



THE *July 2009* STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Quit You Like Men

Rev. Kenneth Koole's final duty as president of Synod 2008 was to preach the pre-synodical sermon for Synod 2009. As it happened, the service was canceled because of inclement weather conditions. The sermon was therefore unpreached. But it appears nevertheless in Meditation-form in this issue of the SB and the next. In view of the fact that Synod recessed on June 16, and will reconvene in August to deal with the 'school issue' that dominated this year's agenda, Rev. Koole's exposition of I Corinthians 16:13, 14 can still serve as an edifying word setting the tone for the rest of Synod 2009. What is printed here is the first point of the sermon. The second and third points will be published in the August issue.

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

"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

Men and brethren, beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, the church of Corinth was a troubled church. Any number of evils were loose in that congregation. Special-interest groups had their own agenda, challenging apostolic authority; sexual immoralities were winked at; drunkenness was found at the Lord's table. As a result, the Corinthian church was making an extremely poor witness to the world as to any real difference between the Christian faith and ungodly society itself. Unbelievers said, "This is Christian behavior? We can take you to our marketplace, where people behave and speak no worse than

you Christians, and they may be even more trustworthy. If this is what belonging to the Christian church means, all this evil speech and slander and the absence of peace and unity, we want no part of it. We have enough division and bitterness towards each other in our own ungodly families without adding that of your church to ours!"

All this largely because office-bearers were shirking their duty and failing to take the apostolic Word and apply it with vigor to the life and doctrine of the congregation.

And if you were to worship in the Corinthian church, you would have found chaos and confusion. Any number were trying to out-shout each other, claiming that their gifts and authority of the Spirit outweighed all the others.

Cover picture of Synod 2009 (l. to r.)

Rev. R. Miersma, Rev. Doug Kuiper, Prof. R. Dykstra, Henry Ferguson, Rev. G. Eriks, Rev. N. Langerak, Jack Regnerus, Rev. K. Koole, Rev. S. Key, Rev. J. Slopsema, Loren Gritters, Fred Tolsma, Prof. R. Cammenga, Gerald Kuiper, Rev. R. VanOverloop, Sid Miedema, Garry Eriks, Rev. M. VanderWal, David Ondersma, Rev. C. Haak, Prof. B. Gritters, Cal Kalsbeek, Don Doezeema

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Decency and good order were not the order of the day.

As the apostle points out in chapter 14, if outsiders were to visit and observe what was happening in their assemblies, they would think the Christians mad.

"Let's get some order in this church of yours, officebearers!"

Adding to the disorder were women who refused to keep silence in the church, women who insisted on an equal right to govern the affairs of the church. This the apostle sharply opposed. "Let your women keep silence in the church" (v. 34).

But who was going to see to that, insisting that these loud, assertive women submit, directing them back to their place in the church? Who had enough manhood for that!

Who if not the officebearers of the church?

Men and brethren, quit you, behave yourselves, like men. Take the lead; address the weaknesses and sins of God's people; refute the doctrinal errors. Show the church and the world what true manhood, sanctified and redeemed manhood, is all about.

What the apostle speaks of here is the need of the hour in the church of Christ. She needs those who will 'play the man.' Not playing at *being* a man, while behaving like an irresponsible child, but playing the man, filling the part, doing what God made the male of the race to accomplish to begin with.

Understand, I did not select these verses because I think our churches lack such men, or that our churches are in trouble like that of the church of Corinth. Not at all. True, from our agenda it is apparent that we have an issue to deal with that is unsettling our churches at the time, but nothing of the magnitude of the issues troubling the church of Corinth.

Rather, I selected this passage because we as delegated office-

bearers who represent all of our churches must "quit ourselves like men" if we are to prevent the great issues and evils of our apostate ecclesiastical age from entering our beloved congregations and our broader assemblies as well. We are to take the apostle's exhortation to heart for the sake of true unity and peace, for maintaining a distinctive witness, and for the purity of the gospel of truth.

It is where the church of Christ has men who function as men that she provides a good environment, one in which to grow spiritually and raise a family, one where spiritual maturity and peace prevail. So, men and brethren:

Quit You Like Men

- 1. What the Apostle Means by This**
- 2. Why This Is the Need of the Hour**
- 3. What Great Incentive Is Given**

There is a dearth in this land of ours.

There is a dearth in the church of our day and age.

It is a dearth of men, of those who will 'play the man.'

There are plenty of women willing to 'play the man'; women who thrust themselves forward; women who have much to say about running affairs in home and church. But where are the men?

One could almost wish that some men would study these forward women and take a lesson or two on how to assert themselves and act like men.

And yet that's not the remedy either, is it. Such women, for all their manly traits, are out of place. They are the source of endless confusion. Men step aside and the church becomes emasculated. The very presence of these women in places of authority in the House of God

means that already the Word of our Lord and the authority of our King has been shoved aside. Where they are seated in assemblies you can be sure that vital concessions concerning the apostolic word have already been made, and every concession will be sure to follow.

What is instructive for us is the word that the apostle uses here and which the A.V. translates by the phrase "Quit you like men." It is one composite Greek word. It is not derived from the common Greek word that is translated as 'man' or 'mankind'—the word *anthropos*. Rather, the apostle uses a gender-specific word that refers specifically to the male in distinction from the female. It is a word that could be translated as "be the male," or "be men," or "behave as men should." Or, to use King James language, "Quit (that is, *Acquit*) you like men," instead of behaving as if you are neutered and do not dare to confront a mouse.

Significantly joined to this gender-specific word is the Greek word for *courage*. This sets the direction that the apostle has in mind and tells us why, in large part, God created men as males. True manhood has to do with courage.

Courage to do what?

What else but to face danger and that which threatens life, family, and kingdom, and not to be easily intimidated or collapse in fear. That is all part of true male headship.

Scripture itself exalts our Lord Christ as a warrior-king and lion with this connotation.

As you know, in ancient times, both in pagan society and in the nation of Israel herself, the strong desire of parents, wives as well as husbands, was to have sons, and not a few.

Why?

For the sake of the inheritance, you say. That's true. Hav-

ing a son had everything to do with keeping one's property in the family and continuing one's name. Ask any royal house or patriarch.

But there was more to it than that. In those days of warfare by hand-to-hand combat it was in those sons—an abundance of stalwart, manly sons—that resided the very safety of one's nation and home, safety from the invading foe or marauding bands.

Without those sons, sons of courage schooled in the skills of weaponry, no one was safe—not one's wife, not one's daughters, not one's way of life itself. One would simply have been swept from the land, lives ending in death or slavery. Fathers and sons in sufficient number had everything to do with a people's protection and security.

That is how it was in biblical times for the nations. So it is for the church of Christ herself in the New Testament age. The apostle's point is that true manhood has everything to do with courage to withstand evils and errors and to take a stand for what is right for the preservation of the church. Therein lies the keeping of our inheritance as churches.

The apostle is talking here, or course, not simply of natural manhood. That, for all its displays of natural courage, is yet prone to be self-centered and self-serving. Rather, he is referring to redeemed and sanctified manhood. Fallen manhood is prone to display itself either in domineering, dictatorial ways—"I run the show!"—or in irresponsible fashion, never growing up. Not so, redeemed manhood. Redeemed manhood uses its strength of character and resolution of will

not for self, but with *others* in mind, for loved ones, for their protection and well-being.

I have it on good record that in the Netherlands on many tombstones of young soldiers of the Reformed faith who died in WW II are written the words, "For Country, Family, and Church." They put their life on the line with the church itself in mind, for her continued freedom to worship in accordance with the apostolic word, which Nazism would never have allowed. How many young men in the Netherlands, so deep in apostasy, would you find with that perspective today one wonders.

"Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets!"

Courage, then, brethren. The willingness to behave as men is the need of the hour for the name and well-being of Christ's church.

And let it begin over against the spirit of feminism so prevalent today. Let us not be ashamed to be one of the increasingly rare ecclesiastical assemblies where women are excluded as delegates, an assembly just of men, and

one, mind you, that represents a denomination that not only does not allow women to hold of-

fice, but not even to vote in church affairs! Can such a species of Christians still exist? A hew and cry goes up. How long civil law will permit such remains to be seen. Many roundly castigate us.

"What! You think women are inferior to you men? You male chauvinists, you!"

No, good brethren, not inferior at all. In fact, in certain areas of life they are much our superiors, as any married man with

children knows. It is not a matter of their not being our *equals*, it is a matter of their being *different*, God be thanked! God be thanked that the church of Christ is not composed simply of males or of those who want to think as a man or react to everything like a man. Where would the counter-balance be? Such would be an impoverished and diminishing church (yes, in numbers too!), I will tell you that.

If you don't believe it, check the condition of any number of churches where the feminist spirit dominates today.

