

THE *August 2009* STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

In This Issue

- ◆ Quit You Like Men 434
- ◆ Letters 436
- ◆ Creedal Authority 437
- ◆ CERC Family Camp—News Report 440
- ◆ A Refutation of Dispensationalism (2) 442
- ◆ Not Anabaptist but Reformed (14) 445
- ◆ All Around Us 446
- ◆ The Millennium (3) 448
- ◆ The Nature of Fire 450
- ◆ Bring the books... 452
- ◆ News From Our Churches 453

Volume 85 ◆ Number 19

Quit You Like Men (2)

The first point of Rev. Koole's 2009 pre-synodical sermon was "What the Apostle Means by Quit You Like Men." That was the focus of the July Meditation (p. 410). Rev. Koole goes on, now, to address "Why This Is the Need of the Hour" and "The Great Incentive."

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity."

I Corinthians 16:13, 14

Why This is the Need of the Hour

And why does the church need such men, men who acquit themselves like men?

As the apostle makes plain in the whole epistle, it is because of all the enemies the church must deal with. As he stated in verses 8 and 9, "But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great

door and effectual is opened unto me and there are many adversaries."

On this earth we serve the church militant. Many are the adversaries of the church and of the apostolic gospel. The enemy without would prevent the spread of the gospel. The enemy within would corrupt it so that what goes forth is not the gospel.

It is significant that the language of our text is basically militaristic.

"Watch!" That is, be on the alert for danger and the subtle infiltration of the enemy.

"Stand fast in the faith!" That is, when it comes to the faith, hold your ground. Here the emphasis is not on the inner activity of faith, but on the *content* of the faith, the faith once delivered to the saints. When it comes to that faith and the doctrines of the gospel of sovereign, free grace, yield not one inch.

"Quit you like men!" Behave and give a good account of yourselves as "a man" should.

"Be strong!" Defend those entrusted to your care, doing so

with energy, with resolution, and without fear.

As well, what we find in verse 14, namely, making sure that everything we do is done in charity, is not contrary to a military theme.

To be sure, the call of verse 14 to do all things with love is to provide a balance to the idea of battle and warfare. It is a reminder that being a man with its emphasis on strength and not flinching in the face of combat does not exclude tenderness and care. As Paul writes elsewhere, "Husbands love your wives, as Christ does the church." The apostle is not interested in the rule of authority that seeks to be domineering and harsh, but in the rule that takes the lead in love. That's true in marriage, and that's true in the church. Consideration of each other and of those affected by our decisions is how we must go about our business.

But love is also part and parcel of being a good soldier. Stalwart, faithful Uriah of old comes to mind. He willingly died on a battlefield, on the forefront,

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The Standard Bearer (ISSN 0362-4692) is a semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August, published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc., 1894 Georgetown Center Dr., Jenison, MI 49428-7137.

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SUBSCRIPTION PRICE

\$21.00 per year in the U.S., US\$25.00 elsewhere.

ADVERTISING POLICY

The Standard Bearer does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$10.00 fee. Announcements should be sent, with the \$10.00 fee, to the editorial office: SB Announcements, 4949 Ivanrest Ave. SW, Grandville, MI 49418 (e-mail: doezema@prca.org). Deadline for announcements is one month prior to publication date.

Web site for RFA: www.rfa.org
Web site for PRC: www.prc.org

because he so loved his land, his wife, his true Lord, and even David, that unworthy king of his who sent him to his death.

That said, how thankful, good brethren, we can be that the one on whose behalf we labor is not merely David himself, but the true and faithful Son of David. It is that faithful Shepherd King who is worthy of a loyalty and love that inspires.

How many have died with great courage on battlefields, in the name of love! They put their lives on the line, standing in the forefront of the battle out of loyalty to their motherland and for the sake of their families and loved ones back home.

Ultimately the urgent need of the church for sons who will behave as men is because of the enemy's relentless assault on the gospel truth. And if that was true in the apostle's own day (just read the Epistle to the Corinthians if you need convincing), how much more so today.

For our purposes we need make reference only to one evil loose in Protestantism today, namely, the deadly evil of the Federal Vision heresy. The ancient error of the Judaizers against the great apostolic gospel of justification by faith alone has been resurrected and, in its mutated form, is infecting the very life-blood of the whole of the Presbyterian and Reformed church world, it seems.

God grant that against it we continue to stand fast and with boldness dare label it for what it is—a deadly cross-destroying, grace-defaming, faith-denying, apostle-despising, man-glorifying heresy.

With respect to this heresy I have a great grief. My grief being not simply on account of how many are willing to buy into this heresy, but also on account of how few of those who do oppose it do so with a true courage and decisiveness.

We do not deny that there are men out there opposing this heresy within their own denominations. Any number of good books and articles have been written that take issue with the error. There are even those who within their church assemblies and courts are in the process of opposing the error, though sadly without much success.

But the great grief is what those who oppose the error will not say about the Federal Vision teachers themselves. They will not label them for what they are—wolves in sheep's clothing, heretics! I could give you the names of writers of books and articles that do good work in exposing the error, and yet they cannot bring themselves to say one cross word about the men who are injecting this deadly poison into the life-blood of the church. I refrain at this time from naming names. But these men refer to the promoters of the Federal Vision as "Brothers in Christ," as "men for whom I have the highest regard," and again, as "those to whom I am indebted for their deep insights into the Scriptures," and so forth. They are so worried about being ever so nice in the name of emasculated love that they cannot bring themselves to say one stern word against these deceivers for all the deadly damage they are doing to the church by their staggering dishonesty and their corruption of the apostolic gospel.

Brethren, I don't care how moral and genteel and 'gracious' these false teachers may be (or others like them who may come along later), we must have the fortitude to apply to them the language of the apostle. You know his words, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed [anathema!]" (Gal. 1:8). Mind you, even an angel from heaven! How much more upright and gra-

cious could Beings be, blameless as far as their lives are concerned. And yet, should even such a Being dare tamper with the gospel delivered by the Holy Spirit to the apostles, Paul says "Let him be ANATHEMA." That means under the interdict and wrath of the Lamb Himself!

So much for allowing these deceivers to remain in the church with honor in order to prove how 'brotherly' we are.

Brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus we ourselves must not be afraid publicly to label those who teach this deadly error for what they are—enemies of the gospel, ministers of darkness. We must acquit ourselves like men. We must not allow ourselves to be intimidated by those who would accuse us of harsh speech and of being unbrotherly and judgmental.

The apostle Paul would not have been. Neither must we.

We must insist on the purity of the gospel and be set for its defense.

Why?

For the sake of missions, first of all, of course. What better way to prevent the spread of the gospel than by corrupting it, so that what goes forth is not really Christ's gospel at all, but another? The great Adversary's goal would be accomplished. All of our decisions with regards to missions and its generous support would be to no purpose if what those sent forth to preach is not the apostolic gospel after all.

And the same goes for our seminary. What good would it be to approve so much financial support for that valuable institution if what the young men are given to wield is not the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, but rather something brittle and dull, not genuine and sharp, something filled with impurities, sure to betray one in the battle?

We must continue to tolerate nothing other than the pure alloy

of the gospel of grace. Everything about our usefulness for our churches and Christ's greater cause depends on it. In that pure gospel of grace is our safety, security, and strength.

Brethren, let us watch, stand steadfast, and acquit ourselves like men.

The Great Incentive Given

What is the incentive? Love, you say. Love for the church and its members. Love for our families and little ones. Love for our Lord.

To be sure, there is motivation enough right there.

But the question is, why do we so love the Lord and His church?

Why else but because He first loved us!

It is significant that before the apostle mentions doing all things in love, he refers to faith, being steadfast in the faith! Faith, true faith, always comes before Christian love. Self-denying love is

the fruit of faith and is produced by the knowledge of faith, the knowledge of what Christ Jesus, God's own Son, has done for me, for you, for us.

Wasn't that Paul? "... and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, *who loved me*, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Out of that faith that grasped the greatness of the gospel of a sovereign, free grace and its redeeming love came a life of service—a young ex-Pharisee living no longer for himself but for Another, and for others, so that others might know this same Lord, who so loved him, the chief of sinners.


It was another great servant of God who, fifteen centuries later (born in 1509), in the knowledge of that surpassing love would say, *Promptly and Sincerely, Lord, I Offer My Service to Thee!* He too spent himself for the service of Christ's church and gospel truth.

There was one who acquitted himself as a man!

It is that love divine and its power that has restored to us the reality of true and redeemed manhood—not the manhood of self-centeredness, which feeds pride, "Oh, I hope everyone recognizes me and I have the last word," but the manhood of a heartfelt concern for others entrusted to our care and a consideration of others affected by our deliberations, and above all, a love for Christ our Lord and for His body, the church.

Let it be a love that evidences itself by the words we speak, words that breathe the apostolic Spirit in all that we say and do, yes, speaking the truth in love.

Brethren, manly courage is required, which is to say, faith and zeal mixed with love.

Let all that we do be in the name of the great Son of David, the epitome of true manhood, yea, striving to represent properly that great Son of Man. 

Letters

Creedal Authority

I am writing concerning your Editorial in the March 1, 2009 *Standard Bearer*. Please understand I greatly respect you, the SB, and the PRC. I have been a reader and subscriber for over thirty years. So in that frame of reference I am criticizing what I see as several errors in your March 1st Editorial.

1. The creeds *are not* the work of the Holy Spirit. They are man's words summarizing particular biblical doctrines.

2. Some (like me) can "honestly dispute" that the same charge holds true for present day officers of churches as it did for the apostles.

3. We are dealing with a church council (Acts 15); you are

implying that today's Sessions or Synods are equal to those of the first century.

I feel that you hold the church-officer position in the light of a "favorable dream," but the truth is that many of today's officers are tyrants and unbelievers! They abuse their position and look down on the congregation as being "underlings" much like our present-day politicians in Washington, DC.


They have both forgotten that they are called to be servants! In government, God sets them to serve the people of the nation. In the church, God calls them to serve His people, the church of Jesus Christ.

Please read the enclosed pamphlet, *Imperious Presbyterians*, by

Kevin Reed. (Maybe you would do a book review on it in a future *Standard Bearer* issue.)

