God may equip our sons for the high and glorious calling of the gospel ministry.

Prof. B. Gritters,  
Rector



*(Students pictured in group – l. t. r:  
Karl Dykstra, Stefan Griess, Vernon Ibe,  
Nathan Decker, Erik Guichelaar,  
Brian Huizinga, Jon Mahtani.)*



## Separated Unto the Gospel of God (2)

### Paul's Separation unto this Gospel

**T**his is the gospel, now, unto which Paul was separated: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, *separated unto the gospel of God*" (Rom. 1:1). There may very well be a play on words in the text. Prior to his conversion, Paul was a Pharisee. The word "Pharisee" means "separated one," and is derived from the same root as the verb "separated" in the text. Whereas before Paul was separated unto a fanatical sect that persecuted the church of God, now he was separated unto the gospel of God.

God separated and God called Paul to be a preacher of His gospel. That is the implication of the text. Paul was called to be an apostle, and Paul was separated unto the gospel *by* God. Read Romans 1:1 that way: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called *by* God to be an apostle, separated *by* God unto the gospel of God." If the gospel is the gospel of God, it follows that God calls and God separates men unto this gospel.

God called and God separated Paul unto the gospel in His eternal and sovereign counsel when

He determined that Paul should be a chosen vessel to proclaim the gospel of His grace in His Son, Jesus Christ. That call and separation of Paul consisted of his election unto salvation in eternity, according to which election God gave Paul to Jesus Christ. The call of God that separated Paul to the gospel came to him on the Damascus road when the risen Christ appeared directly to him, as is recounted in Acts 9. To that separation and call of Paul belonged also the time of Paul's preparation spent in the deserts of Arabia.

To that call of Paul belonged also the call of God through the church, as recorded in Acts 13:1-3. This is an important aspect of the call. This is an aspect of Paul's call and separation that may not be overlooked. That is implied also in the word "apostle," which means literally, "one who is sent out." That he is an apostle implies that Paul was called and sent out by another. That other is God in Christ, through the church. Paul did not go out on his own, carrying out an independent ministry, accountable to no one but himself. He did no such thing. He went out after having been called by the church. And in all his preaching he was subject to the church and to the church's supervision.

What was true of Paul is true of every preacher of the gospel. This is true, as well, of you brothers who graduate tonight. In His eternal counsel, God has not only chosen you to salvation, but has separated you unto the gospel. As God called Paul, so God

called you at some point in your life, working that call in your heart and making His call and separation of you clear to you in and through the providential circumstances of your lives. Your Christian upbringing and godly instruction in your youth and young manhood belongs to God's separation of you unto the gospel. Your training in the seminary has not only served to prepare you for your calling, something that is absolutely necessary, but it has also confirmed in you that God has called you and does separate you unto His gospel. And we are confident that soon enough God will also call and separate you by the call from His church.

The outstanding thing that the passage emphasizes is that God has called and separated Paul to *preach* the gospel. That Paul has been separated to *preach* the gospel of God is plain from the history of the book of Acts. This is what he did and this is the work that he gave himself to. That Paul was called to be an *apostle*, as verse 1 says that he was, underscores this same truth. As an apostle, he was sent out to *preach*. This was the work of the apostles. That Paul conceived of his calling as the calling to preach the gospel is made plain later in the chapter: "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to *preach the gospel* to you that are in Rome also" (v. 15).

This is what Paul considered to be his great work. To this work he devoted his life. He did so because he understood something about the preaching of the gospel: "For I am not ashamed

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*Prof. Cammenga is professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.*

*This is the second installment of the text of the address given on the occasion of the graduation of Mr. Cory Griess and Dr. David Torlach from the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary on June 11, 2009 in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.*

*Previous article in this series: October 1, 2009, p. 7.*



of the gospel of Christ: *for it is the power of God unto salvation...*" (v. 16). How the church today needs to be reminded of this! You brothers must be convinced of this! The gospel is, the gospel was in Paul's day and is in our day, the gospel is in every age *the power of God unto salvation*. This is the means, God's means, unto the salvation of elect sinners. Apart from the preaching of the gospel, there is no salvation. Of such fundamental importance is the preaching of the gospel.

Several things are implied in the fact that Paul was separated unto the preaching of the gospel of God.

Implied, certainly, is the privilege and honor of the office of the ministry of the gospel. Think of it! You have been separated unto the *gospel of God*! What a privilege! What an honor! There is no greater calling in all the world than this calling!

Implied also is what Paul mentions at the beginning of Romans 1:1, "Paul, a *servant* of Jesus Christ." The gospel unto which you have been separated is *God's* gospel; it is not your gospel. God is the One who has called and separated you unto this gospel. The gospel that He has called you to preach is His gospel. It follows, it follows necessarily, that you are and that you must view yourself to be "a servant of Jesus Christ," a servant of God. Paul did, and so does the faithful preacher of the gospel today. The root sin of every unfaithful minister of the gospel is his failure to remember that because the gospel is God's gospel, he is called to be God's servant.

Since the gospel is God's gospel it is implied that the saving efficacy of the gospel is due to God and to God alone. Of this truth also, we need to be reminded. The effect of the preaching of the gospel does not depend on us. How grateful we preachers of the gospel ought to

be for that. What an impossible burden that would be, if the effect of our preaching—the saving of lost sinners—depended on us. What a goodness of God to us that we do not bear that burden. At the same time, this gives us confidence in preaching! Since the gospel is God's gospel, He will use that gospel for the saving of His people. He will use that gospel in the established congregation, so that believers and their children are saved and built up in their salvation. He will use that gospel in missions, so that the elect are gathered out of the nations.

If the gospel is God's gospel, and if God is the One who calls and separates men unto this gospel, it also follows that those thus called and separated are *accountable* unto Him. That, too, is implied. Remember, brothers, that you are called to handle the gospel of God! That demands your best! That demands the devotion of your time and energy! That demands your all!

There comes a day when the God whose gospel it is will call every preacher of that gospel to account. That will be a dreadful day for those preachers who have been unfaithful; a dreadful day for those who have compromised, corrupted, and denied the gospel of God. They will learn by bitter experience that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God (Heb. 10:31).

One thing more is implied in the truth that the gospel is the gospel of God. Implied also is our complete dependence as preachers upon God. If the gospel is God's gospel, and if He has called and separated you unto the gospel, you must look to Him for the grace and strength to proclaim the gospel. In all your labors in and on behalf of the gospel, look to Him. He is the One who has called and separated you; He will give you what you

stand in need of as you go forth proclaiming His gospel.

### **The Purpose of Paul's Separation**

To the gospel of God, Paul had been called and separated. But what was the purpose of his calling and separation?

The purpose was, first of all, to bring men to believe the gospel of God. His purpose was not his own honor and recognition. His purpose was not his advancement in the ecclesiastical world of his day. His purpose was not a soft and comfortable earthly life. His purpose was not getting rich at the expense of the people.

But his purpose was the salvation of God's elect through his preaching of the gospel, the salvation into which he himself had so miraculously been brought. His purpose was, according to verse 5, "the obedience of faith among all nations." His purpose was "fruit among the Gentiles" (v. 13). His purpose was the salvation of elect believers: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (vv. 16, 17). With a view to that purpose, Paul gave himself, heart and soul, to the ministry of the gospel of God.

But beyond even the salvation of the elect, God's purpose in the preaching of the gospel is the glory of His own name and of His Son, Jesus Christ. That is verse 5: "By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, *for His name*." For His name—that is the purpose of the preaching of the gospel of God.