Why will we not allow women as delegates? Because when it comes to authority in the church and home this same apostle made plain elsewhere, "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (I Tim. 2:12). This means women of Christ's church must not think to govern affairs in the church. And the apostle's point is, where believing men function as men and do not abdicate their calling and place, women will not need to 'run the show.' They will not want to. They will have men to answer to their needs. And where such men are found, we find happy wives and women, satisfied and secure!

Do not get me wrong, the apostle does not mean women have no input into the affairs of the church, no voice. They do, but it is in the biblically approved way, namely, through their husbands and men of the church. The wise husband listens carefully to his spouse. But when it comes to governing affairs of the church, it is the role of the man.

Brethren, do we have the courage to oppose the feminist agenda on every front? I trust we do. We must take the same stand Paul took when it came to some insisting Titus be circumcised. "[T]o whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour" (Gal. 2:5).

*Redeemed manhood
uses its strength of character
and resolution of will
not for self, but
with others in mind....*

From the apostle's exhortations it is plain that functioning as a man in the church means that one is doing some assessing on his own and making independent judgments, in the sense of not letting someone else do his thinking for him. As the apostle says, "Watch!"—that is, "Be on the alert!" and like a sentry on a city wall make your assessment and respond accordingly.

At the same time, let us not mistake the apostle here as though he is advocating that we all come to our own conclusions about matters, and then, regardless of what others think, go our own independent way. Nothing of the sort.

Let us remember that true, sanctified manhood comes to expression within the oneness of the body of Christ. It has everything to do with a recognition of the Spirit of Christ in others, an interest in listening to the others, and even deferring in various matters.

In this connection, I draw your attention to the verse preceding our own, verse 12.

As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.

That's quite a verse. Unable to free himself from Ephesus to go to Corinth at the time, Paul urges Apollos, a fellow preacher, to get himself to Corinth as soon as possible. Apollos considers it and decides not to. He disagrees with the apostle on this matter.

What is going on? If an apostle had told you to secure passage on the next ship leaving Ephesus' port city, would you have refused? Would I? Apollos did.

Let us understand well that the power of the passage is not that Apollos held his own coun-

sel. The power of the passage is that the apostle allowed it.

Why?

Because, in the first place, Paul was not dealing here with a principle matter, a matter of biblical doctrine. When it came to such matters, the apostle suffered no one to disagree with him in a misbegotten spirit of brotherhood. He had no tolerance for the attitude of modern churchmen, "You view the authority of the apostolic doctrines as you want to view them. I'll view them as I want to. We will just agree to disagree and in brotherly fashion allow these various views in the church."

Nonsense!

This was the same apostle, remember, who withstood a fellow apostle to the face, Simon Peter by name. He did so when Peter caved in to Judaism and withdrew himself from the Gentile Christians and would not eat with them, leaving the impression that they were unclean and their spirituality suspect, not measuring up to the Jewish brothers' standards. As Paul declares, "I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed" (Gal. 2:11).

And the apostle Peter deferred to Paul, acknowledging he had erred.

But, with Apollos, when it came to a practical matter, dealing with what was in the best interest of the churches at that time, the apostle did not pull rank, so to speak, but recognized that Apollos was a fellow officebearer, one who also had the Holy Spirit, and was able to make judgments and assessments.

But let us be clear. The power of the reference is not that it promotes the right of officebearers in Christ's church to disagree with the apostles when their spirit moves them, for officebearers to say "Apollos was an independent thinker, so am I. He disagreed with the apostles, so I may too. I am free to reexamine everything

they taught. All the apostolic teachings are up for grabs."

Nonsense!

For such men one word is appropriate. It is found towards the conclusion of our chapter, in verse 24. It is the word "Anathema," which means, condemned and dismissed from the church of Christ.

No, the power of verse 12 as it has bearing on our text is not that it sponsors autonomy of thinking in the church, "because, after all, I am a man." Rather, verse 12 indicates that the apostles themselves were keenly aware of the presence of Christ's Spirit in fellow officebearers as they labored to bring God's Word to bear on the practical life of the church. It indicates that Paul himself was willing to listen to other officers when it came to practical matters, deciding what was best for the churches that were committed not simply to his, but to their mutual care. And plainly, he was willing to defer in such matters when the others did not see it his way.

So the apostle would have viewed us were he to have been delegated to our assembly, and so he would have labored as well. Not a man without his own strong opinions and perspective. But also not one who obstinately refused to hear what others had to say.

Brethren, let us take heart and deliberate as men. Let us labor in mutual esteem for each other, to be sure, but above all with the well-being of Christ's precious church foremost in mind.

That, after all, is what it means to labor in love, as love is apostolically defined—not for myself and my own reputation, but with those others bought by The Blood in mind.

... to be concluded —
just like the 2009 Synod.



Synod of 2009 – To Be Continued

If the PRC Synod of 2008 might properly be called “The Synod of Article 21” (see editorial of July 2008), this year’s gathering can rightly be titled “The Synod that Recessed over Article 21.” More on that later.

The Joys of Synod

Many memories of a Protestant Reformed synod are good and pleasant. This is due especially to two things—the blessed Christian fellowship, and the spiritual character of the work. The heartfelt prayers for God’s church universal, for His indispensable blessing on synod, and for the wisdom of the Spirit—these prayers set the spiritual tone. Likewise the robust Psalm singing.

The fact is, Protestant Reformed synods are not “political.” Delegates to synod do not seek to ‘win their case,’ or ‘protect their pet programs,’ or work behind the scenes to ‘get the votes’ for their proposals. On the contrary, they seek the good of the church. They desire not their own will, but the will of the King of the church, Christ Jesus. If they become animated, even intense in the discussions, such is fueled not by animosity but by the conviction that they are supporting what Christ would have them support on a given issue. Yet that too comes with a humility that one man’s understanding is not superior to the collective

wisdom of the body, which body is guided by the Spirit of Christ (Acts 15, especially verse 28).

This spirit of unity and humility was plainly evident at synod again this year. I thank God for this. These yearly gatherings would be an insufferable burden if they were like a worldly legislature with party spirit, personal motivations, and pride governing the proceedings. Do not misunderstand. Unanimity is not required; disagreements surface; not all motions pass unanimously. But dissension is rare.

God’s Blessing

It is an easy thing for a man to write that God is blessing the work of a church. Apostatizing churches can glibly claim that God is blessing them, even as they depart from His Word and profane His name. I do not lightly write, you understand, that I personally see God’s blessing on the Protestant Reformed Churches. This blessing is not due to our goodness or our efforts. In spite of our sins and failures, God is pleased to use the PRC. Allow me to point out how, using some decisions of synod.

The Domestic Mission Committee brought positive reports on all current fields. Synod expressed sincere thanks to all the missionaries. Synod took note of the organization of Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA, expressing appreciation for the work of Missionary T. Miersma

and Loveland PRC. The work in Pittsburgh continues to progress well. Likewise the fellowship in Sioux Falls, SD, which expects under God’s blessing to organize sometime in the next twelve months.

The Foreign Mission Committee reported with thanksgiving God’s gift of two energetic ordained missionaries for the work in the Philippines. Synod approved the work of the FMC and the calling church (Doon) since the last synod, noting especially the work of preparing the new missionaries for the work.

The Committee for Contact with Other Churches (CC) reported on contacts in seven places in the world. Of special significance is our sister church in Northern Ireland, a vibrant congregation and an energetic witness to the truth of sovereign, particular grace and the unconditional covenant. What a joy to have this friend and ally in the British Isles!

Upon the recommendation of the CC, and after three and a half decades of contact, synod officially established a “Corresponding Relationship” with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia. This confirms the evaluation of the first two ministers (H.C. Hoeksema and C. Hanks) who visited the EPC in 1975 that the EPC and the PRC would certainly have an official relationship one day. The relationship is built on unity in the truth of sov-

ereign, particular grace and the unconditional covenant. Again, it is a joy to manifest this unity officially with a friend and ally on the other side of the world. At the same time, our significant differences, particularly on the biblical teaching on divorce and remarriage (the EPC holding the position of the Westminster Confession of Faith), preclude the deeper and richer relationship of “sister church.”

One other noteworthy development—the CC reported continued improving relationships with the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore. Synod judged that it was time to send a delegation, as Covenant requested, to investigate the possibility of official ties.

The joyful news from the Protestant Reformed Seminary is that two students were recommended for graduation. Mr. Cory Griess sustained his examination before synod and was unanimously approved for candidacy in the PRC in July. Dr. David Torlach also graduated and has returned home to his churches in Australia for his internship. Dr. Torlach is the fourth man sent by the EPCA for training in the Protestant Reformed Seminary. Is there a greater blessing than that God gives a man for the gospel ministry and allows the churches to train men for other churches besides? If that were not enough cause for thanksgiving, synod also approved the entrance of two additional students for the coming year.