With you, I agree creeds and confessions can be rightly used and subscribed to, but only in the sense that they are man-written, trying to consolidate biblical doctrine into manageable statements of short summary. They should never be used to bring men to trial or charge believers with crimes against them. The wise use of creeds is not objected to, but the putting them above Scripture and enforced by self-righteous officers is!

Please read Reed!

Albert Salmon
Moorestown, New Jersey. 

Creedal Authority

Note to the readers of the SB: Before we respond to various points raised by the brother in the above letter (dated mid-April) our readers should know that brother Salmon and I have carried on some correspondence over the issues he raised and have come to the conclusion that we are closer to each other about the importance of the creeds than may appear from this first letter. But because the issue concerning the character and authority of the confessions is of such importance today, and because the brother's 'reservations' about what we wrote is quite likely shared by others, especially by those who, having left creedally-based but apostatizing denominations have been strongly rebuked for doing so by the very officers who refuse to be bound by those selfsame creeds, we asked his permission to print the personal letter sent to myself, together with a response. He has graciously consented.

The question the brother raises about the creeds and the right to speak about them as the *work of the Spirit* through the church of the past is, in our judgment, the point at issue and needs to be discussed and explained.

What follows contains the essence of my response to the brother, but now in an edited and revised form to make it suitable for publication.

Good Brother Salmon:

Be assured we of the SB have the highest regard for readers such as yourself, and we much appreciate your past encouragement and support.

What you raise about the creeds and what weight and authority they have is one of the great issues of our day, an issue that needs to be discussed and thought through. Just keep in mind, good brother, that it is especially the modern day heretics in apostatizing Presbyterian and Reformed churches (Federal Vision men come to mind, to say nothing of leaders in the Emerging Church movement) who want either to set aside the creeds completely (as 'mere man-made traditions') or to minimize them to such an extent that they no longer have binding authority upon those who have vowed to subscribe to them.

And why?

So that they may be free to teach their unReformed and unbiblical novelties in the churches without being challenged on the basis of the creeds. Their common argument is, "We are going back to the Bible in direct, exegetical fashion, and now, through us, the church is at last rediscovering firsthand what the apostles themselves originally taught."

As if the Spirit has waited for two millennia to begin to open up the true meaning of the Scriptures to Christ's church and believers, the Spirit leaving Christ's church in ignorance on fundamental gospel doctrines for thousands of years. And, mind you, we are talking about the church that the apostle calls "the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15).

It is exactly by loosing the Bible from the centuries-old creedal explanations that these

men give themselves free rein to give a biblical passage any explanation their 'spirit' pleases at the moment. And if you disagree, it is simply your word (as a mere common believer who knows nothing of the 'nuances of the Greek,' after all!) against theirs. As a result, no doctrine is settled in the church, and even so fundamental a doctrine as justification by faith without works, the hinge upon which the whole gospel of grace swings, is up for grabs. We are now to believe that justification does not mean what the great Reformed creeds for centuries have declared it to mean, but rather something Romish after all. As a result, doctrinal confusion rules the day, a climate in which heretics have a field day, free to teach whatever novelty they please.

This is our great concern. So we are pressing the importance of the great Christological and Reformed creeds, as well as faithfulness to them.

In response to your first assertion that "The Creeds are not the work of the Holy Spirit. They are man's words summarizing particular biblical doctrines," we would ask, not the work of the Holy Spirit in any fashion at all?

If by the words "The Creeds are not the work of the Spirit" you mean, not in the same sense as the Scriptures are, we would agree. We neither assume nor assert that the creeds are infallible (although, until a teaching is shown to be contrary to Scripture, they are to be received as trustworthy in what the creed teaches). But if you mean, they

are not the work of the Spirit in any sense at all, or *even in a special sense* that distinguishes them from all other theological writings of good men, we must disagree.

It is your second sentence, "They are man's words summarizing particular doctrines" that brings us, I think, to the nub of the issue. To describe the creeds simply as 'man's words' does not do the creeds justice. Such could be said about Calvin's *Institutes* or Bavinck's *Dogmatiek*—man's words summarizing biblical doctrines—but not about our confessions. Rather, a proper description of the historic Christian creeds is that they are the words of *Christ's church* summarizing biblical doctrines. And *that* reality puts them into a different and special category. This is what gives the creeds their special weight and binding authority.

What we are asserting is that declarations made by the faithful church of Christ speaking in concert is the Spirit's way of giving those pronouncements a seal of authority that other documents produced by believing theologians do not have.

I may read Calvin's *Institutes* with profit and Bavinck's *Dogmatiek* (and even the *SB!*), but they have no power or authority to bind you or me to what they teach. It is different with the great Christian creeds. To them the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit who has enabled God-fearing church councils to set forth what the Scriptures in fact teach on a doctrine of controversy, gives a special weight and authority.

Significantly, the faithful church of Christ understood this from earliest times. This is evident from the opening words of the Athanasius Creed, drawn up to expose and refute a host of early errors concerning God as God triune. Those who hammered out that creed, as they brought the Scriptures to bear on

the deadly errors threatening that fundamental doctrine, had the boldness to begin that creed with these words.

Whosoever will be saved, before all else it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith; 2. Which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without a doubt he shall perish everlastingly. 3. And the catholic faith is this: that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; 4. Neither confounding the persons nor dividing the essence...."

How could they make such a pronouncement with such boldness? "Believe this, confess this—or perish." Only because they were confident that what they had produced was not of themselves but was under the leading of the Spirit of Truth.

The Athanasian Creed, definitive when it comes to how we confess God triune, is not the same as Scripture. It uses words not even found in the Scriptures, such as Trinity, person, and so on. But it was certainly produced under the leading of the same Spirit who had inspired the apostles who wrote the Scriptures. It is the fruit of Christ's own Spirit working in men as they approached the Word of God by faith and prayer. Without that Spirit working in the great church councils of the past, we would all be Arians, Sabellians, Eutycheans, or some such misled sect today.

That first of all.

Second, good brother, I would urge you to consider once again the significance and implications of the great church council of Jerusalem recorded in Acts 15.

What we find striking about that council is that the Holy Spirit did not decide to settle the issue of the status of the uncircumcised in the church simply by revealing it directly to the apostle Paul (or Peter) and then having them, under divine inspiration, settle the

issue for the church. He could have, but He did not. Instead He directed the apostles to call a council that gave to *elders* (teaching and ruling) equal voice with the apostles! The emphasis of Acts 15 is upon the involvement of the elders of the church and what they contributed to the final creedal statement of that church council. As we stated in March, the phrase "*apostles and elders*" is found no fewer than five times. James, the brother of Christ, was not an apostle. Nor was Barnabas. How did these elders contribute? By quoting and applying the Scriptures (Amos 9) to the heresy facing them at that time. That's what *the Spirit of Christ* in James enabled him as an elder to do. And even the apostles paid heed and made that explanation their own.

Most significant are the words of verse 28, "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things." That 'to us' refers not only to the apostles and their claim of Spirit-derived authority, but to the elders as well. The presence of the apostles at that time was exactly to assure the New Testament church that they could trust what was coming from a great church council in which God-fearing, Bible-believing ministers and elders were involved.

What this means, we are convinced, is this: we must not think that while the apostles lived, the church (and her elders) had the guidance of the Spirit and could say over against error, "*This is in accordance with the Word of God and a fruit of the guidance of the Spirit,*" but once the apostles died, church councils could not say that with any confidence anymore. That is not true. That is the whole point of the value of the Canon of the New Testament Scriptures—the New Testament church has at its disposal the apostolic word and its wisdom in its entirety.

What is the implication? This: when God-fearing, Bible-believing officers of the later New Testament church councils and synods were called to defend the gospel of grace against heresy, and did that by bringing the apostolic word to bear, thereby producing those great Christian creeds, *they were being directed by the same Spirit who directed the council and elders of Jerusalem in the book of the Acts*. The apostles, being dead, yet speak! And therefore, what later biblically-faithful church councils have produced (the creeds) can be and, in our judgment, ought to be called the work of the Spirit, having great authority as a result—not independent of the Bible, but as faithful applications of the Word of God as directed by the Spirit.

You understand, we are not talking about just any creed that officers of a church decide to write out, but those that are the result of godly men bringing the apostolic word to bear on a heresy (such as Arminianism) threatening the gospel of grace. Such creeds and confessions are the work of the Spirit in the sense of His enabling believing officer-bearers to take God's Word and to declare "This is error. And this is truth!"

I think the key for finding common ground on this issue is the description with which you close your letter, in which you express a fear of "Creeds... [as] enforced by *self-righteous officers*...."

I could not agree more.

Indeed, when self-righteous officers get involved (i.e., those who justify themselves as they depart from truth) every high-handed evil under the sun results. They are not above even using creedal-authority itself as a club against those who dare challenge their 'new perspective' on things—"How dare you say such things about church-approved officers. And now you talk about

leaving this creedally-based church whose creeds tie you in with the church of the past? Woe to you!" And this, mind you, by men who refuse to be bound to those very creeds they vowed they would uphold.

As Kevin Reed labels it, "*Imperious Presbyterianism*" indeed.

We sympathize.

But weakening or diminishing the authority of the great biblically-based creeds is not going to help avert this abuse. In fact, it will play into the hands of these dishonest men, allowing them to twist the Scriptures into any shape they want, all the while remaining as preachers in good standing while they do so.

The Federal Vision men come to mind, men trying to foist upon the church novel interpretations of Paul's doctrine of justification by faith, and of election itself, interpretations of the Bible that are clearly at odds with and even condemned by the Reformed confessions. And this is exactly why these men keep insisting on discussing things only on the basis of exegesis of biblical texts, and why they so strongly object when faithful elders bring the confessions to bear on this 'new perspective' of theirs—because the great Reformed confessions quickly demonstrate that what they are trying to introduce into the church stands in flat contradiction with what the faithful church of the past has always taught about these same biblical doctrines.

They hate being so easily detected and flushed out. Hence, away with the creeds!