Of course that is the purpose. The world was created for God's glory, and His glory is the chief end of the salvation of sinners.

The faithful preacher does not aim at his own glory. But he aims at the glory of God who has called him and separated him unto the gospel. In this respect, too, the gospel is the gospel of God.

This glory of His name God accomplishes in the salvation and gathering of the church. But for that salvation and gathering of the church, He uses the preaching of the gospel. This is your calling, brothers. It is a truly

glorious calling. You are called to preach the gospel of God. Do not ever minimize or doubt or become careless with respect to that gospel. But honor the gospel; honor it because it is the gospel of God.



Things Which Must Shortly Come to Pass

Prof. David Engelsma

## Chapter Four

# Postmillennialism (1)

### Introduction

**T**he truth of the millennium is corrupted by two, distinct errors concerning the thousand years of Revelation 20. Not only do these two doctrines err in their explanation of the millennium, but they also grossly exaggerate its importance. The millennium, a relatively minor teaching found in only one chapter of the Bible (and that, in the highly figurative and symbolical book of Revelation), comes to dominate all of eschatology and even to occupy an unduly prominent place in the whole of theology.

Such exaggeration of the significance of the thousand-year period of Revelation 20 out of all biblical proportion, thus distorting the millennium (to say nothing of the erroneous explanations themselves of the biblical truth), is *millennialism*, as pietism is the exaggerated distortion of genuine piety; scientism, the distortion of legitimate science; and Communism, the distortion of necessary human community.

There are two basic forms

of this *millennialism*, differing with regard to the time of Jesus' second, bodily coming in relation to the millennium. The millennial error that has Jesus returning before the millennium is *premillennialism*. The millennial error that has Jesus returning after the millennium is *postmillennialism*.

### Shared Views

Although these two forms of false teaching concerning the millennium differ, and in some respects differ sharply, they hold certain, important views of the millennium and its implications in common. Both explain the thousand years of Revelation literally, rather than figuratively, although some postmillennialists feel free to expand the coming period of the millennium to hundreds of thousands of years.

Both expect the literal millennium in the earthly future, within present history, before the destruction and renewal of this world.

Both teach an earthly realization of the Messianic kingdom in history—a carnal kingdom consisting of earthly power, earthly prosperity, and earthly peace.

Both make much of the Jews—*physical, racial* Jews—in their doctrine of the last things. Premillennialists have the restored nation of Israel in Palestine ruling

the world under Christ during the millennium. The millennium is for the Jews. Postmillennialists teach that a mass conversion to Christ of Jewish people will signal and usher in the millennium.

Both forms of *millennialism* rob the contemporary church of much of Holy Scripture. Premillennialism assigns most of the Old Testament and large sections of the New Testament exclusively to the Jews, supposedly God's kingdom people in distinction from the church. Postmillennialism contends that all of the passages, especially in the New Testament, that predict perilous times, lawlessness, apostasy, tribulation, and antichrist were intended for the church before AD 70, insofar as they applied to the church at all. Included among the passages that postmillennialism strips from the church today is the entire book of Revelation, except for the last three chapters.

Three errors that both forms of *millennialism* share are especially damning. Both premillennialism and postmillennialism promise the church and her members that they will escape the great tribulation foretold in Matthew 24:21 and many other passages of Scripture. Premillennialism foists the great tribulation on the Jews in the future.

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Postmillennialism thrusts it on the Jews in the past, in AD 70.

Both regard the millennium as the victory—the victory—of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

And both fix the hope of the believing church, not upon the coming of Jesus Christ that raises the dead, judges all men, and brings about the new world in which righteousness, and *only* righteousness, shall dwell, as the goal (Greek: *telos*) of history, but upon the millennium within history, in which unrighteousness shall dwell. For premillennialism, the “blessed hope” is the rapture of the church marking the onset of the millennium.

Because postmillennialism appears in the Reformed tradition and is vigorously advocated by Presbyterian and Reformed theologians, I begin my critical examination of the two forms of *millennialism* with postmillennialism.

### Description and Distinctions

Postmillennialism is the doctrine concerning the last things that teaches that the cause of Christ will increasingly prevail in this world in an earthly, visible manner, so that in the future masses of humans will be converted to Christ—likely, the majority of mankind—Christians will dominate the life of nations, and the evils that have plagued mankind—war, social strife, crime, disease, and poverty—will be severely curtailed, if not eradicated. This world will be “Christianized.” Postmillennialism dreams of a “golden age” for the church at the end of history—earthly power, earthly peace, and earthly prosperity.

This culturally, socially, and politically triumphant Christianity will be the Messianic kingdom prophesied by the Old Testament, for example, Psalm 72, in its fulfillment and perfection. Concerning the millennial glory of the church, Iain H. Murray exclaims,

“The Church, after all, would be victorious!” (*The Puritan Hope: Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy*, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, repr. 1975, 97; the enthusiastic exclamation mark is Murray’s. The implication is that prior to the millennium the church has been defeated.)

The finally victorious, Messianic kingdom of Christ will endure for a thousand years (although, as dreams are wont to do, the period of this earthly victory of Christ’s kingdom mightily expands in some postmillennialists to hundreds of thousands of years).

After this “golden age” of a thousand years, Jesus Christ will return to raise the dead, conduct the final judgment, and renew the creation. Some postmillennialists hold that Christ will return to a world under the dominion of Christians. Others, with an uneasy eye on Revelation 20:7-9, the loosing of Satan for a little season after the thousand years, are compelled to acknowledge that the earthly reign of the saints will be broken up at the very end by hordes of the ungodly, so that Christ will return to a world convulsed by war. Herein lies a huge problem for the advocates of the coming earthly victory of the church, to which I will return.

The postmillennialism that appears in the Reformed tradition demands to be distinguished from the old, theologically modernist and unbelieving notion of a coming millennium of peace and plenty for the human race. David Chilton complained that

the dominion outlook [postmillennialism as it appears in the Reformed tradition—DJE] is equated with the liberal “Social Gospel” movement of the early 1900s. Such an identification is utterly absurd, devoid of any foundation whatsoever. The leaders of the Social Gospel movement were evolutionary humanists and socialists, and

were openly hostile toward Biblical Christianity (David Chilton, *Paradise Restored: A Biblical Theology of Dominion*, Tyler, Texas: Reconstruction Press, 228).

The modernist, or liberal, message of a future millennium proclaimed that this utopia (literally, “no place”), which modernism called “the kingdom of God,” would come by the cooperating energies of irresistible evolutionary development and strenuous human effort. Nature and man would bring about the “kingdom of God.”

Early twentieth-century Protestant theologian Walter Rauschenbusch gave expression to the modernist conception of the millennium. “We need a restoration of the millennial hope,” he wrote. The millennium hoped for would be “a social life in which the law of Christ shall prevail, and in which its prevalence shall result in peace, justice and a glorious blossoming of human life...the brotherhood of man...expressed in the common possession of the economic resources of society.” The way in which the millennium will come, according to Rauschenbusch, is “development.” This powerful “development” is God Himself immanent “in history...working toward redemption and education.” The church must “cooperate” with this immanent deity (who is nothing other than Darwin’s evolutionary force applied, with unwarranted optimism, to social progress and the material welfare of the human race) to realize the “kingdom of God.”

Of course, for theological modernism there can be no coming of Jesus Christ in the body after the millennium, since Jesus, if He ever existed, remains dead and buried. Rauschenbusch was at pains to insist that his eschatology “of historic development has no final consummation.”