Not as happy for the seminary was the necessity of dropping the pre-seminary requirement of two years of Dutch. Dutch is the language of the Reformed forebears of the PRC. In this language are hidden treasures of Reformed theology and church order commentary. Facing the reality that our students today cannot become proficient in Dutch in the ordinary college training, the

Theological School Committee recommended that synod drop this requirement, but set up an incentive program to encourage interested pre-seminary students to gain proficiency in this language. This recommendation had the support of the faculty. However, the committee of pre-advice changed the second part of the recommendation to an incentive program for any foreign language, with merely a preference for Dutch, and synod adopted that.

The TSC also gained synod’s approval of a long-range plan of remodeling and updating the seminary building. Synod approved the first stage for immediate commencement. Any and all expenses are to be paid out of donations, not assessments.

Many joys, blessings, and privileges. The membership of the PRC will be privileged to use more of the income God supplies them to support the many opportunities God gives for true kingdom work. The assessments will rise 9.9%, and that of necessity, not carelessness. We thank God for the opportunity and ability to help needy churches; to support the emeriti ministers God has given to preach the gospel the last fifty or more years; to send the gospel out into our land and foreign lands; and to train more men for the gospel ministry.

All of that and more was decided in less than a week. Much cause for thanksgiving and for rejoicing.

But a dark cloud was there. That matter of Article 21 of the Church Order.

Re Article 21

Coming to Synod 2009 was one overture to change the wording of Article 21. Three men brought appeals against decisions of Classis East, and the same three joined seven others bringing protests against decisions of the 2008 Synod. In one way or

another, they touched on Article 21—*The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant.*

Even though most of the documents focus on the permissibility of homeschooling, and whether or not the PRC are or ought to be condemning it, this is not the issue. The true issue was correctly, clearly, and succinctly put by Prof. B. Gritters in the editorial of one year ago.¹ I urge anyone who is interested to read that. If you want to be informed, read that.

All these documents were placed in one committee of pre-advice to bring recommendations to synod. But wading through some 270 pages of material, capturing the point of each protest, appeal, and the overture, and coming with clear and correct recommendations—that is a tall order. The committee worked long and valiantly, but in the end recognized their limitations. They asked synod to recess until the end of the summer. This gives them enough time to do careful work. It also puts synod near to the meeting of Classis West and the Calvin Conference (both the first week of September), thus saving on traveling expenses for the churches.

Surely these men would have preferred to finish their work rather than to carry the burden through the summer. But they desire to serve the churches with the best recommendations they can give. The churches owe them our thanks. The churches must be praying for them, especially that the Spirit of Christ give them wisdom and courage.

Synod of 2009—recessed until Tuesday, August 25, 2009.



¹ July, 2008, V. 84, #18 also available online: <http://sb.rfpa.org/>

Church Membership—Optional?

In the April 1 issue of the *Standard Bearer* a reader tells us that he "...can't find a passage of Scripture that states we must do anything other (or additional) than believe on Jesus Christ for salvation."

He need not look any further than the book of Ephesians, where we read, "...Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25).

Now if Christ loves the church and gave Himself for it, does He also love those outside the church? Did He give Himself for them as well? The answer must be "no," by logical inference; otherwise we would have an unfaithful bridegroom, and Paul's marriage analogy would collapse.

Love must be selective; it must be directed to a specific person, or persons, to the exclusion of others. Universal love leads inevitably to universal salvation, and a denial of limited atonement.

Article 28 of the Belgic Confession states, in part:

We believe, since this holy congregation is an assembly of those who are saved, and that out of it there is no salvation, [that] all men are in duty bound to join and unite themselves with it.

Church membership is not optional. Those who insist that they believe on Jesus Christ for salvation will be found in a local congregation of God's people.

Ralph W. Hahn
Boise, Idaho

god is not Great

Thank you for the review of Hitchen's book *god is not Great* (cf. January 1 SB, p. 165). I appreciate very much Mr. Kevin Vink's analysis. We can eas-

ily overlook one spiritual danger while focusing on other ones. To underestimate the mindset promoted by Mr. Hitchens is a grave error, and to dismiss it as 'out there' is the ostrich's response.

The days are arriving when some kind of college education is needed just to get a job. However, colleges, even the two-year ones, push Mr. Hitchens' ideas. Professors of college programs have long been known to be huge promoters of atheism and/or pluralism, the rights of the individual, sincerity without an attachment to truth, and unconditional toleration of all things except Christ with His cross. We need to remember that these life-views may be sirens for our young adults. The logic presented is dressed up with such noble rhetoric that it caresses the pride of life. The youth are strong, full of life and vigor, and they chafe at the reminder that they have spiritual weaknesses and needs. These youth are also adults who are making their own choices. This logic can captivate a mind that is ripe for independence and cultivate in that mind a spiritual independence from God. We may think that something so blatantly unbiblical shouldn't even be a problem. We should remember that, in a subtle way, the ideas promoted by Mr. Hitchens stroke our zeal for individuality as well as our desire to be kings of our own lives.

Avoiding college is not the answer, but we must prepare our children for this temptation. College students are taught to question everything. This is not a bad thing, but when it encourages young students to view their religious upbringing as mere formalism and their church home as stifling, backward, narrow-minded, and dictatorial, it tempts these

intelligent students to doubt God Himself. We must pray for our youth who are at college and are called to withstand this personally. We should pray for those who currently wrestle with this temptation in their hearts and minds and for their loved ones who struggle with them. This challenging of established things and especially spiritual things appeals to everyone's sense of importance. Satan's very first argument to Eve, "yea, hath God said..." still resonates today.

As the last days approach, there will be an increase in scholarly heresies, but I believe that there will also be an increase in glaring unbelief pawning itself off as the 'honest' or 'real' life-view. Our young people may already be tempted to listen when nice, decent-living professors and fellow students befriend them and proceed to teach them that they should 'grow up' and 'get the big picture.' Under the banner of self-assertion they are pressured to rethink what they have been spiritually 'fed' by their upbringing and they are encouraged to decide for themselves if God really exists.

Individualism and independent-mindedness might not be bad things in themselves, because God made each of us unique and we are not spiritual robots. However, it is our calling to understand these concepts in the light of God's Word, instruct ourselves about the selfishness and egocentricity they can lead to, and be aware of how this all works against the good of the body of the church. We should set examples for our youth and live in unified harmony as a church body when we are tempted by ideas of self-rule that arise from within our own hearts. How quickly we as a people can become like the

Israelites during the time of the Judges when "...every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Jud. 21:25). Without reminders and examples, our young people may quickly lose their reliance on the Body of Christ and the spiritual strength it provides. The knowledge of God's presence and personal identity are soon jeopardized as well if we lose sight of the truth about His body and our duty to one another.

Mr. Vink suggested that Mr. Hitchens' complaint about threats is nothing more than an attempt to gain pity. I believe that Mr. Hitchens' references to the threats were not intended to evoke pity but were his attempt to prove that religious people are

guilty of a double standard when, as he alleges, they claim the love of their God and yet can hate venomously and even threaten a man's life when he disagrees with their views.

Mr. Vink finds it hard to believe that Hitchens honestly holds to the convictions written in his book. I would dare to say that Mr. Hitchens does indeed firmly hold to his convictions, just as surely as Satan holds to his. As Lewis Chafer points out in the third chapter of his book, *Satan: His Motives and Methods* (Kregel Publications, 1990), "Satan, like a fond mother, is bending over those in his arms, *breathing into their minds* (emphasis mine) the quieting balm of a 'universal fa-

therhood of God' and a 'universal brotherhood of man'...." He also points out in his ninth chapter that "it is not strange that the world assumes to have advanced beyond that which is repeatedly said to be the manifestation of the wisdom of God; branding as bigots, insincere, or ignorant, all who still hold to the whole testimony of God." Hitchens has clearly made conscious choices and is busy recruiting many with his writings.

With thanks to God for your work and Word in the *Standard Bearer*.

Mrs. Brenda Hoekstra
Hudsonville, Michigan



Evangelism Committee Work

Featured in our May 15 "Special Issue" on Missions and Evangelism was the work of various PR Evangelism Committees. The contribution of South Holland PRC's Evangelism Committee was inadvertently omitted. With our apologies to South Holland, we print theirs belatedly below.


The Evangelism Committee of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church officially labors in direct obedience to Christ's command to proclaim the gospel to all nations. We do this under the supervision of the council of our church, with our pastor as the chairman of the Evangelism Committee. The committee takes this work very seriously. The work is nothing less than the proclamation of the good news of salvation, which is a savor of life unto life for God's elect and a savor of death unto death for the reprobate.