But where Bible-honoring, honest officers are involved, a different 'Spirit' is at work. Where such men yet govern the church, the creeds and confessions can be used properly. In fact, we would say that, in their hands, the creeds are a powerful and God-given tool to be used against dishonest, deceiving

theologians, men who having promised to teach God's truth *as set forth in the creeds*, then proceed to contradict those very doctrines they have vowed to uphold.

With your statement "They should *never* [emphasis ours] be used to bring men to trial or charge believers with crimes against them" we must respectfully disagree. If an officebearer has had the honesty to inform his church where he disagrees with a creedal teaching, and explained why he cannot subscribe, that's one thing (though it may mean he must be relieved of office in that church if he remains unpersuaded); but if a man has subscribed to the creeds, promising to teach what they teach, and then simply starts introducing doctrines at odds with what he has subscribed, that's another matter. Our Church Order declares that such a one is 'de facto' (by that very fact) suspended. Such a man has proved dishonest, and is to be charged with teaching things contrary to Scripture and the confessions.

Finally, thanks for sending the booklet by Kevin Reed (*Imperious Presbyterianism*). I am familiar with the booklet, as I am with any number of other excellent treatises published by the Trinity Foundation. Though it may surprise you, I agree with almost everything Reed writes in his booklet, or at least I thought I did. Having read your letter I begin to wonder if there is something I overlooked. If so, I have not found it as yet.

However, in light of a number of excellent observations Kevin Reed does make about the apostasy of our day and high-handed Presbyterians (officebearers), we may well review the booklet in a future *SB* installment.

Proverbs 27:17

—Rev. Kenneth Koole



Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church Family Camp—News Report

Quite incredibly, for a second year in a row I was invited to be the speaker at the family camp of the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore. These family camps are held yearly by the church in Singapore. Over the years they have been a source of great blessing to many. I have attended at least ten such camps over the years, at many different places in Singapore and Malaysia, some with my wife and family.

There were two reasons for which this opportunity again filled me with joy and thanks to God. The first is that I, with the Contact Committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches, saw this as another opportunity to renew and strengthen the bonds between the church in Singapore and our churches in America. The second reason is, of course, that after so many years of living and working among the saints in Singapore I have a strong bond of love with them and great concern for their continued spiritual welfare.

About half of my time from June 8 to 18 was spent with members of Covenant ERCS, and the other half at the campsite in a city called Rompin, on the eastern side of the Malaysian Peninsula.

While in Singapore I enjoyed the gracious hospitality of Wee Gim Theng and Patricia and their

family. Some years ago Gim Theng lost his wife after a long battle with cancer. She too was a dear member of the church. Patricia, a few years later, became the wife of Gim Theng and the mother of his children. Patricia has by the grace of God become a real mother in every respect to these children adopted by her. Living with the family for several days gave me the opportunity to enjoy the spirituality and happiness of a truly covenant home, experiencing also its trials and challenges with respect to modern-day life in Singapore.

During our short time in Singapore we had lots of opportunities for personal visits and fellowship with beloved saints we have known from years past. We were reminded again of the culture and way of life in Singapore, so very different from that in America. On the other hand, we and our families in the States face many of the same challenges in trying by the grace of God to live a truly Christian life in an ungodly world. It is significant also, at any given time, to consider where a Christian is at in his or her development in Christian living and to see how much the truth of God's Word must continue to be our guide and stay through all the years. We must be always growing in our knowledge of the Word of God and our love for its truth. By the Word of God and by His grace and Spirit we must be different from the world, living a truly antithetical Christian life.

We also attended a home Bible study group (cell group). At this Bible study there were about 10 to 15 adults present. A good brother of the church, Lee Meng Hsien, is doing a commendable job in leading the group in the study of the book of Isaiah, certainly a difficult but profoundly rich book of the Bible to study.

On the Lord's Day of June 14 I had the privilege of preaching at both worship services of Covenant Church. Covenant has about 150 members. There are now a goodly number of teenagers, who represent the second generation of the church that was first instituted when I served in Singapore as missionary the first time. Pastor Paul Goh and Elder Gim Theng were away on this Lord's Day visiting and preaching for a mission station in Penang, Malaysia. The auditorium was full at the morning service, with some visitors in attendance as well. The afternoon service had a smaller audience.

Covenant has recently been able to rent a new facility for holding its worship services. As was the case in the past when we lived in Singapore, it is very difficult for a small church to purchase property and build a church building of its own. The new rented facility is beautiful, having a nice auditorium for the worship services, a cafeteria where members of the church regularly enjoy Sunday lunch together, and several nice meeting rooms for Sunday school and catechism classes. Between the

Rev. denHartog is pastor of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

worship services I also led one of the catechism classes that Gim Theng normally teaches. It was a class of young people studying from the book *Essentials of Reformed Doctrine*.

Another highlight of my time in Singapore was two visits to the Singapore General Hospital to visit with Pastor Lau Chin Kwee. Many readers of this news article will know that Pastor Lau was the first local pastor of the church in Singapore. We have many fond memories of working together in the early days of the beginning of the Evangelical Reformed Churches in Singapore. In the last few years Pastor Lau has been grievously afflicted with a degenerative liver condition. This condition caused deterioration not only of his liver but also of his heart. A few months ago Pastor Lau went through a very rare medical procedure, a heart and liver transplant—the first of its kind ever done in Singapore. He is still recovering from this surgery.

The first day I visited Pastor Lau he was very, very sick because of anti-rejection medicine being administered to him. The next time I visited him he was remarkably better. We had a very joyful visit, speaking together of the history of the work of the church in Singapore. Pastor Lau offered many expressions of appreciation for the years of labor of the Protestant Reformed Churches in Singapore. Pastor Lau still has many physical struggles, which require him to be in and out of the hospital. I spoke to him yet from the Changi Airport at the time of my departure. It is our prayer that the Lord will be merciful to him and, if it be His will, that his life will yet be spared for labors and witness to His Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, whose name he continues in much affliction to praise and thank.

The second half of our stay in Singapore was at the family

camp in Rompin, Malaysia. We traveled by car into Malaysia, for about four hours. A number of church members also traveled the four hours to the camp in their own cars. Most traveled by bus. The camp was attended by about 130 people, most of them being members of Covenant Church. The campsite was at a beautiful resort on the beach of the South China Sea. There were nice accommodations for all the campers, quite upscale compared to those where camps were held years ago. At that time there was little money, and conditions of the campsites were pretty primitive and austere. Now the adult members of the church are almost all employed in very good occupations that generate good income to support the church.

I had the arduous but blessed opportunity to give five messages for the camp on the general subject of “Provoking One Another Unto Love and Good Works.” The sub-topics included that of family life, building up the church, evangelism, and Christian living. Attention to the messages was very good. There were only a couple of attendees at the camp who would in our churches be called ‘seniors.’ These were grandmothers brought into the church, often by the testimony of their own children. In many cases entire families, including a goodly number of young people, were at the camp. The young people gave youthful excitement and enthusiasm to the whole camp. They participated in all the activities of the camp. Many of these are schooling for their life’s careers. Higher education is very strongly emphasized in the Singaporean culture. It is



our hope and prayer that they will soon also marry and establish their own Christian homes. The need for the young people to be strongly established in the Reformed faith is obviously very great, for they must carry on the work of the church and the cause of the kingdom of Christ. Our prayer is that these covenant young people may be zealous to grow to a profound understanding of the basis of their faith, with the same application of effort and study with which they pursue their secular studies for their careers. There continues in the church also the great challenges of encouraging young people to marry in the Lord, and if possible to fellow members of the church.

The spiritual fellowship in the Lord that we enjoyed together was rich and very blessed. Over the years, this has always been the character of these camps. There was good opportunity to talk personally with them about the many struggles and difficulties and problems, as well as the joys, that the members of the church in Singapore face.

Our time in Singapore and Malaysia reminded me again of the on-going needs and struggles of the church in Singapore. It is our prayer and hope that there might be a renewed relationship between the church in Singapore and our Protestant Reformed Churches in America. May the Lord give us an open door for the




gospel and give us mutual love and respect for each other. Because of their still relative youthfulness as a church, and as they seek to grow and remain steadfast over the years as a distinctively Reformed church in Singapore, Covenant Church continues to need the help of our more mature Reformed denomination. The pastor and session members of the church greatly need encouragement and help and fellowship in their many difficult labors as

they care for the church in a heathen land, where there are still only few that know and love the Reformed faith. We as churches in America stand also to receive many blessings from our fellowship with the saints in Singapore and from laboring together in the cause of the truth and the kingdom of Christ in this part of the world.

Since I have been back from Singapore, I have been engaged in another interesting project. Elder Wong Chee Choong in Singapore has taken it upon himself to teach the Canons of Dordt to a group of members of Covenant Church. This gives us another opportunity to help build up the members of the church in the knowledge and love of the historic and glorious doctrines of the Reformed faith that are our own blessed heritage. Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma is helping

with furnishing discussion outlines for teaching the Canons of Dordt to a catechism class.

In the years of my ministry I have been greatly blessed by labors in many parts of the world. It fills me with great joy and awe before God to have experienced so profoundly the truth of the glorious catholic church of Christ gathered from the nations of the world. What an amazing thing, that God has His elect people in all different lands and cultures. The church in every part of the world has its unique struggles and trials, both sorrows and joys. The truth of the gospel, and the grace and Spirit of Christ, unite us all in one. We look for the blessed and glorious return of our Lord, when we shall all be gathered around His throne to worship the one only true and living God and the glorious and blessed Savior of His elect people, our Lord Jesus Christ. 

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. James Laning

A Refutation of Dispensationalism (2)

The Dispensational Well-Meant Offer

The previous article dealt with the dispensational claim that the kingdom of Christ was not mentioned by the Old Testament prophets. Over against this error it was pointed

out that Scripture says that not only some, but all these prophets, spoke of the days in which we now live. They spoke of a Messiah that would come to a heavenly throne through the deep way of the cross, and who would then rule the nations from God's right hand.

The Jews in Jesus' day were slow to believe these prophets, and wrongly concluded that they spoke of a future earthly king-

dom. But after Pentecost the disciples clearly grasped the heavenly nature of Christ's kingdom, and went forth boldly to proclaim that the promises found in the Old Testament had been fulfilled, and that the Messiah was already reigning over all the nations, and gathering His people out of these nations into His body, the church.