It is often said that this mod-



ernist hope of future millennial peace and prosperity shattered on the hatred, strife, and devastation of World War I. But Rauschenbusch wrote his book and proclaimed his message of millennial hope in 1917, when World War I was very much in progress. In fact, Rauschenbusch took the war into account, not as a damper on his dream, but as part of the development of the human race towards the coming millennium: "The Great War is a catastrophic stage in the coming of the Kingdom of God" (Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, Nashville, Abingdon Press, repr. 1978, 208-239).

As deaf to the testimony of history as it is to the witness of Scripture, theological modernism still stubbornly entertains the hope of a "golden age" for mankind by means of evolutionary development and the efforts especially of preachers, politicians, scientists, and teachers in the state schools. Rome has its French Jesuit philosopher, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, liberation theologians, and, as his recent

encyclical, "Charity in Truth," indicates, the present pope.

Protestantism has its Paul Tillich and hosts of pastors whose message every Sunday morning is love for mankind (referred to as humankind), tolerance of everyone and everything (except uncompromising confession of the truth and unswerving obedience to the law of God), and the uniting of all the nations and peoples of the world (excluding the holy nation, which is the true church).

Natural men and women are moved by this hope of an earthly paradise—a carnal "kingdom of God." American politicians seek votes with the vision of "a new world order." Lenin and Stalin won the hearts of millions, including liberals in the United States, by their announcement of the coming of the millennium in the form of Communism, regardless of Communism's avowed godlessness, mass murders, and dictatorial cruelties. Hitler bewitched virtually all of Germany, including multitudes of German Christians, with the prospect of

the "thousand-year Reich"—the millennial kingdom of the messianic Fuhrer—reared up though it was by war, bloodshed, and terror.

With his millennium, Antichrist will seduce the world, including many nominal Christians, who do not have their heart set on the spiritual kingdom of Christ, revealed in the sound doctrine of the gospel (II Thess. 2). The seduction will be the arrival, at long last, of the millennial kingdom of God and Christ (as Antichrist's prophet, the beast out of the earth [Rev. 13:11ff.] will describe it) in its full, carnal, bedazzling, beguiling splendor and beneficence.

From this conception of the millennium, the Reformed post-millennialists are anxious to distance themselves.

Understandably.

Well may they be anxious also that their conception of a carnal kingdom not play into the program of the "king of fierce countenance," who "by peace shall destroy many" (Daniel 8:23-25).



*Ministering to the Saints*

*Rev. Douglas Kuiper*

## *Women Assisting the Deacons (2)*

# *A Historical Survey: The Early Christian Church and the Middle Ages*

**T**hat God in His Word both forbids women to hold the office of deacon, and at the same time permits the deacons to

use women as assistants in their work of mercy, we have seen in our last article.

In this article we begin to survey the history of the church permitting women to assist the deacons. Noting the teachings of the church fathers, the statements of church councils, and the opinions of scholars, we will

draw some general conclusions about this history. The particular point we desire to emphasize is that the Christian church has historically understood that women have a role in the ministry of the church.

That the early New Testament church actually had an order of women who served the church in

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some capacity, I Timothy 5:9-10 indicates. In this passage, Paul refers to an already existing body of women, and gives their qualifications. As we indicated in our last article, these women most likely served the deacons by assisting in their work of mercy.

After Bible times, the first known reference to women as deaconesses appears in a letter from Pliny, governor of Bithynia (in northern Asia Minor), to the emperor Trajan, written about AD 113, in which Pliny mentions that he tortured some deaconesses.<sup>1</sup> On the basis of this letter, some argue that already at this time women served, not merely as assistants to the deacons, but in the office of deacon itself. We must be careful, though, in assessing Pliny's use of the term. He was, after all, not a Christian himself, but an unbeliever; how well did he understand the role of women in the early church? And Brian Schwertley is correct when he writes that from this brief reference "we are given no information as to the role or the function these women had in the church."<sup>2</sup>

Without a doubt, however, an official position known as "deaconess" was found in the early Christian church. By the middle of the second century, if not earlier, the term appears in the writings of the church fathers. Even official church declarations, such as the canons of the Council of Nicea (325) and Chalcedon (451), refer to such, as we shall see presently. However, the term "deaconess" did not refer to women who held the office of deacon; it referred rather to women who held an official position of help-

ers to deacons, the scriptural basis for which was found in the words of the apostle in I Timothy 5:9-10.

That the position of deaconess evolved out of the order of widows and virgins (I Corinthians 7:25ff.) is the conviction of many scholars who are not bent on proving that women have always held church office from the earliest times. Jeannine Olson writes: "Scholars who feel that deaconesses originated in the third century suggest that they might have come out of the order of widows...."<sup>3</sup> And Schwertley, whose book is meant to demonstrate that "having deaconesses in the church is biblical as long as the church defines deaconesses biblically" (that is, as Paul speaks of them in I Timothy 5, and not as holding the office of deacon), also says:

The most plausible explanation of the appearance of the office of deaconess in the early church is that the office developed out of the order of widows. This view explains why in *every* instance where deaconesses are discussed in the Ante-Nicene Fathers and councils, they always have the exact same qualifications as Paul's servant-widows (I Tim. 5:9ff.).<sup>4</sup>

Whether or not these women were formally ordained seems to have varied by time and place, but usually they were admitted in some formal way to their work. Paul's words in I Timothy 5:9, referring to widows being "taken into the number," implies some formal admission to this work. In the *Apostolic Constitutions*, probably written in the second century, Bartholomew is said to have required bishops to lay their hands on the deaconess being ordained, "in the presence of the presbytery, and of the deacons and deaconesses," and to pray a

prayer beseeching God to give her His Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup> Yet in its nineteenth canon, the Council of Nicea (325) referred to deaconesses as "such as have assumed the habit, but who, since they have no imposition of hands, are to be numbered only among the laity."<sup>6</sup> They are not clergy; they do not hold office in the church in the same sense in which men do; yet they do hold a distinct position among the laity.

Though following the pattern Paul prescribed in I Timothy 5, the church did at times revise some of the qualifications for such women. *Not* revised was the requirement that these women be unmarried. The Council of Chalcedon required that, should such an one "despise the grace of God and give herself in marriage, she shall be anathematized and the man united to her."<sup>7</sup> But the church did permit unmarried women of two sorts to serve—widows, and virgins. And the church revised the minimum

<sup>1</sup> Jeannine E. Olson, *Deacons and Deaconesses Through the Centuries* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2005), p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Brian M. Schwertley, *A Historical and Biblical Examination of Women Deacons* (Southfield, MI: Reformed Witness, 1998), p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Olson, p. 41.

<sup>4</sup> Schwertley, pp. 155 and 30.

<sup>5</sup> "Constitutions of the Holy Apostles," Book 3, section 2, as found in *The AnteNicene Fathers* (ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), vol. 7, p. 492. Peter Y. DeJong quotes this ordination prayer in his book *The Ministry of Mercy for Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1963), p. 239.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3801.htm>. As this council of Nicea is a church council, and its words carry weight, let me briefly give the background to the quotation above. The nineteenth canon is speaking specifically of members of a sect call the Paulianists, who were coming to the true Christian church. The nineteenth canon of Nicea required that such be rebaptized, and that, after examination and baptism, their clergy could be ordained in the catholic church. Included specifically under this last point are the deaconesses of the Paulianists, who may become deaconesses in the Christian church after rebaptism and examination.