The Evangelism Committee is busy in this work in a number of different ways. We continue

to work on many longstanding projects such as a small quarterly magazine, *The Reformed Perspective*, sent to our mailing list in the community and abroad. We maintain a website with a fully searchable and up-to-date sermon library. The committee is currently reworking our Reformed Bookshelf, through which we promote RFPA and other good Reformed books in the congregation and RFPA literature to the community. Our recent advertisement for a sermon series on Titus has received good response, for which we are thankful.

In addition to these and many other labors, two recent events are worthy of further explanation. For many years the Evangelism Committee has hosted a lecture for Reformation Day. This year's lecture, by Prof. Herman Hanko, was entitled, "The Reformed Ecumenical Movement: Was the Reformation a Mistake?" The lecture was promoted extensively in the Reformed peri-

odicals and we received many orders for the lecture from these ads.

Second, we have had a long history of publishing pamphlets as one of the main ways to spread the truth of the gospel through promotion in magazine ads, the Internet, and mailings. We continue in this labor with many reprints, and we report an exciting new pamphlet that we are preparing for publication entitled, "The Holy Spirit and Assurance," by Prof. David Engelsma. The author refutes the popular notion that is promoted far and wide, and almost without challenge, that one of the main experiences of the Christian life is doubt. He stresses that the Christian's experience is the comforting assurance of his salvation. Our committee intends to promote this pamphlet as vigorously as we promoted our last pamphlet, *Until Death Do Us Part*. We are confident that this new pamphlet will receive as warm a welcome as did *Until Death Do Us Part*. 

David Torlach, M.D., is a member of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, a denomination with which the PRCA have established, officially at Synod 2009, a Corresponding Relationship. Several men from the EPCA have, in the recent past, been trained in the Protestant Reformed Seminary. Dr. Torlach is the fourth. He graduated, along with Mr. Cory Griess, at the Commencement Program on June 11. One of the items of interest at this year's synod was the reading of a letter from Dr. Torlach, expressing his appreciation for his training and for the reception of him and his family in the PRC while in residence here. His letter follows:

Note of Thanks to the PRCA

I want to take this opportunity briefly to express appreciation and thanks to the PRCA, on behalf of myself and my family, and therefore somewhat also on behalf of the EPC of Australia.

We want to thank the PRC for:

My training in the seminary. I have received seminary training which I have no doubt is one of the best in the world. I have been taught by professors who not only have a solid and deep knowledge of the truth of the Scriptures, but also demonstrate a practical love for that truth, both in their teaching and in their personal lives. I have grown in my personal faith and knowledge; and my love of my Saviour and His truth has grown immeasurably whilst under their teaching.

My training has been provided free of charge either to myself or to the EPC in general. At the present time, I do not believe that the EPC, with its limited resources, could provide the kind of training I have received here. We are indebted to you for this.

This is a very generous undertaking. There is no direct benefit to the PRC. They are doing this simply in their love and support of the gospel and the church of Jesus Christ in other places.

I have been trained in all the Reformed doctrines, with a sensitivity to the differences between us. There has been a respect of our positions, and even allowing the putting forward and consideration of differences, without their making any difference to my training or assessment. I pray that this may likewise be reflected in our broader relationships in the years to come.

The care of our family. We were included in the Byron Center congregation and were made to feel as if we were members there, and cared for as such, even if not quite so in reality. We have been cared for by the council of Byron Center Church in many ways, but also by all the members of the congregation. They have shown a love for us, not only in word but in deed. We have all grown spiritually here. We have been blessed by the preaching of the Word, the fellowship, the catechism classes, and the schools. We have made so many firm

friends in the Lord. It has not only been Byron Center: everywhere we have gone in the PRC the people have shown an interest in and a care for us, putting themselves out for us. At times this has been overwhelming for us. We have been privileged to live amongst God's people here. I believe it is not until you travel and even live outside of your usual circle of church family, that you start to truly appreciate the universality of the church of Jesus Christ—that He really has His people in every place upon the face of this earth.

May our Lord and King, Jesus Christ the Savior, strengthen all the Protestant Reformed Churches, as they seek to serve Him, preach the gospel, and glorify God. May He also bless both of our denominations with stronger ties in the truth of the Scriptures and the Reformed faith, that we might be a blessing and encouragement to one another, and strengthen one another's hand in the great task of proclaiming the gospel, preserving the truth, and shepherding His sheep, until He comes again.

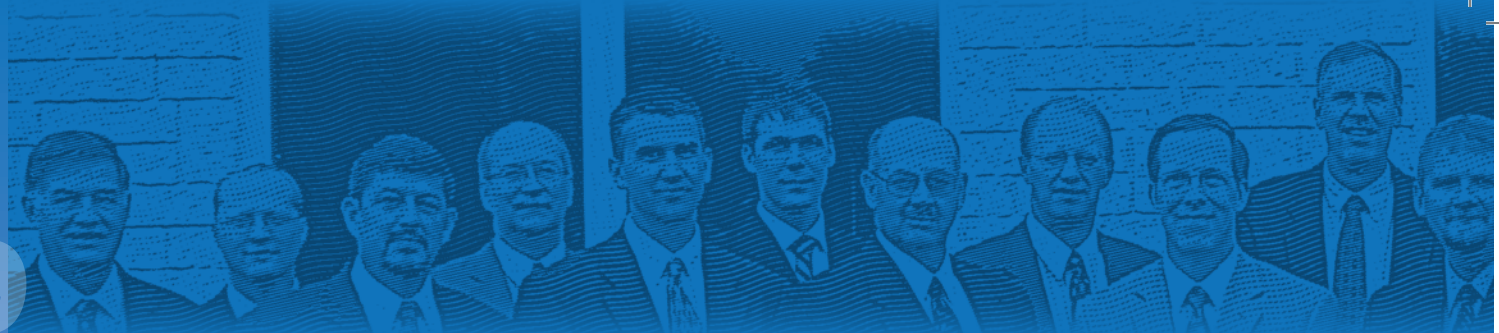
David Torlach



SEMINARY GRADUATES:

**Mr. Cory Griess,
Dr. David Torlach**

Synod '09



"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

1 Corinthians 16:13



Dr. David Torlach

Mr. Cory Griess

The following is one of many letters (e-mails) that Rev. Lanning wrote to his family and friends while in the Philippines recently on behalf of the Foreign Mission Committee of the PRC. With his permission we share it with our readers here.

Meeting Family

Saturday, May 9, 2009

The events of today are sure to be among the highlights of our trip. But they are also the most difficult, so far, to recount. In thinking back on the day, there is such a confused mingling of joy and sorrow that I am not sure where one leaves off and the other begins.

The day began very early. We were picked up at 4 A.M. Our destination was the provinces to the north of Manila, where can be found the village of Gabaldon.

● The provinces we drove through were dominated by rice paddies. Green, wet land; sometimes flat, sometimes slightly terraced. Flowing through the paddies were little streams, marked by the meandering lines of palm trees and shrubs.

● As the rice paddies receded toward the horizon, lush green foothills rose to take their place. Ravines and peaks and deep gorges could be seen, but all covered with a verdant tropical blanket.

● It was toward these hills that we were heading, for Gabaldon is located within a ring of them. We soon were crossing bridges with clean, clear water rushing below, the green hills stretching up away from us into the low clouds.

● Finally we arrived in the town of Gabaldon itself. Nipa huts were set back just a little from the roads; all around and over us was the tropical foliage. The air was humid, the sky fairly overcast. It would be hard to imagine a more tropical village than this.

A few notes about the work in Gabaldon:

● The Berean PRC has been actively supporting this mission field. When Seminarian Vernon Ibe was still living there, he would travel every weekend to lead the saints in worship.

● Now that Vernon is studying in the PRC seminary, the elders of Berean PRC have taken over the care of the saints in Gabaldon as much as they are able. Whenever a delegation comes to preach for the Berean PRC, the elders are eager to take them to Gabaldon to minister to the saints there.

● With a little help, the saints have been able to construct a building for their worship. It is an open-air nipa hut like all of the buildings in the village, but sturdy, having a cement and wood frame.

Now, to the worship.

● Tagalog is the only language they speak in Gabaldon. They have a few English words, but not nearly enough to keep up with a sermon. Therefore, I read Psalm 23 in English, after which brother Rod read the Tagalog version. Then I preached, one sentence at a time. After every one, brother Rod translated into Tagalog. I am still deciding whether I liked preaching that way or not.

● It was not an actual worship service, but more of an hour of meditation. There were two prayers by the elders, a couple

of Psalter numbers, the message, and we were finished.

So, why was this day so moving?

● For one thing, we got to meet some of our family today. These were brothers and sisters in Christ. We have known about them, and have prayed for them, but we never had opportunity to see them until now. Even though we don't know their language, and they hardly know ours, there is an almost instant connection between saints in Christ. I still cannot get over how joyful it was to meet them.