We turn now to consider yet another peculiar teaching of the

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dispensationalists. They commonly maintain that Jesus at the beginning of His public ministry offered to the Jews an earthly kingdom, only to withdraw that offer once it was rejected. Then they go on to say that Jesus withdrew this offer only temporarily, and that He will offer this earthly kingdom to the Jews once again when He returns.

This idea of a well-meant offer of the kingdom is similar in some respects to the error known as the well-meant offer of the gospel. Both refer to God's promise as a gracious "offer," and both involve God graciously offering to people something He has already determined that they will not receive.¹ This similarity is interesting and significant, and warrants our close attention as we proceed.

The dispensational "offer" of an earthly kingdom

The dispensational position on Christ "offering" an earthly kingdom to the Jews can be summarized briefly. Their argument goes like this:

God's promise to David concerning the kingdom of His Son was an unconditional promise of an earthly kingdom—a kingdom of earthly power and riches that would be enjoyed by the Jews in this life. When the promised Son of David came and began to preach, He offered this earthly kingdom to the Jews. He proclaimed to them that the time for this kingdom was "at hand," and that the Jews were to repent and receive the kingdom of earthly

dominion that God had promised to their father David.

The Jews, however, rejected this well-meant offer. And when this became clearly evident, Christ withdrew His offer and began speaking about a different subject, namely, about what was going to happen during the time period between His first coming and His second coming.

But the offer that Christ had made could not be withdrawn forever. Because the promise to David was unconditional, the offer would have to be made again at some future time. So the fulfillment of the promise was postponed until the time of the second coming of Christ. When Christ returns, the Jews will be different than they were when He came the first time. Having been humbled into submission during the Great Tribulation, they will finally accept Christ as their King, and the promised earthly kingdom will be realized.

This, in short, is the dispensational position. It is a view that manifests a wrong view not only of Christ's kingdom, but also of the nature of God's gracious call.

The objection that this would be a kingdom without the cross

As was pointed out last time, the unconditional promise to David concerning the reign of His Son was fulfilled in Christ's resurrection and ascension. The prophets spoke of a suffering Messiah that would reign from heaven *after* His resurrection. This being the case, how could Christ have offered an earthly kingdom to the Jews *before* He had suffered and died to pay for the sins of His people? Atone-ment was necessary for the kingdom to come. How could the Messiah offer the Jews a kingdom on earth when as yet the justice of God had not been satisfied?

A number of writers have made this objection against dispensationalism, arguing that this

would mean that Christ "offered" a kingdom that did not require the cross. Oswald T. Allis, a teacher at Princeton Theological Seminary in the early 1900s, is one of those who made this objection. In his popular book, *Prophecy and the Church*, he wrote:

Can it then be affirmed that the establishment of the kingdom was quite independent of the sacrifice of the Cross? Can it be asserted that the order might have been, first the kingdom, then the Cross, when the risen Christ so clearly declares that the burden of prophecy gives the opposite order: "Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:26; Acts 26:23; I Pet.1:11). Finally, if the sequence could have been, first the kingdom, then the Cross, and if the kingdom is to be "without end," where can the Cross come in? In other words, if the Jews had accepted the kingdom would there have been any place, any necessity for the Cross?²

Dispensationalists are, of course, aware of this argument. And some of them have given a response:

The difficulty is removed at once when it is remembered that the postponement was not an afterthought or unexpected necessity, but was itself a part of the original plan of God—that is, to the end that an age might be introduced which had been kept secret in the counsels of God, that Messiah might be crucified and raised from the dead to be the Redeemer of both Israel and the Church....³

Perhaps not all dispensationalists would be willing to admit,

¹ There are different views of the well-meant offer. In this article I will be referring to this error as it is held by those who also claim to hold to unconditional election. Those who say they hold to both these teachings are guilty of maintaining that God graciously offers salvation to many people whom He has determined will never receive it.

² Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1945), 75.

³ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 347.

as Chafer did here, that the cross was part of God's original plan. But leaving that aside, let us consider what Chafer said here about Christ offering the Jews an earthly kingdom. Chafer says that Christ made this offer even though He knew that God had determined that the cross was necessary to redeem Israel. But does God graciously offer to His people that which He has determined not to give them?

Dispensationalism and the well-meant offer

It is interesting to see the similarity here between dispensationalism and the teaching of the well-meant offer. Those who hold to both the well-meant offer and unconditional election teach that God graciously offers salvation to many individuals whom He has determined not to save.¹

Dispensationalists say something very similar. Before going to the cross, Christ is said to have sincerely offered to the Jews an earthly kingdom. Yet some dispensationalists would admit that it was God's plan that Christ was going to have to go to the cross to redeem His people.

This comparison between dispensationalism and the well-meant offer is pointed out by the dispensationalists themselves. Charles C. Ryrie, former professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, responding to the argument of Allis, had this to say:

It is particularly astounding that a Calvinist like Allis should stumble at this matter when he

would not even suggest questioning the sincerity of God in offering salvation to non-elect people. One may grant that in the final analysis such matters are inexplicable, but one does not need to charge God with insincerity.²

Indeed it would be hard for one who claims to be Reformed but who holds to the well-meant offer to refute the dispensationalists on this point. Leaving aside what Allis may or may not have thought on the well-meant offer, it is important to stress that a person who is truly Reformed does not hold to such an offer.

An essential teaching of the Reformed faith is the doctrine of *irresistible* grace. When God gives grace, that grace always has the effect that God desires. Yet almost everyone who speaks of God "offering" grace or "offering" a kingdom is teaching the very opposite of this. They are saying that God offers something to certain individuals with the sincere desire that they receive what is offered, but that the reception of what is offered depends on their will. In other words, they are teaching *resistible* grace, which is the exact opposite of one of the fundamental teachings of the Reformed faith.

An attempt to turn the tables

After attempting to fend off objections to the idea that Christ offered the Jews an earthly kingdom, Ryrie made an attempt to turn the tables against the amillennialists:

Let us suppose for sake of discussion that the dispensational interpretation of Jesus' offer of the Davidic kingdom in the Gos-

pels is not correct. If He was not preaching about the millennial kingdom when He said, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17), then He must have been talking about a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men (for there are no other choices).... If the Jews living during the earthly ministry of Jesus had received His teaching and had repented and been born again, does this mean there was in those days a way of salvation which was different from salvation through the death of Christ?... If the Jews had received this spiritual kingdom and had been saved, then does this not mean that the cross might have been unnecessary? If the Jews had immediately accepted the spiritual kingdom Jesus offered, then what would have happened to the cross?³

Ryrie then goes on to say that an amillennialist would undoubtedly reply to these questions by saying that they are merely theoretical questions that do not demand an answer. And then Ryrie agrees with the answer that he put into the mouth of the amillennialist. Referring to the questions listed in the quote above, he says:

These are foolish questions.

Perhaps the same is true of the similar questions asked of dispensationalists.

"Foolish," he says. And in a sense, I suppose, that is true. But I do believe there would be a real value in pointing out where specifically Ryrie goes wrong with his line of questioning. But this, Lord willing, will have to wait until next time.



¹ It is true that God "sets forth" Christ and calls to repentance many individuals whom He has determined not to save. This is what is meant when Scripture says that many are called, but few are chosen (Matt. 20:16). But the external call to the reprobate does not come with grace. The error of the well-meant offer is that it teaches that God's *gracious* call comes to many individuals who will never be saved.

² Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), 165. I am interpreting Ryrie's use of the word "offering" to refer to a gracious offer, seeing as that is virtually always what dispensationalists mean by the term.

³ Ibid., 166-167.

Not Anabaptist but Reformed (14)*

By Rev. H. Danhof and Rev. H. Hoeksema

Chapter 7. Answers to Questions

Having come to the end of his pamphlet, Rev. VanBaalen thinks he must ask us several questions, which, it seems to him, call for resolution.

Now we do not feel obligated to answer every question the brother thinks he must ask us. Moreover, we are also a bit too busy to spend much time here.

But we will oblige him.

And therefore we give the following brief answers:

1) In the first question Rev. VanBaalen wants us to give an explanation of the love that existed between a certain Hector and his wife according to an ancient Greek poet. The occasion for this question is obviously a misunderstanding by Rev. Van Baalen. He thinks that Rev. Danhof might have made the remark somewhere on the occasion of a classical examination that all natural love outside the boundaries of grace is always bestial. Now this is not the case. The question there was whether we sing of natural love in the Song of Solomon, or of the love of Christ and His church. In response to that, Rev. Danhof claimed that

natural love as such is never a type of the love between Christ and His people in Holy Scripture. The love between a husband and wife as it originally existed before sin is a picture of the everlasting. After the Fall there is still natural love outside the boundaries of grace, but it was corrupted by sin, and instead of love for God's sake, it has now become love for its own sake. Does not Article 24 of our Belgic Confession say that without justifying faith man never does anything but out of self-love and fear of damnation? Well then, this natural love, in its very principle corrupted and torn away from God, actually develops into bestiality and whoredom. And, therefore, that love is also a picture of spiritual whoredom, whereas this love in the area of regeneration can again become a type of the bond between Christ and the church. Now then, explain the love between Hector and his wife in some other way, Rev. VanBaalen, always in agreement with our Reformed confession.

2) The second question has to do with products of classical antiquity viewed in the light of our position. Let it suffice to refer the brother to what we quoted above from our confessions: Canons III/IV, 4; Belgic Confessions, Art. 24, etc.; and furthermore, to Calvin's judgment on this as quoted above.

3) In the third question the brother writes that we have accused Calvin, Bavinck, Kuyper, Warfield, Vos, and others of

Arminianism. Our answer is that we have defended principles; we have never gone against persons. Now in this regard we do have doubts about whether you, Rev. VanBaalen, are not tainted with this corrupt error. But this is based purely on what you wrote in your pamphlet. Prove yourself with our confessions that we have doubted you unjustly.