<sup>7</sup> As quoted in Schwertley, p. 25.

age requirement for such. Although Paul by inspiration had prescribed 60 as a minimum, one church document stated that “a woman could be enrolled as a widow at the age of 50 rather than 60,”<sup>1</sup> and the Council of Chalcedon said that “A woman shall not receive the laying on of hands as a deaconess under forty years of age, and then only after searching examination.”<sup>2</sup>

Regarding their work, Tertulian (living in North Africa in the late second and early third century) wrote:

They were charged to care for the poor, comfort the martyrs and confessors in prison, to whom they had easier access than the deacons, assist at the baptism of women, and exercise a general oversight both in public and private over the female members of the congregation. Of their labors they were to render regular reports to the bishops and elders.<sup>3</sup>

The document *Apostolic Constitutions* speaks of their work in baptizing:

Ordain also a deaconess who is faithful and holy, for the ministrations towards women. For sometimes he cannot send a deacon, who is a man, to the women, on account of unbelievers. Thou shalt therefore send a woman, a deaconess, on account of the imaginations of the bad. For we stand in need of a woman, a deaconess, for many necessities; and first in the baptism of women, the deacon shall anoint only their forehead with the holy oil, and after him the deaconess shall anoint them: for there is no necessity that the women should be seen by the men.<sup>4</sup>

John Chrysostom, bishop of

Constantinople, and considered by many the greatest preacher in the eastern church in the late 300s and early 400s, explained I Timothy 5:10 not so much as setting forth the qualification for the rank of widow, but setting forth the work they were called to do—bring up children (orphans, probably), lodge strangers, wash the saints feet, relieve the afflicted: “He exhorts them to contribute bodily service, for women are peculiarly fitted for such attendance, for making the bed of the sick, and composing them to rest.”<sup>5</sup>

In addition, the “deaconesses were charged with instructing women” and with guarding the women’s door during the Eucharist.<sup>6</sup>

### **The role of women in the Christian church in the Middle Ages**

It is generally agreed that the role of women in the church was most prominent during the first four centuries after Christ. “The fourth century marked the zenith of such female activity in the churches,” writes P. Y. DeJong.<sup>7</sup> After this period, the role of women diminished considerably.

Olson suggests that during or soon after the fourth century, the office of widows essentially died out, and the position of deaconess became more of an official position in the church. As the church’s hierarchy developed, “in the fourth and fifth centuries, deacons became subordinate to presbyters, deaconesses to deacons, and widows to deaconesses.... Eventually the deaconesses and widows were absorbed into the monastic movement.”<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, it must not be overlooked that the decrees of various church councils were influential in diminishing the role of women. The Council of Orange (441) declared in Canon 26: “Let no one proceed to the ordination of Deaconesses anymore.” In 517, the Council of Epaon declared in Canon 21, “We abrogate completely in the entire Kingdom the consecration of widows who are named Deaconesses.” And the Council of Orleans (533) said: “No longer shall the blessing of women deaconesses be given, because of the weakness of their sex.”<sup>9</sup> These councils particularly affected the churches in France and western Europe, but gradually the official role of women in the church died out—almost, with one exception.

Olson already pointed us to that exception—the role women played in the monastic movement. It is well known that not only did monasteries for men arise during these times, but also communities of women, which were devoted to works of mercy such as care of the sick and poor. Especially the abbess, the female head of the female cloisters, carried out activities that resembled those that God assigned office-bearers in His church.

### **General conclusions to this point**

From this brief survey of history, we can draw some general conclusions.

First, it appears that at times the church permitted women to have a role and perform duties in the church that Scripture clearly does not allow. That women

<sup>1</sup> Olson, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Schwertley, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Y. DeJong, *The Ministry of Mercy for Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1963), pp. 239-240.

<sup>4</sup> “Constitutions,” *The AnteNicene Fathers*, vol. 7, p. 431.

<sup>5</sup> *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1889), vol. 14, p. 454.

<sup>6</sup> Olson, pp. 35 and 39.

<sup>7</sup> DeJong, p. 240.

<sup>8</sup> Olson, p. 91.

<sup>9</sup> All quotes in this paragraph are taken from Del Cain, “Woman and Christianity,” as found at <http://www.womenpriests.org/interact/delcain.asp>. Cain says that he took this information on the church councils from the book, *Fore-Mothers: Women of the Bible*, by Janice Nunnally-Cox.




were at times ordained into office by the laying on of hands—a ceremony reserved in Scripture for men who are called by God to special office in the church—is unscriptural; so is the fact that women at times instructed, apparently officially, and assisted in baptisms. If the church claimed to be adhering to I Timothy 5 and I Corinthians 7 by allowing such, she certainly misapplied these texts.

Second, despite what we just said, one cannot justifiably appeal to the church's practice as

evidence that the church from her early history permitted women to hold church office. Never did the early church let women hold the offices of pastor, elder, or deacon; even the office of deaconess was distinct from that of deacon. Always the deaconesses were subordinate to deacons. More importantly, church councils opposed the practice of letting women have too much authority, and the practice eventually died out.

Third, the church in her early history sets a positive example of striving to implement the

teaching of the apostle in I Timothy 3:11; I Timothy 5:9-10; and I Corinthians 7. That the church allowed women to do some work under the supervision of the deacons, and particularly work that would be immodest or inappropriate for a man to do, is this positive example.

While this positive example seems to have died out during the Middle Ages, it was resurrected at the time of the Reformation. Continuing our historical survey, we will note this in our next article, God willing. 

*When Thou Sittest in Thine House*

*Abraham Kuyper*

## Luxurious Living

### Keeping in one's station

**D**oes the Christian faith condemn all luxury as such? For an answer to this question, compare the ministry of Christ with that of John the Baptist; and see how Jesus Himself pointed to the fact that John refrained even from food and drink, and they said: He hath a devil; while the Son of man came *eating and drinking*, even in such a manner that they said (Matt. 11:19): "Behold a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber."

At the marriage at Cana things are by no means provided on a contracted scale. And after the supply of wine is exhausted, Jesus by His wonder-power renews wine in the firkins.

Yea, even the spilling of a bottle of costly nard, to anoint

His feet, Judas disapproved. But not Jesus. With someone else it would have been waste. But for Him, and at that moment, it was not.

You should not say, therefore, that they who prefer the method of the Baptist, oppose the Christ; since Scripture teaches that the Baptist did not oppose Jesus, but prepared the way for Him. Also great sobriety, even abstention, can in all sorts of ways be right. Only the idea that *all* luxury, for everyone and in all circumstances, is censurable and sinful will not do as life's image of our Savior.

Jesus by no means antagonized *all* luxury as such; rather has He honored the relative right of luxury by His own example.

Only, by wrong use, the balance can lean toward evil, and then the rich young man goes away weeping, the rich cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven, and after death poor Lazarus sees the rich man in hell.

◆◆◆ ◆◆◆ ◆◆◆

Luxury is, oh, so relative.

What is abounding luxury to one is sobriety to another. It all depends upon station and means. Solomon bathed himself day by day in the glitter of an Eastern court-luxury, far more so even than his father David, and who would censure this in a king? Or should not a prince maintain a far different station, and for the sake of the crown he wears, does not splendor and pomp behoove him?

A laborer in the country from his savings may make a feast on his festal day, which to him is uncommonly rich and abundant; but a well-to-do nobleman need not on this account be pleased with it as his daily fare.

God Himself has divided unequally the wealth of His creation. He clothed the birds in their feathery garb, and how simple is that of the sparrow and of the nightingale as compared

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*Reprinted from When Thou Sittest In Thine House, by Abraham Kuyper, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan. 1929. Used by permission of Eerdmans Publishing Co.*

with the splendor of the golden pheasant. Compare the dun dress of the ass with the striped coat of the tiger.