● For another thing, we had to say goodbye to family today. For all I know, this is the last time we will see the saints of Gabaldon until glory. Our goodbyes were not "See you later," but, "Goodbye." We had poked our heads in just long enough to realize how much we love these brothers and sisters, and now we have to wait until glory to be reunited. It is almost like losing a loved one.


● But for all our mixed feelings, God is taking care of His people in Gabaldon. We took our leave, but God does not. This in itself is overwhelming. The faithfulness of God moves us when we know it in our own lives, but also when we see it in the lives of His other children.

There was one event during our two hours in Gabaldon that stands out in my mind. After the worship service was over, I sat down next to Mama Guarina. She is an aged woman in the church, a widow. She reminded me very much of a certain saintly widow at Faith. Mama Guarina knew hardly any English; I knew even less Tagalog. How could we ever communicate? We found a couple of words we did know that were

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

important to us: *mga bata* (children). Even though we couldn't talk much, we could communicate by holding up fingers to tell each other how many children we had and how old they were. She also knew the word "husband." When I asked, her eyes filled with

tears. Four years ago, she signaled. No words between us, but her grief didn't need words. We sat some more on the bench in the church. I held her hand while she cried a little. In English, I repeated the text of the sermon: "Surely goodness and mercy shall

follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever." I think she understood. Almost nothing in common, not even the language; only this: the hope of the gospel. And that was enough. 

Decency and Order

Prof. Ronald Cammenga

Transfer of Church Membership

"To those who remove from the congregation, a letter or testimony concerning their profession and conduct shall be given by the consistory, signed by two; or, in the case of letters which are given under the seal of the church, signed by one."

Church Order, Article 82.

Transfer of Membership

Article 82 deals with the transfer of membership from one congregation to another within the church federation. The article provides for the transfer of membership by means of the granting of a "letter or testimony concerning the profession and conduct" of the member. On the decision of the consistory this letter is to be given to the member who intends to transfer. This is the language of Article 82. It is presumed that the member desiring to transfer will take this letter with him and present it to the consistory of the congregation with which he intends to affiliate. For practical reasons, and as an expression of denominational unity, Reformed churches have adopted various forms that fulfill the requirements of Article 82 on behalf of the members.

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

There are two forms that are used by the congregations of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America for this purpose. There is the form for "Transfer of Baptized Members" and there is the form for "Transfer of Confessing Members." Although the form for "Transfer of Baptized Members" does not call for recording the date of birth and the date of baptism, these should be provided by the consistory issuing the transfer. Church membership records should be as complete as possible, and this information should now be on file with the church to which the baptized member is transferring.

The form for "Transfer of Confessing Members" can be used for individuals as well as for families. Ordinarily when parents request the transfer of their church membership they also include request for the transfer of the membership of their minor, baptized children. At the request of the parents, the covenant family as a unit is transferred to the

care of another congregation and consistory. Space is provided on the transfer form for listing the name of each child in the family, including the date of their birth and baptism, as well as the birth, baptism, and profession of faith dates of the parents. Again, this form ought to be filled out in detail by the consistory issuing the transfer so that complete records for each family member are on file with the congregation that they are now joining. Too often incomplete information is given on the transfer form. If complete information is not provided by the consistory issuing the transfer, it ought to be requested by the consistory receiving the transfer.

These two forms are in use within our denomination when members transfer from one congregation to another. These forms may also be used when members transfer from one of our congregations to a congregation of a sister church. The "Constitution of the Committee for Contact

with Other Churches” states, among other things, that a full sister-church relationship implies “[m]utual acknowledgment of membership attests.” Although Article 82 does not speak directly to transfer of membership to a sister church, the principle and practice expressed in the article apply. This is the significance of a full sister-church relationship.

There is another membership form that the PRCA make use of, the “Certificate of Dismissal.” This form is used when members of the Protestant Reformed Churches terminate their membership in these churches, by requesting that their membership papers be sent to them. The PRCA do not transfer membership to churches outside the denomination with whom they do not have a sister-church relationship. This is not necessarily a judgment that these churches are not true churches. It is simply a recognition that they are not in ecclesiastical fellowship with the PRCA. The sad reality is that many who request dismissal papers intend to affiliate with churches that have serious weaknesses, churches that are officially committed to false doctrine and countenance unholy living. When such an intention is expressed to a committee of elders, which in every case of requests for termination of membership ought to be appointed by the consistory, these members must be admonished for the sin of leaving a true church of Jesus Christ. In the case of confessing members, they must also be reminded of the vows that they assumed at the time of public confession of faith, which vows they are now transgressing.

The adopted forms that the churches use fulfill the requirement of Article 82 that to those who transfer from one congregation to another “a letter or testimony concerning their profession and conduct shall be given by

the consistory....” The adopted forms are today the letter and testimonial spoken of in the article. The use of the adopted forms by all the churches is an expression of the unity of the congregations within the denomination. On account of that unity, the churches within the federation ordinarily honor and accept one another’s certificates of transfer of membership.

If there are spiritual concerns regarding the individual or family who has requested the membership transfer, these ought to be noted on the form. If the member is under discipline, ideally this ought to be resolved before the transfer takes place. If, however, this is not possible, perhaps because the individual has moved out of the state, the fact that the member is under discipline must be noted on the membership papers. This applies also to certificates of dismissal that are granted. No member transferring or leaving a congregation while under discipline may be given “clean papers.” The fact of the discipline, a brief history of the case, and any other pertinent information ought to be noted on the membership papers. The consistory to whom the transfer is made must see it as its obligation to take up the disciplinary work begun by the elders of the sister church. And any consistory from another denomination must honor the discipline done by faithful elders of the PRCA, just as elders in our churches must honor the discipline that may have been done in another church and denomination.

Requests for membership transfer must be made by the members themselves. The consistory may not take a decision to transfer a member to another congregation, let us say, because that member has moved into the vicinity of a sister church. The consistory can recommend membership transfer under the

circumstances. But ordinarily it is up to the member to request the transfer. Membership in the church is a matter of willing affiliation with the body of Christ in the world, at least on the part of adults. In this sense the membership papers belong to the individual. Since they do, it is only at the member’s request that his membership papers are transferred.

Members ought to request the transfer of their membership either in writing or by way of personal appearance at a consistory meeting. In some cases a verbal request in the presence of at least two elders may be deemed sufficient. But ordinarily a written request or personal appearance before the consistory is preferable. In this way the consistory retains a record of the request, either by way of a supplemented letter or an article in the consistory’s minute book.

Reasons for Transfer

Article 82 speaks of transfer of membership of “those who remove from the congregation....” The language of the article is open to misunderstanding. The article does not refer merely to those who remove from one congregation to another, both of which are in the same city, or at least both of which are in easy driving distance. Rather, the article refers to those who move out of the city in which the congregation of which they are members exists. This is also clearly the meaning of the article in the historical context in which it was originally written. In our day, the reference would be to those who move to a different city or state. The principle of the article is that one ought to be a member of the congregation in the city in which he resides, if this is at all possible.

It happens today that there may be a number of congregations in one city. In Grand

Rapids, Michigan, for example, or in northwest Iowa there are a number of PRC churches in close proximity. Members of one church often drive by one or more PRC churches on their way to the church of which they are members. There is nothing wrong with this in itself. Nevertheless, the principle of Article 82 is that we ought to be members of a congregation that is near to our residence. An important consideration, in this regard, is that we will be able to participate more fully in the life of the congregation.

Granted that all the congregations within the denomination exhibit the marks of the true church of Jesus Christ in the world, there may be legitimate secondary factors that enter into church membership. A newly married couple may choose to be members of a congregation in which a number of their friends have their membership. Or they may choose to join the congregation of which one or both of them were members before they were married. Or, again, they may choose to be members of a congregation in which they were raised and in which many of their own family are members. And there may be other equally valid considerations as well. These judgments must be left to the members themselves, allowing for a certain measure of freedom on this matter.

Nevertheless, what our people must be admonished against is needlessly transferring membership to another congregation. What our members must be encouraged to do is to establish themselves in a congregation, live in a congregation, raise their family in a congregation. Especially our young couples must be encouraged to put down roots in a congregation. What they must be exhorted against is “church hopping.” There are those who show this weakness. They are quick to leave one congregation for an-

other. Perhaps they are critical of the minister’s preaching, or they have a gripe against the elders, or they dislike a certain member. Like Reuben they are “unstable as water” (Gen. 49:4). For a few years, they are members of this congregation. After awhile they leave to join another of the congregations. And in time they are on the move again. This is not good for the church. And this is not conducive to the member’s spiritual growth or the growth of his family.

In their Church Order commentary, VanDellen and Monsma give reasons why they feel that the failure to maintain boundary lines between the churches is to be regretted. While our churches do not establish and maintain boundaries when it comes to church membership, it is worthwhile to consider their reasons.