4) In the fourth question we are asked to give an explanation of the behavior of Pharaoh's daughter, who drew Moses out of the water. This was surely a good deed, says the brother, and that indeed apart from faith. Well then, we want to ask Rev. VanBaalen this question too, and in the light of Scripture and the confessions. The Scripture says, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." And the confessions teach that without this faith no one ever does anything but out of love for himself. This is quite clear to us. Pharaoh's daughter wanted the beautiful little child. She felt drawn to that particular child. She did not in fact save every little Hebrew who was also drowning in the river. Indeed, we do not read either that she went to Pharaoh to show him the horror of his command, do we? She wanted to make that beautiful little child her son. And if by and by that little child does not want to be called her son, he is in danger of his life. Therefore it is very really a possibility for human mercy still to be sin before God.


5) The last question is really

* *Not Anabaptist but Reformed* was a pamphlet written by Danhof and Hoeksema in 1923 as a "Provisional Response to Rev. Jan Karel Van Baalen Concerning the Denial of Common Grace." Translated here from the Dutch by seminarian Daniel Holstege.

Previous article in this series: March 15, 2009, p. 285. This article concludes the series.

more of a threat than a question. The brother threatens that if we do not yet see the bad consequences of our view, he will be

compelled to write another pamphlet in which it is made clear to us that we really are not able to preach well with our view. Here

is our answer: Write another pamphlet, brother. There is definitely need for a more grounded and convincing work. 

All Around Us

Rev. Michael De Vries

Update on Religious Freedom in Canada

From time to time I'm asked, by friends and fellow saints in the United States, regarding the current status of religious freedom here in Canada. Are things getting worse for the faithful church, for serious-minded Christians who strive to live according to their religious (biblical) convictions? One ominous indication that there is much reason for concern is the sad fact that "The Voice of the Martyrs Newsletter" (May 2009) focused on religious liberty issues in Canada. Normally this informative newsletter relates accounts of the suffering of Christians in such countries as Iran, North Korea, China, India—countries strictly controlled by dictators or radical religious zealots. While Christians are overtly being persecuted in many places around the world, a more subtle, insidious antichristian campaign is taking place here in Canada. For a country that talks endlessly about its Charter of Rights, for a country that boasts in being a free and tolerant society, the sad reality is that some rights are now less popular—and less protected—than others. And many Christians are finding that Canadian society is increasingly intolerant of their beliefs.

Freedom of conscience is increasingly under attack in Cana-

da. In the above-mentioned "The Voice of the Martyrs Newsletter," Janet Epp Buckingham, Associate professor of political science and history at Trinity Western University, reports and comments on these attacks in an article entitled, "Shut Down, Shut Up and Shut Out: Religious Freedom in Canada":

The most serious violation of religious conscience currently is that of marriage commissioners, who are being forced to solemnize same-sex marriages or lose their license to marry. Marriage commissioners are not clergy and solemnize civil marriages. But some marriage commissioners are Christians and include Christian content in the weddings they perform. Orville Nichols, in Saskatchewan, refused to solemnize a same-sex marriage and is facing a human rights complaint. In two other cases, currently on hold pending the decision in the Nichols case, marriage commissioners made human rights complaints against provincial governments in Saskatchewan and Manitoba in relation to official letters requiring that they solemnize same sex marriages....

...Over the last few years, we have seen a variety of Christian professionals, from teachers to pharmacists, from doctors to printers, face legal consequences for following their Christian morals. These professionals have paid a huge price in terms of publicity, and legal fees, to stand up for their beliefs. Probably the best known of these is Scott Brockie, a Toronto printer who refused to print materials for an organization that, in Brockie's view, promoted homosexuality.

Brockie faced a complaint to the Ontario Human Rights Commission and then brought an appeal to the Ontario Superior court. Ultimately Brockie lost the battle, but felt that he won the war. The court said that while Brockie cannot refuse to do work for an organization, he may refuse to print material that violates his religious beliefs. It is a fine line that may be difficult to determine in practice.

A teacher, Chris Kempling, in British Columbia and a nurse, Bill Whatcott, in Saskatchewan, have both been disciplined by their professional associations for "conduct unbecoming" for publicizing their views on homosexuality and abortion, respectively. Both Kempling and Whatcott based their opinions on their Christian beliefs but also included facts and figures that they felt made their issues of concern to the broader public.

Nurses, pharmacists and doctors have had issues both with their professional associations and human rights commission complaints for refusing to provide professional services that violate their consciences. Cristina Alarcon, for example, lost her job at a Calgary pharmacy because she refused to dispense prescriptions that violated her conscience. For Catholics, this can include birth control pills as well as abortifacients. A doctor in Barrie, Ontario faced professional discipline for refusing to prescribe birth control for single women patients.

But any Christian who is a member of a professional association, and this includes engineers, medical professionals, teachers, lawyers, accountants, etc., live under a professional code of conduct and can be disciplined by

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a professional association. This means that they can be stripped of their professional license, or suspended for a period of time. This obviously has a significant impact on the ability to earn a living.

In a similar way, pro-life students clubs have lost their club status on campus, leaving the group without the ability to have meetings on campus. Several campuses have shut down pro-life meetings, most recently at St. Mary's University in Halifax, and pro-life displays. At the University of Calgary, the university went so far as to charge students with trespassing who participated in the Genocide Awareness Project, which displays pictures of aborted fetuses alongside Holocaust photos.

These issues are clearly not outright restrictions on practicing one's religion. But they are more subtle ways that society restricts certain religious beliefs with which it disagrees. The message is, "Keep your weird beliefs to yourself."

Religious organizations and institutions also come under attack. In 2008 a human rights complaint was filed against Christian Horizons, the largest private provider of residential care to mentally disabled adults in Ontario. This case revealed that even having an employee lifestyle policy that a worker willingly signed offers no protection. A staff member was let go after disclosing that she had become a lesbian. An Ontario human rights tribunal ruled that Christian Horizons cannot discriminate in hiring staff. Janet Epp Buckingham explains the seriousness of this case:

While the decision really focused on the issue of sexual orientation, the tribunal seemed to say that Christian Horizons cannot require that staff be Christians. The decision was based on the narrow exemption in the Ontario Human Rights Code that is limited to organizations that

provide services to their own constituency. Because Christian Horizons does not require the adults it serves to be Christians, it does not fit in the exemption. Christian Horizons has appealed the case to the Ontario Superior Court. It would undermine many Christian out-reach organizations—ministries to the poor and homeless, for example—if they cannot hire Christians. How can they maintain a Christian ministry?

Christian pastors have not been immune to these attacks. "All Around Us" reported the story of Alberta youth pastor Stephen Boisson, who was charged with a hate crime after he wrote a letter to the editor of the *Red Deer Advocate* expressing his concerns about the effect of homosexual normalization on Canada's youth (*S.B.*, September 1, 2008). Rev. Boisson was barred for life by the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission from ever uttering a disparaging word about homosexuals again. This is a penalty of almost whimsical despotism. No court could pronounce such a sentence, because no law prescribes it. This ruling we might expect to come from a dictator in some banana republic. As Jane Epp Buckingham concluded, "When Christian morals collide with social values, Christians are increasingly shut down, shut up and shut out."

But don't breathe a sigh of relief merely because you happen to reside in the United States. True, in the U.S. the courts have traditionally upheld Freedom of Religion, a First Amendment Right. But clearly that freedom has been delivered a severe blow with the election of the Obama administration. President Obama announced soon after entering office that he was reversing the conscience rule introduced by former President Bush. This rule requires institutions that receive federal funding to certify their

compliance with laws protecting conscience rights. It was intended to block the flow of federal funds to hospitals and other institutions that ignore the rights of moral objectors. Dr. David Stevens, head of the U.S. Christian Medical and Dental Association, worries that Barack Obama is about to end his medical career. "What does free exercise of religion mean, if I cannot follow my conscience?" he asks. "It becomes meaningless if you try to privatize beliefs (to the point) where they have no bearing on action."

In addition, earlier this spring the U.S. House of Representatives approved a federal "hate crimes" bill that would provide special protections to homosexuals but leave Christian ministers open to prosecution should their teachings be linked to any subsequent offense, by anyone, against a "gay." Matt Barber of Liberty Counsel has spoken out against this legislation (H.R. 1913) a number of times. He terms this an Orwellian piece of legislation that "represents a thinly veiled effort to ultimately silence—under penalty of law—morally, medically and biblically based opposition to the homosexual lifestyle...."

Clearly the Christian life in Western society is becoming more and more difficult. Certain careers and businesses may be increasingly difficult for a serious-minded Christian to choose without a severe compromise of his convictions. The hostility of the darkness for the light will be increasingly manifest as the day of the Lord's return draws closer. Obviously there is growing tolerance for virtually any belief or philosophy other than the truth of the Word of God.

As church of Jesus Christ there is no question as to our calling. "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (II Tim. 4:2). Oh, we should be

wise, not purposely seeking to draw down upon ourselves the wrath of the magistrates. Let us remember the Word of Christ to His disciples: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise as

serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt. 10:16). At the same time, we must pray for the boldness of Peter and John as they testified of the Christ in the midst of the Jewish Council (Acts 4). We, too, must obey God rather than men!

May our prayer be that of the early church, "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word" (Acts 4:29).



Things Which Must Shortly Come to Pass

Prof. David Engelsma

Chapter 3 The Millennium (3)

Reformed Amillennialism (conclusion)

As the previous article in this series demonstrated, the millennium, or thousand-year period, of Revelation 20 is a symbolical description of the present gospel-age, from the Ascension of Christ to a time shortly before the return of Christ and the end of all things. During this time, Satan is restrained, or "bound," by Christ so that he cannot unite the nations in the kingdom of Antichrist, and the martyred saints are raised in their soul at death to heavenly life and glory by Christ. At the end of the millennium, shortly before His second coming to the earth, Christ releases Satan so that the dark lord is able finally to achieve his purpose of uniting the nations in the worldwide kingdom of Antichrist. Then Satan launches his final, and greatest, assault against the church—the "great tribulation."

Revelation 20, thus understood, gives important instruction concerning eschatology. First, throughout the present age (which in its entirety is the "last days") the risen and ascended Christ Jesus is the sovereign Lord over all. Even Satan and the development of man's rebellion against God are strictly subject to the will of Christ and completely governed by His power. Christ binds and releases Satan at His pleasure.