And so it is among men. Among people there is no equality and there can be none. Everything differs. People from people, station from station, and even in the same social station family from family. Means differ. Positions in life differ. And since the house, dress, and style of living must be the expression of the position one holds and the calling that on the part of God he has to fulfill, there is bound to be a mighty difference in manners of life, so that to one is ordinary sobriety, what would be luxury to another, of which he never even thought.

What rich shepherd-princes the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were, and how utterly lacking in worldly goods were a Peter, an Andrew, and a James, just fishermen on the shore of Nazareth.



So, you see, luxury has a two-fold significance. The one good, the other bad. There is a good luxury, which belongs to one's station and position. But there is also an evil luxury, which is the result of bad stewardship of one's goods, fruit of the chase after sensual pleasure and desire after vanity.

This first-named luxury Scripture never condemns; the second always. And from this follows that God's child shall not despise this first luxury, but will avoid the second as evil and sinful.

This detracts nothing, however, from the fact that in their better days our fathers too maintained a style of their own for a higher walk in life, floored their houses with marble, wore very costly garments, and even spent sometimes large sums on ornaments.

And this should and even

must be so, for pearls lie in the stream to be fished up, diamonds are not meant to remain hidden in the sand, wine does not gather in the grape to dry up on the vine, and the silkworm does not spin her silk to have it spoil on the mulberry-tree.

All things created of God have their use. And not only this, but also this of-God-intended standard of luxury is the bread of the workingman and of the artist. In a world of only monks there would be no trades or sales.

To the standard of luxury in the higher walks of life you can even add the luxury of festal days and occasions. When with God's ancient people it was the feast of tabernacles, every family lived far more luxuriously than at ordinary times. And the age-old custom of Christendom of going out on the Lord's Day in finer clothes than on week-days continues also among us, Christians of the nineteenth century, to maintain its noble tradition.



But this never condones sinful luxury, i.e., luxury above one's station, the luxury of sensual delight and unbridled self-indulgence, neither what the apostle calls the "daily luxury" of wantonness (II Pet. 2:13, Dutch version).

That sometimes ambition stirs a man to climb the social ladder a round higher is by itself no sin. Scripture cites again and again cases of men who, from lower walks of life, have been elevated to higher stations. But this ambition must be noble. Not to abuse the rise in station as means for more luxurious living: but the nobler life itself in this higher rank must be the attraction, and the freer life merely the *result* of it.

He, on the other hand, who lives above his station, shows that vanity and self-indulgence is to him the chief attraction, and that

already in advance he reaches out toward this more luxurious life, before by diligence and effort he was able to work himself up to that higher place. He then undermines his own future and that of his family. A sin that sometimes goes so far that one stints his children in necessary food, so that in rich apparel he might attract the greater attention in the street.

Neither let anyone say: "As long as I have the means, I am free to buy what luxuries I please." For God did not provide these means for you and your family alone. He made you steward over these means so that, among other things, you should remember His church as well, His institutions, His poor, and if possible lay something by against the day of evil.



But luxury becomes far more evil still, even when means increase, when that which makes you pursue it is the sinful motive to live a life of self-indulgence, in your pomp and vanity to please yourself, and to gratify the voluptuary desire that stimulates you.

For then *flesh* rules *spirit*, and you have subverted the order of the living God, who has called you and still calls you, by your spirit to govern your fleshly desires and the lust of your eyes.

Then you dishonor your divine childship that, like a child of the world, you might satisfy your cravings.

Then you go away from God, and turn to the paths where Satan awaits you, to entice you and to tempt you.

This our fathers have felt and realized, and for this reason they have insisted especially in daily life upon sobriety, upon soundness of sense and simplicity.

At times they had their feasts, and then they enjoyed the abundance of life with thanksgiving. But ordinarily they purposely applied themselves to quiet sim-

plicity and a sober manner of life. And in that way God the Lord has doubly blessed them. With a blessing after the *spirit*, by withdrawing them from the enervation of luxury and by steeling their power of will. And no less with a blessing after the *body*, by as much as nothing is more healthful than a daily life in sobriety and common-sense order.

God's child has pleasure in God's law and uses the world. But the godless takes his delight in daily luxury and uses his God to save him from and after death.

And therefore among all God's children *this* must serve as rule of life, that each, in accordance with the requirements of his station, in ordinary daily life shall love simplicity and sobriety, and on the other hand find daily luxury for their soul in the hidden walk with their God.



There is a power in the world, which, under the name of fashion or custom, endeavors to make the law for God's children as to how they shall live. And especially in our days this evil power demands ever yet greater luxury.

So it was at the close of the eighteenth century, and it lasted until the terrible revolution broke out in Paris, and Napoleon was sent out as scourge of the nations. And then that recklessly inflated luxury was done for at once, and even by the higher classes sometimes there was suffered literal want.

But this should not be necessary for God's child. He has another power by which to resist the tone-giving power of the world. And with the laws of his God he must keep himself free from the slavery of the world.

In us must be found courage, holy, spiritual courage, to ask, not the world, but God, how

we are to direct our life, how we shall dress, what we shall eat and drink, and what shall be the proper forms of our recreation.

Even heathen nations have experienced all too bitterly how the spirit of sturdiness that maintained itself so long as luxury remained excluded, at once retreated and ended in ruin when extravagant luxury gained the upper hand.

Also the middle class of the Romans, once by sobriety strong and great, went under when luxury had weakened and unnerved the spirit.

And therefore it is the calling of Christendom in our times to be also in this sense a salt that saves from corruption, that it should not yield to luxury, but resist it by sobriety.

Possessing as *not* possessing, and in all things *stewarding* as before the face of the Lord God.



Believing and Confessing

Rev. Rodney Kleyn

## How Bad We Really Are

### Lord's Day 3

*Question 6. Did God then create man so wicked and perverse?*

*Answer. By no means; but God created man good, and after His own image, in true righteousness and holiness, that he might rightly know God his Creator, heartily love Him, and live with Him in eternal happiness to glorify and praise Him.*

*Question 7. Whence then proceeds this depravity of human nature?*

*Answer. From the fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise; hence our nature is become so corrupt, that we are all conceived and born in sin.*

*Question 8. Are we then so corrupt that we are wholly incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all wickedness?*

*Answer. Indeed we are, except we are regenerated by the Spirit of God.*

*Rev. Kleyn is pastor of Covenant of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Spokane, Washington.*

*Previous article in this series: April 1, 2009, p. 298.*

**F**ollowing the first two Lord's Days of the catechism, Lord's Day Three digs deeper into our misery. The first Lord's Day shows us that,

if we are to enjoy the comfort of belonging to Jesus our Savior, we must first know our misery. The second Lord's Day begins a diagnosis of man's misery with a



personal question, "How do you know your sin?" and it shows us, from the law of God, that we are sinners. Now Lord's Day Three shows us how bad our sins and sinfulness are by teaching us the doctrine of Total Depravity. It does not leave us with any wiggle room to blame God, or to blame our first parents, or anyone else, but shows us that, because we are sinful in our nature, we ourselves are guilty before God. But, however negative this may seem, the purpose is positive, namely, to lead us into understanding the riches of God's grace.