1. Believers should manifest the body of Christ in the place of their providentially determined residence.
2. It is against the intent of Article 82.
3. It fosters the overgrowth of some Churches and the undergrowth of others.
4. It promotes ‘floating.’
5. It promotes a one-sided development. (Birds of a feather flock together.)
6. It stimulates unholy competition.
7. It promotes slothfulness in catechism attendance.
8. It promotes needless Sunday travel.
9. It constitutes a practical denial of the communion of saints (*The Church Order Commentary*, p. 338).

While we do not necessarily agree with all of the reasons advanced by VanDellen and Monsma, we can appreciate their concern for the consequences of transfer of church membership for little or no real reason.

Approval of Requests for Transfer

It is the consistory that grants approval for the request of a member to transfer membership. Not the clerk, nor the president,

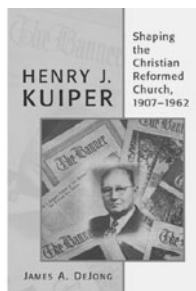
nor even a committee of the consistory may act on a request for membership transfer. The transfer is to “be given by the consistory....” The consistory as a body must approve or disapprove requests for transfer.

The adopted forms are also to be used, which forms require the signature of the president and clerk of the consistory. Article 82 allows for the signature of one “in the case of letters which are given under the seal of the church....”

It is important to note that one remains a member of the congregation from which he is transferring until such time as that consistory receives from the consistory of the congregation to which the member is transferring the “Membership Receipt.” At that point his membership in his former congregation ceases, and his membership in the new congregation commences. During the process of transfer, therefore, he remains a member in the church from which he is transferring and under the oversight of its elders.

For this reason, a consistory ought to wait with notifying the congregation that so-and-so has transferred to such-and-such congregation until the receipt of transfer has been officially received by the consistory. There have been cases in which consistories postponed approving a transfer of membership, or denied it altogether, even though an announcement had already been made to the congregation from which the transfer had been requested. This puts the consistory in the awkward position of having to inform the congregation that so-and-so’s transfer had not been approved, or, at least, was being delayed. Much better that the bulletin announcement waits until after the receipt of transfer has been duly received, for the sake of decency and good order.





Henry J. Kuiper: Shaping the Christian Reformed Church, 1907-1962, by James A. De Jong. Eerdmans (2007). ISBN: 978-0-8028-2585-8. Paper. Reviewed by David J. Engelsma.

President-emeritus of Calvin Theological Seminary James A. De Jong has written an interesting account of the life and work of influential Christian Reformed minister Henry J. Kuiper. Because of the prominence of "HJK," the book affords as well a fascinating look at the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) during the years of Kuiper's ministry, from 1904, when Kuiper entered what would now be considered seminary, until his death in 1962.

For most of his ministerial career, Kuiper was a leading, powerful churchman. He was deeply involved in the ouster of Ralph Janssen from Calvin Seminary in 1922. De Jong makes plain that Janssen was known to hold and teach higher-critical (that is, unbelieving) views of the Old Testament as early as 1906. Kuiper also played a leading role in the deposition of Rev. Henry Danhof and Rev. George Ophoff by CRC Classis Grand Rapids West in January 1925. In the deposing of the two ministers and their consistories, and in the refusal by the classis to examine B. J. Danhof for ordination to the ministry (since at that time Danhof opposed the doctrine of common grace), "H. J. Kuiper's hand on the tiller had

guided the outcome" (58). Thus Henry J. Kuiper became part of the history of the Protestant Reformed Churches, which formed as the result of these depositions and Herman Hoeksema's deposition by Classis Grand Rapids East of the CRC.

Kuiper defended and promoted the doctrine of common grace adopted by the CRC Synod of 1924 by preaching and then publishing three sermons on the subject entitled, "The Three Points of Common Grace." In connection with his account of Kuiper's involvement in the controversy over common grace, and elsewhere in the book, author De Jong recognizes Herman Hoeksema with respect. One of the effects of the struggle over common grace was a CRC synodical warning against worldliness and worldly amusements. Kuiper was a member of the committee that drew up the statement, if he was not the author.

Another significant denominational project spearheaded by Kuiper was the introduction of hymns into the songbook of the CRC, the *Psalter Hymnal*, published in 1934.

It was especially as editor of the official CRC magazine, the *Banner*, that Kuiper gave leadership to the CRC. Kuiper held this influential position, and prosecuted it vigorously, for twenty-seven years, from 1929-1956. De Jong examines the nature and topics of Kuiper's editorship. His editorials were wide-ranging, from labor unions to spirituality. De Jong observes that the membership of the CRC paid "HJK" good heed. Kuiper formed the mind of the CRC as no single person has done since.

One cause that was dear to Kuiper's heart was the Christian schools. Kuiper was instrumental

in the founding of several Christian schools, including Chicago Christian High, Grand Rapids Christian High, and Reformed Bible Institute (now, Kuyper College). The account of Kuiper's involvement in the founding of Grand Rapids Christian High School contains a sentence that causes a pang in the heart not only of the Protestant Reformed reader but also of all who love the unity of Christ's church in her Reformed manifestation.

At the first graduation [of Grand Rapids Christian High School], in the spring of 1923, board president H. J. Kuiper presided. He gave the welcome and offered the invocation; Louis Berkof delivered the commencement address; and fellow board member and vice president, the Reverend Herman Hoeksema of the Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church, closed in prayer (95).

Kuiper zealously promoted the schools in the editorial column of the *Banner*. His first editorial was on Christian education. This occasioned a long and sharp exchange with the Rev. John Vander Mey. Vander Mey defended the public schools. He did so, intriguingly, on the ground of common grace. De Jong summarizes Vander Mey's argument: "By God's common grace, many fine things happen in many public schools" (101). Kuiper, himself a defender of common grace, was forced to ward off Vander Mey's argument by accusing Vander Mey of "an unbalanced overemphasis on common grace" (99). Ironically, Vander Mey was the CRC minister who had been a thorn in the side of Hoeksema at Eastern Avenue CRC in the common grace controversy.

Those who live in the vicinity of Chicago will read with special

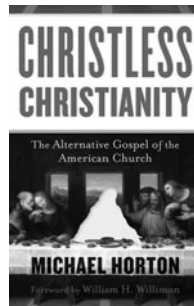
Rev. Langerak is pastor of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

interest the history of Kuiper's pastorate of Second Englewood, Chicago from 1913 to 1919 and the account of Kuiper's editorial involvement in the "Wezeman Case" in 1936.

Henry J. Kuiper was a "conservative" in the CRC. Especially toward the end of his ministry, he did battle with the up-and-coming "progressives/liberals" in the beloved denomination he had long led. The battle was definitely pitched in 1951 by the creation of two, opposing magazines within the CRC: the *Reformed Journal* and the *Torch and Trumpet*. Kuiper's joining the editorial committee of the *Torch and Trumpet* in 1957, immediately after retiring from the *Banner*, was clear evidence that he saw danger threatening the CRC, unmistakable indication where in his judgment the danger lay, and a strong signal that he intended to fight.

What the danger to the CRC really was, and still is (although Kuiper would not have acknowledged it, any more than does author De Jong), James De Jong nevertheless suggests in a significant footnote: "Denominational dynamics from 1880 through 1980 [in the CRC] can be understood essentially in terms of the interplay and application of these two ideas." "These two ideas" are the antithesis and common grace (230). De Jong thinks that the two ideas are harmonious and that the threat to the CRC is a failure to "balance" them. But he acknowledges that from the later years of Kuiper's ministry to the present the antithesis has been losing out in the CRC. The scales of the balance are tilting steadily to the side of common grace. "Religious leaders continued to remind it [the CRC], *though with increasingly less force and clarity*, that the religious antithesis placed it fundamentally at odds with 'the world'" (250; emphasis added by the reviewer).

This well-written and well-researched study of one of the CRC's leading ministers is a worthy addition to "The Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America."



Christless Christianity: The Alternative Gospel of the American Church, by Michael Horton. Baker Books (2008). 270 p. ISBN: 9780801013188. Reviewed by Curt Gritters.

From the back cover flap: "Michael Horton (PhD, University of Coventry and Wycliffe Hall, Oxford) is J. Gresham Machen Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics at Westminster Seminary California...."

The title and cover art (da Vinci's *The Last Supper* with Christ whitened out) summarize well the allegations Michael Horton makes against today's "Christian" churches. Running with such zeal for zeal, seeker and Emergent churches, he claims, are "well on their way" to foregoing Christ, choosing rather to embrace themselves in a self-help movement. He sees that the focus becomes us and our activity (politics, abortion, gay marriage, global warming), not God and His work in Christ. We go to church to learn what we can do for ourselves (become a better person) and for the world (reduce poverty or fight disease), rather than what Christ has done for us (died for the salvation of believers). Thus we make God and Jesus "supporting cast" in our own show. God exists for us, not us for God; restated, God is a means to our joy rather than the end for Whom we exist.