Revelation 20 reminds the reader of the book of the truth that the book impressed upon him in the opening chapter. The truly awesome figure in the book, as in the history of the end that the book reveals, is not the dragon or the beast, but the "one like unto the Son of man" (Rev. 1:13), the exalted Jesus Christ. The believer, who is assured by the gospel that he need not fear the awesome Christ (Rev. 1:17), is fearless of all others, including Satan and the Antichrist.

Second, Christ is Lord over Satan throughout this age "to the church," as Paul puts it in Ephesians 1:22. The purpose of Christ's binding of Satan for a thousand years is His gathering of the church by the preaching of

the gospel and, thus, the extension of His worldwide kingdom. During the millennium, despite Satan's fulmination, the gospel runs its victorious course in all the nations of the world, gathering the universal church out of all nations and races (Acts 1:8; Rev. 6:1, 2). Often, this happens under the protection of the governments of the nations. The saving of the church would be impossible if Satan were not bound, or if he were loosed prematurely.

Third, it is gross error on the part especially of the postmillennialists to speak of the "millennial glories" of the church in the world, on the basis of Revelation 20. As we will observe more carefully when we come to examine postmillennial eschatology, by "millennial glories" the postmillennialists mean great numbers of converts, perhaps a majority of the human race alive at the time; earthly peace; earthly prosperity; and earthly power, during a literal period of one thousand years in the future, prior to the return of Christ.

Apart from the fact that the millennium of Revelation 20 is symbolic, Revelation 20 gives absolutely no ground for expectations of such a "golden age" for

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Previous article in this series: May 1, 2009, p. 343.

the church in the world prior to the coming of Christ. The living and reigning of the saints with Christ for a thousand years take place *in heaven*, not on the earth. It is *souls*, and then souls that had been *beheaded*, who live and reign with Christ (v. 4). In addition, the binding of Satan with regard to his work in the world is limited to one activity: the deceiving of the nations (v. 3). He is not restrained from blinding much of mankind with false religion; from working apostasy; from raising up heretics; from causing schisms; from filling the world with lawlessness; or from troubling the saints by the power of sin in their depraved nature.

If any chapter of the Bible contradicts postmillennialism's notion of coming "millennial glories," it is Revelation 20. The nations are in a perpetual state of readiness to be deceived by Satan, whenever he should be released. Saints are always being persecuted and killed for Christ's sake, so that they are received up into heaven as martyrs. And towards the end of history Satan will be loosed to unite the nations in the kingdom of Antichrist, which will make war on the kingdom of Christ, the true church.

Revelation 20, indeed the entire book of Revelation, illustrates the truth of the Lord's warning to His disciples, "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33).

If we are of a mind to describe the fulfillment of such Old Testament prophecies of the coming peace, prosperity, and power of the church as Isaiah 2:1-4, Isaiah 11, and Isaiah 65 as the "millennial glories" of the church in the world, the reference is to the spiritual blessedness of the church. Despite her unrelenting warfare with Satan, sin, the world of the ungodly, and the false church, the true church has peace with God through the forgiveness of sins. Regardless that few of her

members are rich and that all of them are pilgrims on the earth, the church is wealthy with God, His fellowship, and the blessings of His salvation. Even though numerically the church is always the remnant, the "little flock," without any human power, the church is strong through Christ to battle victoriously the gates of hell, preaching the gospel, confessing the faith, defending the truth, and persevering in holiness of life to the end.

The New Testament authoritatively finds the fulfillment of the Old Testament's prophecies of the coming glory of the Messianic kingdom, the church, in the spiritual salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ. The prophecy of Isaiah 65:17 of "new heavens and a new earth" for His "elect" (Is. 65:9) is fulfilled in the new (spiritual) world of the renewed creation in the Day of Christ (Rev. 21:1) and in the spiritual renewal of the elect already now (II Cor. 5:17).¹

Fourth, Revelation 20, rightly understood, gives great encouragement to the saints to fight on behalf of Christ against His enemies, as well as comfort regarding all our suffering in this battle, *in the truth of the intermediate state*. The truth of the intermediate state, particularly its encouragement of the disciples of Christ in the world, is one of the main emphases of the chapter. The ultimate suffering of Christ's servants in the war between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan—a cruel death at the hands of the persecuting

foe—becomes at once the means of translation (in the soul) into the supreme bliss—living and reigning in conscious union with Christ. It is not so with regard to the very worst that the enemy can do to believers and their children that defeat is followed by a compensatory reward. Rather, defeat is swallowed up in victory.

This encouragement gives the members of the church in the world firm resolve to serve Christ faithfully. It steels them for the increasingly fierce battle.

Fifth, the church is taught to expect the end of the millennium of Satan's binding in history. With the end of the millennium will come the greatest marshaling of the hosts of darkness and the greatest struggle of the host of light that history has even seen. History approaches its conclusion with the fullest development of the wickedness that began in heaven with the revolt of Lucifer and that began on earth with the revolution of Adam. This is in keeping with the nature of the entire present age as struggle, warfare, and persecution for the church, as forcefully taught by the book of Revelation.

The church at the beginning of the twenty-first century is forewarned. She must prepare herself. Shortly, the millennium expires; Satan is released; he deceives the nations; under that malignant, determined enemy of the Christ whom we confess the whole world makes war against the kingdom of Christ.

At the same time that wickedness develops fully, there will be a mighty work of grace in those who are privileged to carry the banner of the name of Christ in those days. Some will be preserved in the truth, without any compromising of sound doctrine, in the midst of deception and apostasy. Some will keep their garments unspotted from the filth of the world in the midst of debauchery and lawlessness. Some


¹ See my explanation of Isaiah 65:17ff., in opposition to the postmillennial interpretation of this and similar Old Testament prophecies on behalf of their teaching of earthly "millennial glories" for the church in a coming "golden age," in *Christ's Spiritual Kingdom: A Defense of Reformed Amillennialism* (Redlands, CA: The Reformed Witness, 2001), 90-115.

will confess, "Christ is Lord," in the teeth of the world's confession that man is lord and god. Some will love not their lives unto the death (Rev. 12:11).

And history will end, shortly, with the defeat of Satan and his world-kingdom and with the vic-

tory of Christ and His kingdom, but by a wonder: "fire came down from heaven, and devoured them" (Rev. 20:9); "And I saw a great white throne, and him [Jesus Christ] that sat on it" (Rev. 20:11).

Much as those doctrines

lean on the chapter, Revelation 20 gives no support to those doctrines of the last things that expect an earthly kingdom of Christ during a literal millennium in history and that exempt the church from the coming great tribulation. 

All Thy Works Shall Praise Thee

Mr. Joel Minderhoud

The Nature of Fire

Have you ever sat by the cozy warmth of a flickering campfire, staring at and contemplating the bright flames? Or have you ever witnessed the raging flames of a much larger fire, perhaps one that is burning uncontrollably, and felt its intense heat? In either case there is something about the mysterious nature of fire that intrigues us and makes us pause. We either contemplate its warmth and beauty or marvel at the speed and strength of its devouring destruction. Fire inspires an array of feelings within us, for it has a number of fascinating characteristics, from its heat and brightness to its insatiable appetite and destructive power. Furthermore, the Lord often uses fire in the Scriptures as a simple picture to us of profound spiritual realities. We do well, therefore, to consider what God teaches us through the gift of fire.

What is Fire?

Children learn in school and we recognize from experience that a fire requires three things:

a fuel source, a supply of oxygen, and a means of ignition. The fuel source, in most day-to-day cases, is a material made of carbon compounds. For example, wood products, which are a common source of fuel, are made of the carbon compound cellulose. Cellulose is a polymer (a long chain of hundreds of the same particular molecule) of the molecule $C_6H_{10}O_5$ —a substance derived from the glucose molecule. Secondly, these carbon compounds must combine with the oxygen in the air to make a fire. Chemists call this combustion—the reaction of the fuel with oxygen, producing carbon dioxide gas, water vapor, and energy (either in the form of heat or light). Finally, there is a third important requirement for a fire. You can place all the wood you want in a pile and surround it with oxygen, but a fire will not start. This is a good thing, because oxygen surrounds us, as well as the many combustible substances in the creation, and yet, these things do not spontaneously start on fire. In order for a fire to start, there must also be an ignition source. The ignition source is some form of heat, produced either from friction, a strike of lightning, light focused by a mirror or magnifying lens, or from some other source of energy.

For a fire actually to start, a series of interesting events must occur. First of all, the fuel source must be heated by an ignition source. This heating causes some of the particles of the fuel to break away from the rest of the fuel particles and to rise as a gas. These escaping gases are a part of what we commonly recognize as smoke. Smoke contains tiny, airborne, solid particles (usually some carbon atoms that we call soot) that make smoke visible to us. But smoke also contains flammable gases that come out of the fuel when it is heated. As these flammable gas particles get hot enough, a chemical reaction occurs between them and the oxygen gas molecules of the air. At that point, the molecules of these gases break apart into various atoms, which combine with oxygen gas and reorganize to form new products. Most commonly these new products are carbon dioxide and water vapor. In addition to the production of carbon dioxide and water vapor, there is also the release of *more* heat energy. This new heat energy is used to further evaporate more molecules of the fuel. These vaporized molecules will, in turn, chemically react with more oxygen to make more carbon dioxide, water, and *heat*.

Mr. Minderhoud is a teacher in Covenant Christian High School and a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, Michigan.

Thus, a fire, once started, is self-propagating. (Notice that the particles from the fuel source must reach a particular *temperature* in order to combust. This temperature is called the “ignition temperature,” and is unique to every substance. Therefore it is not necessary to have a flame start a fire, but merely the correct temperature. For example, a building that is engulfed in flames can produce such heat that although the flames never touch any of the surrounding buildings, these buildings can and will spontaneously ignite if a portion of the building reaches its ignition temperature).

In addition, when wood burns, the actual wood does not burn, *per se*, but it is the vapors from the wood that burn. When the vapors leave the wood, the left-over non-combustible materials, such as calcium and potassium, remain as ash. The other main left-over material is pure carbon, or “char,” which can burn but does so much more slowly than the gas particles from the fuel. This char is what is used in one’s “charcoal” briquettes. Since char has little of the gaseous substances combined with it, the char can burn without making much smoke (gas particles) and burns in a very slow but even way—perfect for cooking one’s supper.