### **How Bad Is Our Depravity?**

Notice, our depravity is not couched in nice terms in the catechism. Far from flattering or making people feel good, the Catechism tells us that we are "prone by nature to hate God and the neighbor," and we are described as "so wicked and perverse," and "so corrupt that we are wholly incapable of doing any good and inclined to all wickedness." Our depravity is not simply a flaw, an evil streak in something that is otherwise good. Human sinfulness is not just a sickness, partially cured by common grace. But our depravity is absolute, it is complete, it is total. It is impossible for man, apart from saving grace, to do any good in the eyes of God. Unless a work is done out of faith, and in love for God, it is sin.

And this is the Bible's teaching from the very beginning. In Genesis 6:5-6, before the flood, God saw that "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." After the flood, when there were only eight righteous souls living, God repeated this evaluation in Genesis 8:21, "for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." The prophet Isaiah says, Isaiah 53:6, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one

to his own way." Romans 3:23 teaches that "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

### **Is God to Blame?**

Today philosophers, and many others, ask the question, Where did evil come from? Although there are many different answers given, this is the wrong question. It really doesn't matter where evil came from, so long as we confess with Scripture that God is not the origin of evil, and yet remains sovereign over all evil men and deeds. The Catechism asks the right question, Who is at fault for man's sinfulness? Is man to blame, or should we blame God? Did God create us this way, or did we bring this on ourselves?

In Genesis 1 we learn that God created man, and in verse 31, "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." This includes man, and the goodness extended to man's entire character and person. It was not merely external. There was no manufacturer's defect that with time would come to light. And, even though man was made "able not to sin," but with a will that could choose to sin, this was no flaw. This was a part of the glory of the first creation. They were free to choose to love and serve God.

Man's original perfection is described as "the image of God." This means that man was made different from all the other creatures, but not merely in this sense, that he could think analytically and walk upright on two legs. Rather, God created man to represent Him in the earth and to know and live in communion with Him. Man represented something of the character of God in true righteousness and holiness. This was the image of God, and Adam's original perfection. This is how God made Adam, so God is not to blame for the wickedness of man.

### **Man Is to Blame**

The blame for sin in the hu-

man race rests entirely on man. It is true, Satan is to blame for the origin of sin in the angel world, and Satan did instigate man's fall into sin, but Adam himself chose to sin and brought death and depravity on the entire human race.

This whole event is recorded for us very plainly in Genesis 3. Though God had very clearly said to Adam and Eve that they were not to eat of the tree in the midst of the garden, they ate anyway, and the consequences of which God had forewarned them came immediately. Adam and Eve lost their innocence, and immediately, as their behavior shows when God found them, they became self-centered and unwilling to accept the responsibility for their sin. They shifted the blame right back on God. And today man wants to do the same thing. He does not want to take responsibility for his misery, and he wants to find some other cause for evil in this world, and for sin in his life, rather than to recognize his own responsibility.

The root of our depravity is found in the sin of Adam and Eve. Their corrupt nature is passed on to all their children, so that all are conceived and born with a sinful nature that is opposed to God. It is like a hereditary disease that infects the entire nature, even before birth, in the mother's womb. Man's sinfulness is not a result of a bad environment or poor examples in his life, but is a part of his nature. It is who he is before he is born. The Canons of Dort put it this way (Head III/IV, Art. 2):

Man after the fall begat children in his own likeness. A corrupt stock produced a corrupt offspring. Hence all the posterity of Adam, Christ only excepted, have derived corruption from their original parent, not by imitation, as the Pelagians of old asserted, but by the propagation of a vicious nature.

### **I am to Blame!**

A part of our being born with

this sinful nature is accepting our personal responsibility for the sin of Adam and Eve. In Romans 5:12, talking about Adam's sin in the beginning, the inspired apostle says, "all have sinned." He means we all sinned in Adam's sin and share in the guilt of it before God. God did not view Adam as an individual but as the head and representative of the entire human race, and in Adam God saw the whole human race rising up in rebellion against Him. And though we may want to react against this, we must receive it by faith, the same faith by which we are included in Christ, not because of what we have done, but because of what He has done as our head. My depravity is in Adam. My exalted position is in Christ. I cannot have the one without the other.

The conclusion is that we are all and each to blame for the misery in which we find ourselves. This is not a time to point fingers, me at you, you at me, or us at Adam and Eve. Each of us is responsible before God for his own sinful nature and deeds.

In Psalm 51, David takes responsibility for his sin and sinful nature before God. The context is his sins of adultery and murder. In the Psalm he makes one of the greatest confessions of sin in the Bible. He does not blame the circumstance, the pressures of his job, the woman who enticed him, or his other wives not meeting his needs. Instead, in verse 5, he confesses the sinfulness of his nature, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." He's not saying, "I couldn't help it, I was born a sinner" but rather is confessing, "I did not become a sinner, a murderer and adulterer, when I committed these acts, but this is who I am from my birth." This is the reality of our depravity, and we must feel the burden of it before God.

### Important Doctrine

This is important doctrine, particularly for personal salvation. Question 8 says, "Are we then *so* corrupt ...?" and the answer is an emphatic "YES, INDEED WE ARE!" The term used in the Bible to describe this depravity is the word "dead."

Today this is widely denied. People want to tell you, in Christian literature too, that "You can do it! You can help yourself!" Most people view our fall into sin as comparable to a fall off a two-story building. You probably end up with some injuries, maybe even a broken back or some other life-threatening injury, but you are not dead. You are still conscious. You are able to decide on a course of action to follow. You can call out for help.

But the biblical truth is that we are "dead in trespasses and sins." It's as though we fell from

one of the tallest buildings in the world onto hard pavement. We are dead. There is no life in us to call for help or to accept help. Man would leave us for dead. That's the way the Bible describes our fallen condition. We cannot call out to God for help. We cannot cooperate with God in the recovery by lifting a leg. We are "unable to do any good and inclined to all evil."

And that is important doctrine, because it leads us to the only way of deliverance and to the graciousness of God's gift of salvation. The only deliverance is that we are "regenerated by the Spirit of God." And that is a miracle and a gift of God. God raises us from the dead. God makes us to live. God restores what man took away. It is all of grace, and nothing of the work of man.

Do you know your misery and are you humbled before God?

### Questions for Discussion

1. What was unique about the creation of man as compared to that of other creatures?
2. From Colossians 3:10 and Ephesians 4:24 describe the "image of God" in which man was created.
3. Has sin always been a part of who man is? What brought the change in human nature?
4. Why are the descendants of Adam and Eve also corrupt? What is our relation to Adam according to Romans 5:12ff.?
5. Are little children and infants sinful too? What does Psalm 51:5 say?
6. List the parts of the human nature that are corrupted by sin (see LD 2, q. 4). Is there any part of man that is not depraved?
7. What word does the Bible use to describe our depravity in Ephesians 2:1-2? What does this say about a free-will gospel?
8. How does the theory of common grace contradict the teaching of this Lord's Day?
9. What act of God is necessary before a man can ever do a good work?
10. How does an evolutionary view of Genesis 1-3 undermine the fundamental truth about man?
11. How should believers respond to the truth concerning their depravity?



## A Refutation of Dispensationalism (4)

# Who Is the Nation Whose God Is the Lord?

**I**srael means Israel," is one of the most common lines uttered by dispensationalists. It is a way of saying that there is no need to search the Scriptures to find an answer to the question as to who Israel is. To a dispensationalist, everyone knows by common sense who Israel is. The Jews in Palestine—and really the other Jews scattered abroad as well—constitute this nation. In the mind of a dispensationalist, the promises to Israel are obviously promises to this group of people.