One might paraphrase his accusations as the church's stepping off Jacob's ladder to reach

heaven, and climbing instead Maslow's hierarchy of needs to self-actualization. This narcissistic and pragmatic church should hardly, Horton claims, be called "Christian." After all, if being a "Christian" is simply a lifestyle, many Buddhists are better "Christians"!

Though I commend the book in general, I offer first this critique:

First: Dr. Horton scribes nearly 250 loosely-organized pages to elaborate, reiterate, provide examples, and reiterate more an allegation that could be synopsized in one paragraph. While I recognize the verbiage of this review is more austere than the doctor's, does it take a loquacious book to diagnose this problem? It seems that the author is trying tenaciously to be quoted.

Second: Though many might consider Horton's claims 'scalding,' I closed the book somewhat disappointed that (and curious why) he did not label this *sin* of selfishness as "idolatry." I wonder, too, why narcissism (obsession with and love of *self*) was not described as a deviation from Matthew 22:37's positive summary of the law to love *God* and the *neighbor*.

Third: Though the last chapter is titled "A Call to the Resistance," the author dwells on reiterating and accentuating the problems and the need to avoid them. A few sentences dabble in a proposed positive response. The reader might close the book wondering whether it was written in a spirit of disappointment or a spirit of true joy in Christ.

I applaud other aspects of the book:

First: In response to my own critique, I offer that it might take a well-publicized, likely-controversial book to get the attention this problem deserves. Also, even Paul recognized the need to be negative when severe problems infiltrated the church ("O foolish Galatians..." 3:1).

Second: I believe that Horton has accurately diagnosed a debilitating and pervasive disease in 21st-century Christendom. He, like the first few verses of Romans 10, criticizes a 'zeal without knowledge' and 'ignorance of God's righteousness.' The reader would likely recognize this disease in names like Ossteen, Robertson, Finney, Willow Creek, and their own local seeker churches. Pastors are becoming life coaches, not ambassadors of Christ. Are we aware how many are falling prey to Arminianism, (semi-) Pelagianism, and Gnosticism in their narcissistic and pragmatic trends? It knocks on our doors, brothers and sisters. Is it in our midst?

'Our response to this problem' was not precisely addressed in the book. How would I hope we as Reformed Christians respond? In four ways:

1. We would **recognize that selfishness** is the opposite of loving God and the neighbor, is the root of all sins, and **runs rampant in each of us** totally-depraved sinners.
2. We would **be humbled** that, in spite of this trend in neighboring churches, God, in His undeserved grace, has blessed our denomination with Christ-centered worship and preaching.
3. We would **pray for God's grace** to have joy in Christ-centered worship and preaching (not evaluating a service based on 'what I got out of it'), and pray for God's grace in our response to individuals or denominations that drift away from this.
4. Our **prayers would be more** than thanks for what God does for us and requests for God's blessing on Christians. "Hal-lowed," "praised," "blessed" be God's name!

May God in Christ be praised!



WAYNE A. MACK
and JORDANA MACK

Humility the Forgotten Virtue, by Wayne A. Mack. P&R Publishing, 2005. ISBN 087-552-639X. 180 pages, soft-cover. \$14.99. Available at Reformed Book Outlet, christianbook.com and the publisher at prpbooks.com. Reviewed by Barb Dykstra.

Pride is an ugly thing. It comes *first* in the list of things God hates—things that are an abomination to him (Prov. 6:16-17). How quick we are to label others as proud, and how slow we are to examine our own actions to see what they reveal, and our own hearts to see what is hidden there. "The very definition of pride is thinking better of ourselves than we really are. It is not surprising, then, that proud people do not usually see their pride. For this reason, it is vitally important that we spend time regularly searching out the pride in our hearts."

Wayne Mack wrote *Humility the Forgotten Virtue* to help us "attempt to understand pride and humility from a biblical perspective and to help us diminish the destructive pride factor and to increase the true humility factor in our lives." He took on this task with a 'four-D approach': "by giving a biblical *definition* of what pride and humility are... how pride and humility *display* themselves,...(and) how true humility can be *developed* and destructive pride can be *diminished* in our lives."

Mack explains the differences between the proud person and the humble one: "Self is at the center of everything in the mind of the proud person. He is his own master, and everything and everyone else exists to please him and serve his needs. As a result, he takes the throne in his own heart and, in reality, worships himself. Not only that, but he demands that everyone else worship him as well. The humble

person...has a servant's mindset. He desires to worship, love, and serve God at all times, and he demonstrates this mind-set by loving and serving other people. (He is) acutely aware of God's supreme right to rule over all... (and puts himself) entirely under God's authority."

The author's 'four D' approach is worked out in the following chapters: "The Importance of Humility"—the *definition* of pride and humility; "Humility toward God," "Portrait of Humility toward Man," "Completed Portrait of Humility," and "The Folly of Pride"—the *display* of pride and humility; "Yes, but How?" and "More on How"—how humility can be *developed* and pride *diminished*.

After each chapter there is a section of "Application/Discussion Exercises" with questions covering the material in the chapter, scripture passages to study, and thought questions for readers to examine themselves. At the close of the book there is a list of over 100 biblical passages on pride and humility, and a complete index of hundreds of passages from 42 books of the Bible, which the author used in the text itself, or suggested the reader look up.

"Since the fall of man in Genesis 3, pride is as natural and common to us as breathing, whereas humility is a supernatural and uncommon virtue.... There will never come a time in our lives, as long as we are in this world, when we can relax and think that we have completely conquered our propensity to be proud. The biblical commands instructing us to humble ourselves are in the present tense, meaning that obeying them is an ongoing process from which we can never take a vacation."

"How foolish it is for us to become proud of ourselves when, apart from Christ, there is nothing good in us.... Only through the work of the Spirit in our

hearts are we able to see our desperate need for God.... If Christ, who was perfect, voluntarily humbled Himself before His creatures, how much more should we

gladly humble ourselves before others?"

"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due

time" (I Pet. 5:6.) *Humility the Forgotten Virtue* can help believers look to God's Word in order to put off the many forms of pride and live in godly humility.



Report of Classis East

May 13, 2009
Faith Protestant Reformed
Church

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, May 13, 2009 at the Faith PRC. All churches were represented by two delegates. Rev. W. Langerak was the chairman of this session.

Classis had two main items on its agenda: 1) An appeal from a member against a decision of her consistory, and 2) Requests for classical appointments from Byron Center and Holland and additional requests from Classis West to provide some pulpit supply to Bethel, Calvary, and Lacombe.

Classis declared that the appeal was not legally before it.

Classis provided appointments to all the churches who requested such.

The expenses of this session amounted to \$463.57. Classis will meet next at the Kalamazoo PRC on September 9, 2009.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon J. Huisken
Stated Clerk



News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Minister Activities

Rev. Rodney Kleyn accepted the call he received to serve as the first pastor of the newly organized Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA.

Rev. Steven Key, pastor of the Hull, IA PRC declined the call extended to him from the Byron Center, MI PRC to serve as their next pastor.

Rev. Doug Kuiper, serving our denomination as pastor of the Randolph, WI PRC, declined the call he received to serve as the first pastor of the Calvary PRC in Hull, IA.

Rev. Ron Hanco, pastor of the Lynden, WA PRC, declined the call extended to him to serve as pastor of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada.

The First PRC of Holland, MI has extended a call to Rev. Garrett Eriks, pastor of the Hudson-

ville, MI PRC, to serve as their next pastor.

The congregation of the Byron Center, MI PRC has extended a call to Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, missionary pastor in Pittsburgh, PA, to become their next pastor.

Seminarians Jon Mahtani, Nathan Decker, and Brian Huizinga, were on the pulpit for the first time Sunday, May 24. Seminarian Mahtani was at the Grace PRC in Standale, MI for their morning service; Seminarian Decker was at the Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI that same morning; while Seminarian Huizinga had to wait until the evening service at the Providence PRC in Hudsonville, MI, to speak his first words of edification.

Evangelism Activities

The Randolph, WI PRC sponsored their annual Spring Lecture on May 8. Prof. Ron Cammenga spoke that evening on "The Biblical Doctrine of Creation, in light of the 200th anniversary of Darwin's birth."

The Evangelism Committee

of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI recently began a new program called Faith and Life in conjunction with the Reformed Witness Hour. They are distributing free CDs containing two RWH messages in several area restaurants on a monthly basis, and they have been encouraged by the rapid disappearance of CDs from the display racks. Consequently, Faith is looking to expand their program more widely to include other West Michigan restaurants or businesses.