Once a fuel begins burning, the tiny particles in the smoke begin to glow as a result of the heat given off from the combustion process. These glowing particles emit light and are called the flame. The flame flickers and can have different colors. The flickering of the flame has to do with the movement of air around the fire. Hot air rises and cooler air rushes into the area of the flame to replace the rising hot air. These convection currents are responsible for the movement of the flame. The color of the flame has to do with the temperature and type of material that is burn-

ing. As some of the particles of burning fuel rise in the smoke they begin to glow because they are so hot.

Different molecules and different atoms of material will glow a different color when heated. For example, most wood products will produce a characteristic yellow/orange flame. But perhaps you have had certain metals in the fire with the wood. Then you may have seen bursts of green or red in the flame. Certain metals, like copper, produce green or blue flames. Strontium compounds produce a bright red flame, while potassium compounds produce violet flames. These kinds of compounds are responsible for the colors in fireworks displays. In addition, the different colors of a flame are related to the different temperatures of the flame. The “coolest” part of a flame emits a yellow color, while “hotter” flames emit a blue color.

From these properties and others, it is abundantly clear that there is much more to a fire than what first meets the eye. What makes us pause at the sights and sounds of fire is its complicated and mysterious nature. Fire is a phenomenon so common in our daily lives and yet hardly understood. We only scratch the surface of its unique workings. Although science often boasts of its findings and knowledge of the creation, in reality it knows very little of the inner workings of God’s creation. When we consider such complexity in such an ordinary and important aspect of creation, our finiteness is accentuated.

Fire is certainly a special gift of God to man. It is as useful as it can be destructive, and its great importance in our day-to-day lives is so extensive that we cannot imagine life without it. From the internal combustion engine to forest fires, fire is a “creature” of God that is necessary for man’s physical existence and for the

benefit of the entire creation. It is of no surprise that the “ancients” considered fire to be one of the four basic “elements” of the creation.

Typical Fire

As Christians, we look at God’s gifts with the “spectacles of Scripture” in order to see what spiritual truths God reveals to us about Himself. We confess that God reveals His power and divinity by use of the physical creation. Fire is no exception. It too is one of the “many characters leading us to contemplate the invisible things of God” (Belgic Confession, Art. 2).

Many of Scripture’s references to fire are used to describe God’s fiery judgment upon the wicked (cf. Psalm 21, Psalm 68). The complete destruction of the wicked is pictured by the destructive nature of fire. Think of the charred remains, for example, of a forest that once was lively and beautiful. Consider the white and black ash remains of a simple campfire—solid logs reduced to windblown ashes only a short time later. So it is with the reprobate. “Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel” (Is. 5:24).

In a previous article (“Tried by Fire,” *Standard Bearer*, vol. 78, no. 14), we considered how fire pictures the purifying work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Old Testament pointed to this with references to the “refiner’s furnace” (Mal. 3:1-6). The New Testament teaches this, as in Matthew 3:11, “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost

and with fire.” Think also of the signs accompanying the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church, for “cloven tongues like as of fire...sat upon each of them” (Acts 2:3). The fire referred to in these passages points to the purifying work of the Holy Spirit, by which the Spirit cleanses us from the filth of our sins and gives us a new and holy life.

In addition to the above, the Scriptures speak of fire in regard to other aspects of our lives, particularly in regard to sins of the tongue. It is that to which we now focus our attention. James 3:6 speaks of the tongue as a fire, an all-consuming iniquity, that defiles the whole body and sets on fire the course of nature. For, as we read in Matthew 15:11, it is that which cometh out of a man—that which he speaks—that defiles a man. Sometimes what comes out of our mouths is not uplifting words but words that tear down, bringing only strife and confusion. Such is the havoc wrought by a flaming fire. The tongue, as a fire, can be a source of great sorrow and strife in the church of Jesus Christ.


As brothers and sisters in the body of Christ we are thankful to God for the blessed fellowship and communion we enjoy one with another, a blessed organ-

ism united in Christ our Head. How devastating, then, is the fire of strife and contention when it burns among us. Consider the swift and sudden destruction of a house fire. How quickly it can all go down—a beautiful home reduced to rubble and charred remains in a matter of minutes. Strife and contention are fed by the spread of idle tales and gossip, backbiting, and slander. What we speak—orally or with the use of technology—can become a destructive fire spreading and burning uncontrollably, leaving nothing but charred remains in its path and doing great damage to the organism of the body of believers.

A fire never says, “It is enough” (Prov. 30:15, 16). When fed by fuel it burns on and on, wreaking havoc and destruction. In order for strife to cease we must not repeat everything we hear. We must keep our mouths closed if what we have to say, “tweet,” blog, or post on Facebook is not meant to edify and build up the people of God. For “where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife” (Prov. 26:20-21). If left unchecked, idle tales spread rapidly from tongue to

tongue. Oh how great a matter a little fire kindleth.

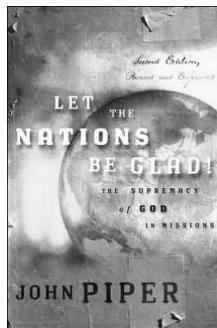
May our lips be characterized by the “balm of Gilead” (Jer. 8:22), not the burning fire of evil. The instruction is so simple, and the picture so clear—preventing contention is as simple as keeping our mouths closed; no fuel, no fire—and yet, how difficult, yes, impossible, except it be for the grace of God. For the tongue no *man* can tame. How thankful we are, therefore, for the work of the Holy Spirit within us. May we grow in the guarding of our tongues and pray that the Lord keep the door of our lips (Ps. 141:3).

How thankful we are to God for the good gift of fire! It certainly helps us in our day-to-day physical lives by providing necessary heat, combustion for our engines, and a means to destroy and purge unwanted materials. But more importantly, it serves to teach us many spiritual truths. As a fascinating creature of God, fire gives us good opportunity to meditate upon our sovereign Creator and His mighty works. By God’s grace, we are prompted to pause and contemplate the purifying work of the Spirit in our lives—especially that very necessary work of taming our fiery tongues. 

Bring the books...



Rev. William Langerak



Let the Nations Be Glad, by John Piper. 2nd ed. Baker Academic (2003). 256pp. Paper. ISBN: 978-00801026133. Reviewed by Dr. Julian Kennedy (Ballymena, Northern Ireland).

John Piper is a pastor and writer with two passions, first, to know God, and second, to make Him known. This book, revised and expanded from when first published in 1993, highlights these two biblical passions as he sets out to prove that God’s great purpose in creation and redemption is His own glory, and that we as His people will experience His fellowship as we aim for that same goal, by making worshipping

disciples in all the people-groups of the earth.

In the first section of the book, Piper covers the purpose, power, and price of missions. God is supreme in the purpose of missions, which is true worship, and that means whole lives devoted to His glory rather than just public gatherings to praise Him. All is for His Name’s sake and praise of His grace. He rightly states that God is most glorified when His

people are most satisfied in Him, just as the Westminster Confession's first catechism answer is "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." Missions exists because true worship does not, namely, that many people glory in idols and false religions that deny God His glory. The power behind missions is prayer because it humbles us in true dependence on God for all spiritual advancement of the gospel. The price to be paid will be suffering, including persecution, and this serves to deepen faith and holiness, enlarge our capacity to enjoy His glory, wean us from the world, make others bold, fill up what is lacking in Christ's sufferings, and may be used to reposition His missionaries. Persecution manifests our commitment to His supremacy and His worth more than anything else, because in suffering we lose cherished relationships and things, and worship is essentially cherishing the perfections of God above all else, including life itself. We are called to deny ourselves the fleeting pleasures of sin, luxury, and self-absorption in order to seek the kingdom above all.

Section two of the book shows the supremacy of Christ as the conscious focus of saving faith, and this, among all nations. He proves that there is only One Saviour, that there is an eternal hell of conscious torment, and that hearing Christ is necessary for salvation. In this section he


names other theologians who deny these truths. He is unashamedly Calvinistic in theology, much of which comes from Jonathan Edwards. He clearly proves that worshiping disciples from every ethnic group is God's ultimate purpose and that 'nations' in Scripture means families or tribes with similar culture and language, e.g., the Kurds in Iraq or Hausa in Nigeria, not political entities such as Iraq or Nigeria. He pointedly states that Paul's aim was not to maximize the number of Gentile converts but to reach as many peoples as he could.

The final section deals with the practical outworking of our commitment to world missions. The book is full of nuggets of truth, e.g., "Worship is essentially an inner stirring of the heart to treasure God above all the treasures of the world." He says that if you love the glory of God you must be mission-minded. He emphasizes that true worship is inward and is exhibited in all of life, rather than external and on a certain day of the week. He ends by saying that our highest duty is the pursuit of joy in God and that it is our unspeakable privilege to be co-workers with Him in gathering the elect from every people-group till the full number is reached and the Lord returns.

How are we to express our concern for world missions? The following thoughts are Piper's,

with the addition of some of my own:

1. Study theology – the better we know God, the more likely we are to fulfil His purposes.
2. As individuals and churches, support in prayer and financially the missionaries we have sent out from our established churches and denomination, and others God has bonded us with.
3. As individuals and churches, pray for un-reached peoples of the world.
4. Be prepared to go, if qualified and called.
5. Pastors and elders teach the centrality of world mission from the pulpit and in visitation.
6. Teach world missions, missiology, culture, and linguistics in our seminary.

Piper is thoroughly biblical and Reformed in his approach, although he does mention the "offer" of God in preaching. He refers to election, limited atonement, and the necessary call of the gospel to go to all peoples. Being Baptist, Piper neglects the important place of covenant children in a fruitful mission field and that God often saves families in His grace. Nevertheless, this book overall serves as an excellent stimulus to know and enjoy our great God, and to fulfil our calling to see Him known and worshiped in all the earth. 

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Congregation Activities

Dr. David Torlach, his wife, Ruth, and their children, left June 19 for their home in Australia after his graduation from our Protestant Reformed Seminary on June 11. Since the Torlachs spent the last three years attending the

Byron Center, MI PRC, that congregation hosted a farewell for them on Sunday evening, June 14. Later that week, a large group, including many young people, saw them leave from the Gerald R. Ford International Airport.