This interpretation is an example of what dispensationalists call the "literal" method of interpreting Scripture. The term "literal" has a number of meanings, one of which is "adhering to the primary meaning of a term or expression." Since most people today use the term "Israel" to refer to the nation of unbelieving Jews located in Palestine, a "literal" interpretation of Israel would be the one that identifies God's holy nation with that earthly nation.

Such may be the interpretation of the carnal man; but it is not the interpretation that arises out of faith. Faith holds for truth all that God reveals in Holy Scripture. Faith searches the Scriptures to find the meanings

of the key terms and expressions that are found in Scripture. When one approaches the Scriptures in faith, looking to God to explain what is meant by the chosen nation of Israel, one will come to a clear understanding of who Israel is. At the same time he will avoid being deceived by the many fortune-tellers who pose as interpreters of prophecy, and make predictions about what will soon happen to the present-day Israelis.

Let us take a look at how God Himself identifies Israel, the one holy nation that He refers to as His people.

### Israel: The Nation Whose God Is Jehovah

God promised that He would make of Abraham a great nation:

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing (Gen. 12:2).

Furthermore, He promised that He would forever be the God of this nation:

And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God (Gen. 17:8).

So who is this nation that will forever have Jehovah as their God?

The dispensationalist insists that this nation refers to the nation of Israel as it is known today.

But does this people really have Jehovah as their God? Dispensationalists look at these texts and argue that the earthly nation of Israel is God's special people and that the earthly land of Canaan is to be theirs forever. Yet they overlook something else that is stated in these verses. God says that He will forever be Israel's God. In other words, the nation spoken of in these verses is the one holy nation that believes in the true God.

Can this be said about the earthly nation of Israel that is commonly in the news today? Is it really the case that Jehovah is their God? Do they love and worship the true God who has manifested Himself in His Word, Jesus Christ?

Before we even take a look at other verses that give a further explanation of who is meant by Israel, these verses alone make clear that Israel is the name for the one nation whose God truly is Jehovah. In other words, it is a name for all the elect people of God who have received the gift of faith, and who trust in Christ alone for their salvation.

### What It Means to Be a Nation

But what is it that constitutes a nation? The Hebrew word "nation" originally referred to a body of people who often came from the same father but who also were united under the rule of one head. Let us consider these two ideas.

First, that a nation referred to a body of people who often had

*Rev. Laning is pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.*

*Previous article in this series: September 15, 2009, p. 492.*



the same father is evident from the fact that the father himself is said to be the nation. God told Abraham that he would be a great nation (Gen. 18:18), and He told Rebecca that two nations were in her womb (Gen. 25:23). Abraham, the father of a nation, is said to be that nation. The same is true of Jacob and of Esau.

In Deuteronomy we read that God's people were told to confess that their father had gone down into Egypt and that there he had become a great nation:

And thou shalt speak and say before the LORD thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous (Deut. 26:5).

So again we see here that the father of the nation is referred to as the nation.

That a nation is a people who often have the same father is also evident from the fact that the nation itself takes on the name of that father. Jacob was given the name Israel, and the nation itself was called Israel.

But to be a nation means more than this. It also means being a united body under one head. This was true of the nation of Israel from the start. Israel was the nation whose king and God was Jehovah Himself. They came forth from one father and were under the rule of the one true God. Thus they were a nation. They were the only nation whose God was Jehovah.

### **Jehovah Always to Remain the God of His Holy Nation**

Now let us take a look at another text that dispensationalists use to prove that the earthly nation of Israel is forever going to be God's special nation. As so often happens in the providence of God, the text they cite is actually a key passage that refutes their

position, rather than supports it. I refer to the following passage from the prophecy of Jeremiah:

Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever (Jer. 31:35-36).

The text clearly states that the seed of Israel will be a nation forever. There is no question about that. The question has to do with who it is that this nation refers to.

The dispensational answer to this question has obvious problems. Their claim that this refers to the earthly nation of Israel is contradicted by other statements made in this very passage. Jeremiah says here that Israel will continue to be a nation just as the ordinances of the sun, moon, and stars continue day after day. Just as these ordinances continue without interruption, so also this nation—without any interruption—will continue to be God's one holy nation.

To understand the significance of this, we must consider the context of Jeremiah's prophecy. Jeremiah prophesied this shortly before the Babylonian captivity. After the announcement that Judah was going to be taken into captivity just as the northern tribes had earlier been taken into Assyria, one might be left wondering whether this meant that Israel was going to cease to be God's one, holy nation. To reassure His people that it did not mean this, God comforted them with the words of this promise. He assured them that just as the sun was going to continue—without interruption—to rise and set while they were in

Babylon, so also Israel was going to continue—without interruption—to be a nation before the face of Jehovah God.

In other words, the true Israel is the nation who will forever have Jehovah as its God. Inseparably connected are the words "ye shall be My people" and the words "I will be your God." The Israel who truly is God's people is the Israel that truly worships Jehovah as their God.

### **Who Is the God of Carnal Israel?**

Dispensationalists will acknowledge that God promised that His people will continue—without interruption—to be God's holy nation. They argue that the physical descendants of Jacob really did continue to be a nation even during the years in which the Jews had been removed from the land of Canaan and were scattered among the nations. According to dispensationalist John Walvoord, Israel's "national characteristics were blurred for many centuries," yet they continued to be a nation.<sup>1</sup>

But is this really true? Leaving aside for the moment the valid question concerning whether the people who today call themselves Israelites really are the blood descendants of Jacob, is it the case that they continued to be a body of people united under a common rule. Who was their king? Under whom were they united?

In the old dispensation, there was a time before Israel had a king who sat on a throne on this earth. Yet at that time they were still a nation, since God was very really their king. They were the one holy nation, the only nation who could honestly say that their God was Jehovah.

Now let us consider the unbelieving Jews in the days

<sup>1</sup> John F. Walvoord, *Israel in Prophecy*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), 47.

before 1948, when they became established as an earthly nation. Did these Jews, while scattered among the nations, continue to have Jehovah as their God? Were they really united under the rule of Jehovah? No, they were not. They were not the nation on this earth whose God is Jehovah. They were not then, and they are not now. Still today carnal Israel is emphatically *not* the nation whose God is Jehovah.


No group of people can claim to be God's people, if they do not

truly have Jehovah as their God. To be God's covenant people is to trust in the triune God.

### **A Warning to Dispensationalists**

Those who maintain that carnal Israel is God's covenant people are in great danger of falling into the error of saying that the Israelis really are worshiping the true God. If carnal Israel is truly God's people, then Jehovah is truly their God. Let us go a step further. If the unbelieving Jews

really do have Jehovah as their God, then Jesus Christ is not the only way to the Father. That is how serious it is to say that Jews who reject Christ constitute God's one holy nation.

Undoubtedly, there are many dispensationalists who would argue that they vehemently reject such doctrines of devils. Yet teachings do have implications, and such are the implications of their serious error concerning the identity of the nation whose God is Jehovah. 

## *Report of Classis East*

September 9, 2009  
Kalamazoo PRC

**C**lassis East met in regular session on Wednesday, September 9, 2009 in the Kalamazoo PRC. Each church was represented by two delegates. Rev. Andrew Lanning was the chairman for this session.

Classis was informed that Cornerstone PRC had transferred the ministerial credentials and membership of its pastor, Rev. Nathan Brummel, to a United Reformed Church. The church visitors also gave a report about this matter.