The Evangelism Society of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI made preparations for their annual Summer Bible Memory Program, beginning June 7. The TULIP must Bloom! This 8-week program gave Georgetown's congregation another opportunity to hide God's Word in their hearts and to become more adept at defending the Reformed truth. The Society will also be promoting the Doctrines of Sovereign Grace (Calvinism) this summer by a series of sermons on TULIP, and, in conjunction with this, the consis-

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

tory sponsored an Adult Sunday School class on different aspects of Calvinism.

Sister Church Activities

On Wednesday and Thursday, June 3-4, Rev. Angus Stewart, pastor of the Covenant PRC in Northern Ireland, gave two speeches at a conference in Lisbon, Portugal, entitled, "Calvin's Battle for the Reformation." The event was sponsored by a Portuguese denomination, the Christian Presbyterian Church of Portugal (*Igreja Christa Presbiteriana de Portugal, ICPP*).

This opportunity for Rev. Stewart and the CPRC came about through the Portuguese translations on their website. Through these translations they came into contact with a man named Nuno Pinheiro, who lives just outside of Lisbon. Mr. Pinheiro and his family came to last summer's BRF Conference. After that conference the Stewarts promised the Pinheiro family that they would visit this summer, and Mr. Pinheiro, a member of the ICPP, arranged for Rev. Stewart to speak at their conference in Lisbon. This was the first time the Stewarts were in Portugal and the first time that Rev. Stewart spoke using a

translator. You may also be interested to know that Mr. Pinheiro has been translating Rev. Haak's messages on the Reformed Witness Hour and then reading and recording his translation, which is broadcast on the radio in Portugal.

Congregation Activities


Rev. Arie den Hartog, pastor of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI, was asked to speak at the Family Camp of the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore. This camp is held yearly and was held this year in Rompin, Malaysia. Rev. den Hartog left on June 8 and returned June 18. At the camp Rev. den Hartog was scheduled to give five messages. This year's camp had the largest enrollment ever. An invitation was also sent to a mission group in Penang, Malaysia, where ministers of Covenant are going once a month to preach.

On Saturday, May 23, members of the First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada were invited to participate in a "Bag-O-Bottles-Pancake Breakfast," to raise money for this summer's Family Conference. Edmonton members could drop off their bottle returns, enjoy a pancake breakfast,

and then make a bottle run with other experienced bottlers. All ages were encouraged to participate. The breakfast was free for all bottle-driver participants. All others were encouraged to make a generous donation.

Rev. Daniel Kleyn preached his farewell sermon as pastor of First PRC in Holland, MI on Sunday evening, May 24. He chose to preach from Exodus 19:4, under the theme, "Jehovah Bearing His Church on Eagles' Wings."

Young Adult Activities

The Young Adult Society of the South Holland, IL PRC hosted a Young Adults Retreat on June 2-4 at the Radisson-Star Plaza Hotel in Merrillville, IN. South Holland's congregation was also invited to attend the speeches featuring Rev. Audred Spriensma, pastor of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC on June 2 and 3. Rev. Spriensma spoke on the theme, "Walking in the Light," and how it applies to one's personal testimony, his witnessing, and letting his light shine. Other featured attractions and activities for the week included the Indiana Dunes, on the shore of Lake Michigan, nearby Chicago attractions, and the hotel pool and hot tub. 

Announcements

NOTICE!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will convene at the Randolph PRC in Randolph, WI, on Wednesday, September 2, 2009, at 8:30 A.M. 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 daregnerus@centurytel.net.

Rev. Douglas Kuiper,
Stated Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

On behalf of the council and congregation of Southeast PRC, we express our Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Jim Swart, in the death of Jim's brother,

BILL SWART.

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

Rev. William Langerak, President
Jim Holstege, Assistant Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Grandville PRC express their Christian sympathy to Stu and Betty Bylsma and family in the death of Betty's brother,

MR. BILL SWART.

"Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psalm 73: 23, 24).

Rev. K. Koole
Asst. Clerk H. De Vries

SEMINARY'S CALVIN CONFERENCE

The Protestant Reformed Churches in America and the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary enthusiastically embrace the legacy of John Calvin. The year 2009 marks the 500th anniversary of Calvin's birth. In commemoration of this event, in thankfulness to God, the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary is sponsoring a Calvin conference. The theme of the conference is: "After 500 Years: John Calvin for Reformed Churches Today." The conference will be held September 3-5, 2009 at the 1st CRC in Byron Center, Michigan and will cover a wide range of pertinent topics and underscore the importance for the contemporary church to maintain Calvin's Calvinism.

We cordially invite one and all to join our celebration. See 500yearsofcalvin.org for details.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With thanks to God, our parents and grandparents,

HILBERT and BEVERLY KUIPER, will celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary on July 6, 2009. We have been blessed by their godly example to our families in their marriage and in life. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it" (Psalm 127:1a).

- ✿ Steve & Rosie Bylsma
Joel, Nathan, Erika, Rebeka
- ✿ Hib & Missy Kuiper
Morgan, Amber, Shelby
- ✿ Jim Kuiper
- ✿ Raphael & Joanna Neff
- ✿ Tom Kuiper
- ✿ Suzie Kuiper

Hudsonville, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With joy and thanksgiving, we will celebrate the anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

EDWARD and KATHLEEN VANDER MEULEN,

on July 12, 2009. We thank the Lord for the blessings He has given them, and us, through their 35 years of marriage. "The mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17).

- ✿ Jeff and Marisa Krosschell
Meagan, Ashley, Jason, Nicole
- ✿ Dave and Cassie VanderMeulen
Julie, Bekah, John
- ✿ Tim and Caitlin VanderMeulen
T.J.
- ✿ Dan and Kara Gritters
Emma

South Holland, Illinois

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council of Faith PRC expresses its Christian sympathy to Deacon Scott Koole in the death of his grandfather,

MR. BILL SWART.

"For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are in the Lord's" (Romans 14:8).

Rev. A. Lanning, President
Andy Brummel, Vice-Clerk

NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 9, 2009 at the Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church, Kalamazoo, Michigan. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 9, 2009.

Jon J. Huiskens
Stated Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council of Faith PRC expresses its Christian sympathy to Elder Peter VanDer Schaaf; Deacon Brian Decker; and Deacon Jon Van Overloop in the death of their father-in-law and grandfather,

MR. THOMAS SPRIENSMA.

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13).

Rev. A. Lanning, President
Andy Brummel, Vice-Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church expresses sincere Christian sympathy to Jessie Spriensma in the loss of her husband and our faithful member,

MR. TOM SPRIENSMA,

whom the Lord took onto His heavenly home on May 17, 2009. May she and her family find comfort in the words of I Corinthians 2:9, "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

Erv Kortering, Secretary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

We rejoice with our parents and grandparents,

GUSTAVE and RAMONA STREYLE, as they celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary, Lord willing, on July 15, 2009.

We are thankful to our covenant God for the guidance He has given them throughout the years. "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (III John 1:4).

- ✿ John and LeAnn Streyle
Adam, Grant, Patrick, Matthew
- ✿ Mike and Elaine Rau
Nathan, Benjamin, Erin, Joel,
Leah, Stefan
Hull, Iowa

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

We rejoice with our parents and grandparents,

BRUCE AND CHERIE JABAAY, who celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary on June 22, 2009. We give thanks to God for them and their covenant instruction to us. We pray the Lord will continue to bless them in the years to come. "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17).

- ✿ Dave and Julie Steenwyk
Benjamin, Jordan, Kedan,
Cameron, Justin, Marissa, Blake
- ✿ Rich and Lisa Jabaay
Brasen
- ✿ Brian Jabaay
- ✿ Joel and Lisa Kooienga
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RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express Christian sympathy to Phil and Helen Vander Wall and their family in the death of their beloved father and grandfather,

MR. THOMAS SPRIENSMA.

May the family be assured of the Lord's promise in I Peter 1:3 and 4: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."

Rev. Carl Haak, President
Gerald Kuiper, Clerk

NOTIFICATION OF CANDIDACY

All Protestant Reformed congregations are hereby informed that the 2009 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America has declared Mr. Cory Griess a candidate for the gospel ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches. Candidate Griess will be eligible for a call on or after July 11, 2009.

Mr. Griess' address is:

3307 Ivanrest Ave. SW
Grandville, MI 49418

Phone: (616) 460-0265

Don Doezeema,
Stated Clerk

July 2009 SUMMER CLASS SERIES

"The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit"
Prof. Herman Hanko

The Person and Work of the Spirit
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The Work of the Spirit in Redemption

At Hope Church, Walker
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Reformed Witness Hour

July 2009		
Date	Topic	Text
July 5	"Give an Account of Your Stewardship"	Luke 16:2
July 12	"The Calling to Work"	Proverbs 6:6-11
July 19	"The Grace of Giving"	II Corinthians 9:5-8
July 26	"Labor Not to Be Rich"	Proverbs 23:3, 4