Dr. and Mrs. Torlach express

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

their warm and sincere thanks for the love of God shown to them in our churches during their stay. We, in turn, wish them the Lord's blessing as they return home and as they begin Dr. Torlach's internship with Rev. Mark Shand, pastor in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia.

Speaking of internships reminds us that on July 1, Seminarian Dan Holstege began his internship under Rev. Doug Kuiper and the Randolph, WI PRC, and Seminarian Martyn McGeown began his internship under Rev. Arie den Hartog and the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI. These internships are for six months. May the Lord use these internships to prepare these men for the gospel ministry.

Ladies from the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA were reminded and encouraged to participate in a summer reading discussion group. The ladies hoped to spend the summer months discussing the book *The Excellent Wife*, by Martha Peace.

Rev. Rodney Kleyn preached his farewell sermon as pastor of the Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI on Sunday evening, June 28. Rev. Kleyn brought God's Word as found in Acts 20:32 under the theme, "Commend You to God and His Word." The Kleyn family planned, D.V., to leave Hudsonville for the Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA on July 10.

Members and friends of our churches were invited to what promised to be a God-glorifying weekend at the 2009 Family Conference, hosted by the First PRC of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada on July 3, 4, and 5 at the Parkland Immanuel Christian School in Edmonton. This conference was themed, "Calvin and His Christian Family." Speeches included: "Calvin's Influence on the Family," "Calvin on the Catechizing of our Children," and "Calvin on Family Discipline." Speak-

ers were Prof. David Engelsma, Prof. Barry Gritters, and Rev. John Marcus. Sunday worship services on July 5 were also held at the school, and the 182 registrants to the conference enjoyed a Sunday meal together between services. The Lord's Day, and the conference, came to a close with an hour of singing praises to God for His wonderful gift of salvation. Psalter 369, stanza 1.

The India Outreach Committee of the Byron Center, MI PRC gave a presentation of the work that is being done in India by their congregation on Sunday evening, June 28.

A special congregational meeting was held on May 26 at the Peace PRC in Lansing, IL, where the South Holland PRC approved a proposal from their Council to authorize South Holland's New-Building Committee to proceed with the construction of their new church building.

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI invited all who were interested to a Summer Workshop to learn about the principles of biblical parenting, as they studied together *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, by Tedd Tripp. A series of eight classes were scheduled at First Church beginning June 17. Each class included a short video and then discussion.

Mission Activities

We thank Rev. Steven Key for providing the "News" with the following:

"For the second time in just over three months, Doon's congregation gathered in a special worship service for the installation of a missionary for the Philippines. Wednesday night, June 24, Rev. Daniel Kleyn was installed in the Doon, IA PRC, the calling church. The joyful service was held in a full sanctuary, with Doon's congregation,

as well as members from Hull, Calvary, Edgerton, and Sioux Falls in attendance. Rev. David Overway, pastor at Doon, led the worship service, preaching from Luke 5:4-11. Rev. Steven Key, the president of the Foreign Mission Committee, read the Form of Installation. After the service, a time of fellowship was held in the basement of Doon. Rev. Kleyn continues his preparation for his labors in the Philippines and plans to move to Manila with his wife, Sharon, later this year, God willing. There they will join Rev. Richard Smit and his family."

Rev. and Tricia Smit and their children were scheduled to depart Sioux Falls for the Philippines on Tuesday morning, July 8, D.V.

Rev. Daniel Kleyn preached his inaugural sermon as missionary to the Philippines in Doon on Sunday, June 28. Rev. Kleyn preached from Zechariah 4:6 under the theme, "The Spirit's Work in the Day of Small Things."

Candidate Cory Griess and family will be spending six weeks with the Franklin OPC in Franklin, PA this summer. They planned to leave the first week of July. Mr. Griess will be preaching and teaching for the congregation at their and the Domestic Mission Committee's request.

Minister Activities

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma declined the call he received from the Byron Center, MI PRC.

Rev. William Langerak is considering calls from the Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI and from Calvary PRC in Hull, IA.

Rev. James Laning declined the call he was considering from the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada.

Rev. Garrett Eriks declined the call extended to him to become the next pastor of the First PRC in Holland, MI.



Announcements

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's and Ladies' Society of First PRC of Holland express their sincere Christian sympathy to Florence Haveman and Brent and Wilma Overway in the passing of their husband and father and our fellow society member,

MARVIN HAVEMAN.

May we all be comforted in God's word found in II Timothy 4:7, 8: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Terry Elzinga, President
Sandy Elzinga, Secretary

ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual meeting of the RFPA will be held on September 24, at 7:30 P.M. in the Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 9, 2009 at the Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Jon J. Huiskens
Stated Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With praise and gratitude to God, our dear parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents,

TONY & WILYNA JANSMA, will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on August 2, 2009, God willing. We thank them for their love for and instruction to us these many years. And we thank God for His faithfulness in providing for them in all things and for His gracious care in preserving them in the faith. May He continue to uphold them by His grace and Holy Spirit. "Happy is that people, whose God is the LORD" (Psalm 144:15).

☼ Dave & Diane Bonestroo

☼ Marlys Koele

☼ David & Rachel Griess

☼ Terry & Dee Jansma
their grandchildren and
great-grandchildren

Hull, Iowa

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With thanksgiving to God, we rejoice with our parents,

DAVID and RACHEL GRIESS, as they celebrate 25 years of marriage on August 11, 2009. We are thankful for their godly example and loving instruction. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless them in the years to come. Psalm 103:17, 18, "But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them."

☼ Stefan and Jaimy Griess

☼ Megan Griess

☼ Leah Griess

☼ Ryan Griess

☼ Erika Griess

Loveland, Colorado

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With thankfulness to our faithful and covenant God, we rejoice with our parents and grandparents,

REV. RON and SUE VAN OVERLOOP,

as they celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary on August 7, 2009. We are grateful and truly blessed for their godly example and many acts of love, devotion, and sacrifice throughout the years. It is our prayer that God will continue to bless their lives together and preserve them in the years to come. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever" (Psalm 23:6).

☼ Kevin and Leesa VanOverloop
Brantley, Brice, Brittney,
Brylynn, Brielle

☼ Travis and Ronda VanBemmel
Mason, Calvin, Emma,
Natalie, Tessa

☼ Jared and Mary VanOverloop
Tyler, Logan, Ethan

☼ Scott and Suzanne Koole
Charity, Trenton, Olivia, Micah

☼ Bill and Danielle VanOverloop
Hayden, Dalton

☼ Chad and Katie Mingerink
Colten, Chloe

☼ Michelle VanOverloop

Grand Rapids, Michigan

NOTICE!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will convene at the Randolph PRC in Randolph, WI, on **Tuesday, September 1, 2009**, at 8:30 A.M. (please note change of date). All material for the agenda should be in the hands of the stated clerk by Saturday, August 1, 2009. Delegates or visitors who will need lodging or transportation should notify Randolph's clerk, Mr. David Regnerus, at (920) 348-6037 or daregn-erus@centurytel.net.

Rev. Douglas Kuiper,
Stated Clerk

NEW BULLETIN SECRETARY

for Grace PRC

DEB HOEKSEMA

email stevedeb@altelco.net

phone #616-677-5209

Address:

13983 32nd Ave,

Marne MI 49435

Bulletin announcements should be submitted to Deb by **FRIDAY evening** each week, whenever possible.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With much thankfulness to God, we rejoice with our parents and grandparents,

DONALD and HILDA DE VRIES, on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary, August 14, 2009. We thank God for them, for their godly instruction, and for their help given to us in so many ways. Truly, what a blessing God gives when He provides faithful parents and grandparents to children. May our heavenly Father continue to so bless them as well, and may He uphold them and sustain them in His covenant faithfulness and grace.

"Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to shew that the LORD is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him" (Psalm 92:13-15).

☼ Neil and Connie Meyer

Timothy and Annette Kuiper

Matthew and Christina Overway
Levi

Bennett, Jennelle, Tabitha

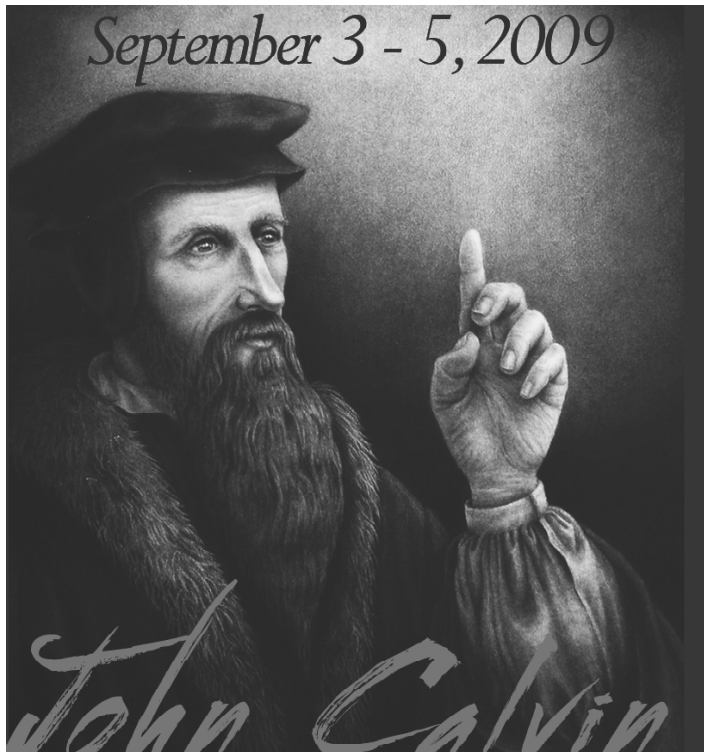
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Reformed Witness Hour

August 2009		
Date	Topic	Text
August 2	"Give Me Neither Poverty nor Riches"	Proverbs 30:7-9
August 9	"Keeping the Lord's Day Holy"	Hebrews 10:24, 25
In Praise of Sovereign Grace		
August 16	1 "And This Is Eternal Life"	John 17:3
August 23	2 "Total Depravity"	John 15:4
August 30	3 "Unconditional Election"	John 6:37