Classis decided to send the following notice to the churches in Classis East and West and to our sister church in Northern Ireland: "With sorrow, Classis East informs the churches that Rev. Nathan Brummel was dismissed,


per his request, from the ministry of the Protestant Reformed Churches to join the United Reformed Churches. Classis asks the churches to remember the Cornerstone PRC congregation in prayer, imploring our faithful Shepherd to care for them in this time of distress. Because there is no procedure in place in our churches to follow when a Protestant Reformed minister leaves our denomination, Classis East appointed a study committee to develop the proper procedure to follow." This study committee is to report to the January 2010 session of classis.

Classis received an overture to Synod 2010 from Faith PRC proposing the reorganization of the classes into three classes rather than the current two. This overture was placed in the hands of a study committee to report to

the January 2010 session of classis.

Classis dealt with a discipline case in closed session. Classical appointments were given to Byron Center, Cornerstone, Holland, and Trinity. Classis is requesting Classis West to supply Cornerstone's pulpit for Sundays in December 2009 and January 2010. Classis, further, approved Cornerstone's request for relief from their synodical assessments due to a loss of families from 41 to 33. Classis did not approve Cornerstone's request of \$12,000 for the remainder of the 2009 year.

The expenses of classis amounted to \$510.35. Classis will meet next on January 13, 2010 at the First PRC, Grand Rapids.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jon J. Huisken   
Stated Clerk

## *News From Our Churches*

*Mr. Benjamin Wigger*

### **Congregation Activities**

**B**y this time of year all of our churches are well into their fall season of catechism classes and Bible studies. The days of summer vacation are long gone and forgotten and there is a

renewed emphasis and dedication to the study of God's Word. Hopefully you take advantage of those opportunities in your local congregation to continue to grow in your knowledge of the good news of the gospel.

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

The Kalamazoo, MI PRC traditionally marks the start of their year of Bible study and catechism instruction with a visit from the Hope Heralds, a group of approximately 55 men from the Michigan churches who sing praises to God in area churches and rest homes during the summer months. This kick-off concert took place the evening of September 15 at Kalamazoo. The entire congregation, along with invited family and friends, came together that evening for an hour of praise and inspiration meant to encourage and set the tone for the coming season of Bible study.

Saturday, September 19, the Junior and Senior Bible Societies of the Peace PRC in Lansing, IL got together for their 2nd annual kick-off cook-out for the start of their fall Bible study season. Those able and interested were invited to join together for a late afternoon bike ride, to be followed by a cook-out for everyone in the early evening.

The Junior Adult Bible Society of the Hope PRC in Walker, MI planned an early fall outing on September 11 at Millennium Park for food, fellowship, and games. The announcement in Hope's bulletin also drew attention to the society's new name—a change meant to encourage Hope's young singles to join the society, as well as the young couples of the congregation.

The Jr. Christian Fellowship Society of the Hudsonville, MI PRC enjoyed a potluck dinner and organizational meeting on September 18 at Heritage Christian School. Weather permitting, plans called for a game of softball outside, or a game of volleyball inside.

The Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA held an organizational meeting for their Bible studies on September 16. Their pastor, Rev. R. Kleyn, gave a brief meditation on the necessity of

Bible study, after which Covenant decided what Bible study groups they would have this year, what they will study in each, and when they will meet.

September 18 and 19 the men and boys of First PRC in Holland, MI enjoyed their annual camp-out at PJ Hoffmaster State Park, on the shore of Lake Michigan, near Muskegon. These overnight camp-outs are held rain or shine each year. Thankfully, this year's was mostly shine.

The Consistory of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI asked Pastor-elect Cory Griess to speak a word of edification for them on Sunday morning, September 13. Mr. Griess, his wife, Lael, and their family have been members of Georgetown for the past four years while he attended our seminary, preparing for the work of pastor in our churches. That evening there was also a time for the congregation to express their farewells and prayers for Cory and Lael before they left for Calvary PRC in Hull, IA and the work the Lord calls them to there. The Griess family anticipated leaving for Calvary on September 21, DV.

While members of the Georgetown congregation bid farewell to the Griess family, they were also encouraged to attend a brief program updating them on developments in their work with Paul Raj and the saints in Vellore, India.

The India Outreach Committee of the Byron Center, MI PRC planned to have a couple of representatives by the map of India in their fellowship hall on Sunday morning, September 13, to answer any questions about their work being done there.

The adults and young people of the First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada were once again invited to play volleyball on September 18. These nights of volleyball take place on a regular basis two times a month

throughout the fall and winter months.

### Denomination Activities

On September 15 the League of PR Adult Bible Societies Mass Meeting/Lecture was held at the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI. Rev. A. Lanning, pastor at Faith, spoke on "Blessed Readers," based on Revelation 1:3.


On Sunday evening, September 13, the Hope Heralds presented a concert of praise in song at First Jenison CRC. Members of our churches in the area were encouraged to attend.

The Theological School began its new school year on September 8. May the Lord bless our professors and their students as they begin this very important work for our churches. This year there will be nine students attending our seminary, including two interns who are working in the churches for this semester as part of their training.

Our thanks goes out to our Theological Seminary, the speakers, and all those who had a part in the Calvin Conference, September 3-5, held at the First CRC in Byron Center, MI. This conference was held in commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the birth of the great church reformer John Calvin and was entitled, "After 500 years: John Calvin for Reformed Churches Today." By all accounts this was a very profitable and edifying conference.

### Minister Activities

The Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada has extended a call to Rev. T. Miersma, our denomination's former missionary in Spokane, WA, to become their next pastor.

We extend our congratulations to Rev. Allen and Crysta Brummel on the birth of a baby girl, Carly Shae, born Sunday morning, September 13. 



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## Announcements

### NOTICE!!!

With the September 15 issue of the *Standard Bearer*, volume year 85 is finished. If you would like your issues bound (cost=\$17.00), please deliver them to the RFPA office before the end of October. For additional orders, call Paula at 616-457-5970.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of the Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church express their sympathy to: Tom and Kathy Verbeek, Jeff and Barb Steenholdt, Tom and Marcia Kiel, Sandy Kiel, Dan and Deb Kiel, and their families in the death of their father, grandfather, and great grandfather,

#### MR. HENRY KIEL.

"Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalm 16:11).

Rev. Spriensma, President  
Tom Verbeek, Clerk

Check out the  
RFPA web page at  
[www.rfpa.org](http://www.rfpa.org)

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Byron Center PRC express their Christian sympathy, in the death of

#### EILEEN HAUCK,

to Jim and Julie Hauck, Rich and Sylvia VanBaren, and to their families, and also to the extended family of several nieces and nephews of Jim's mother and Rich's sister. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Corinthians 5:1).

Ken Elzinga, Vice-president  
Dale Bartelds, Clerk

### NOTICE!!!

Trinity PRC Evangelism Committee is pleased to offer Rev. Rodney Kleyn's Financial Principles sermon series for download or purchase. E-mail [Trinityprc1@gmail.com](mailto:Trinityprc1@gmail.com) to order a CD set for \$15 or to download go to <http://www.trinityprc.org/financialprinciples.html>

### LISTEN LIVE

Covenant of Grace PRCA in Spokane, WA is now live-streaming their Sunday services at [www.reformedspokane.org](http://www.reformedspokane.org), 10 A.M. and 5 P.M. Pacific Time

### LECTURE

Join us for our Reformation Lecture!

Friday, October 30, 2009 at 8:00 P.M.

#### Prof. Barrett Gritters

(Professor of New Testament and Practical Theology  
in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary)

will speak on:

#### "Music's Indispensable Place in (the) Reformation."

Wingham Protestant Reformed Church  
292 Edward Street  
Wingham, Ontario

Call 519-357-1082 for more information.