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Forewarning: There Will Be False Teachers

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of which the way of truth shall be evil spoken of."

II Peter 2: 1, 2

Knowledge is essential. It is absolutely essential for the being and for the well-being of every child of God. This is the knowledge of faith, which holds for truth what God has revealed in His Word. The better that one knows God and what He has revealed, the better will be the spiritual life and experience of that child of God.

Peter has been emphasizing the importance of knowledge

in the first chapter of this, his second, epistle. Grace and peace come through knowledge of God and of Jesus (1:2). What we need for godly living comes through the knowledge of Him who called us (1:3), knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is fruitful and will increase our faith (1:5-8). Peter committed himself to making sure that the new Christians to whom he was writing would continue to be established in the truth (1:12).

Peter assures these new saints that this knowledge of God and the Lord Jesus Christ is not based on fables cunningly devised by himself and the other apostles (1:16). Rather, this knowledge is derived from the sure and certain prophecy of the Scriptures as they were given by God Himself when He moved holy men to write them (1:19-21).

This certain knowledge was and is threatened. In the old dispensation there were false prophets. So also here, Peter affirms that there will be false teachers who will dispense wrong and damning information. Our text

warns about the presence of such false teachers. To be forewarned concerning them is to be forearmed.



"There shall be false teachers among you" even as "there were false prophets also among the people." Long ago Moses warned God's people about false prophets who would call them away from the God who had redeemed them and away from a complete love for and obedience to Him (Deut. 13:1-5). They are instruments of the devil to distract attention from Jehovah. However, Moses shows God's people that these same false prophets were instruments of their sovereign God to test and prove them, and thus to strengthen His people in their cleaving to Him.

The false prophets and the false teachers introduce "heresies." A heresy is a chosen course of thought and action that varies from the true exposition of Scripture. It departs, or differs, from God's Word, which is the measure or standard for all truth.

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Whatever is contrary to the sure word of prophecy is heresy, and whoever promotes it is a false teacher.

There are heresies that are faced by the church today. Many are old...in new garb. They must be faced and answered. There is the old/new heresy that God loves more than those who are saved, and that Jesus died for more than the number saved. The totality of man's depravity is denied when an unnecessary distinction is made between absolute and total depravity. There is the heresy that man is able to choose an offered salvation. There is the heresy that justification requires in some way man's works. There is the denial that the Bible is inspired and infallible, when it is said to be a mixture of the word of God and the word of man.

The Reformed church requires that faithful elders and ministers of the Word alert God's people to false doctrines and errors. "To ward off false doctrines and errors that multiply exceedingly through heretical writings, the ministers and elders shall use the means of teaching, of refutation or warning, and of admonition, as well in the ministry of the Word as in Christian teaching and family-visiting" (Art. 55 of the Church Order).

Peter calls these heresies "damnable," that is, worthy of destruction unto the misery of eternal hell. The use of this word emphasizes the seriousness of departures from the sacred Scriptures and declares that such heresies have their origin in hell, that is, with the devil. And the "ways" of the false teachers are as bad as their heresies. Interestingly, Peter used the same Greek word to describe those ways as he did to describe the heresies—though in the translation the one is "pernicious" and the other "damnable." Clearly, *how* the false teachers present their heresies is as damnable as *what* they present.



What are these pernicious ways of the false teachers? First, Peter says that they bring in their heresies "privily." This means that they do so secretly or with craft. They are not open and forthright, but are deceptive. It is possible that there are some false teachers who do so in ignorance (still inexcusable), but the devil is always aware of his methodology. Peter says they speak with "feigned" words. This is an interesting word in the Greek, for we get the words "plastic" and "plaster" from it. The idea is that their words have a form that looks real, but is not (just like plastic can be made to look like metal or wood). What the false teachers present is made to look as if it is biblical, the real thing, but it is not. The false teachers are deceptively presented by Satan as being very pious. They look like the real thing, claiming the authority of the Bible. But they are wolves in sheep's clothing. And their heresies are presented deceptively.

What adds to the deception is the fact that they are "among you." That is, the false teachers (like the false prophets of old) arise from within the church, not from outside of it. They outwardly confess that they have been purchased by the redeeming blood of Jesus ("the Lord that bought them"). They claim to be servants of the Lord—claiming that Christ died for them.

The way that Peter is inspired to present this shows the seriousness of the activity of the false teachers. They declare that Jesus is the Savior, but their activity as false teachers denies that Jesus is their Savior. Salvation is that Jesus came to redeem unto Himself a people, over whom He is now Lord, so there is always the necessary result that the saved love and obey Him, and that they clearly teach the same. The false teachers say that Jesus is Lord, but what they teach is not in har-

mony with the word of the Lord. They do not teach obedience to His word! And their manner denies that they love Him!

Peter goes on to declare that the motive of the false teachers is "covetousness" and to "make merchandise of" God's people. Their motive is greed. It may not be a greed for money per se, but what they are after is their own honor and advancement in the eyes of men. They are obviously not seeking the honor and glory of God, nor the spiritual good of God's adopted children.

This carnal motive and method results in the way of truth being "evil spoken of." The cause of God's Word, of His Son, and of His church is reviled and reproached—blasphemed. Unbelievers mock when they observe professing Christians seeking their own honor. One does not need faith to be able to identify self-centeredness as contradictory to faith in Jesus Christ. Thus the truth, and God Himself, are mocked. What a terrible embarrassment. What a horrible evil.



But God's people need not fear. The sovereign God is keeping a record, for vengeance is His. He has special care for His dearly beloved, and He will judge severely those who hurt them.

He allows the false teachers to work, not only to test and thus to purify His people, but also to leave the false teachers without excuse. The false teachers "bring upon themselves swift destruction" and "their damnation slumbereth not." It may seem that they get away with their deception and false teaching, but God judges, and His judgment is without delay. Though we might think the judgment should come sooner than it does, God assures us that His timing (like everything He does) is perfect and swift. We need not be dismayed at the apparent success of the false

teachers when there is apostasy. God is holy! He will visit, with a wrath that is always fierce, those who reject Him and His truth and who teach lies. Read the rest of this chapter. It presents one historical example after another that showed how God justly and swiftly judges those who destroy His people and His truth.

Further, let us today be warned not to follow false teachers. Do not be surprised or alarmed when the false teachers appear. Just be on your guard. It is not always easy to detect them.

But no believer is alone. We have each other to help identify and warn.

Positively, let us cling to the precious Word God has given to us. Let us know it in love. Let us demand that it alone be taught to us and to our children. Let us know our wonderful confessions, for they beautifully summarize God's Word, and they clearly identify the false teachers of the past. Remember that there is nothing new under the sun. The old heresies are resurrected by today's false teachers and given

a little different appearance. But our answers to them are already prepared for us in our confessions. So let us commit ourselves to knowing them.

Finally, let us love our Savior and Lord, rendering to Him ardent returns of the love with which He first loved us. And in this love let us listen carefully to Him and His Word. And then, because we love Him so, let us strive to obey Him in every part of our life. What a marked contrast that will be to the false teachers!



Editorial

Prof. Russell Dykstra

After Five Hundred Years...

The year 2009 is the five hundredth anniversary of a most significant event, namely, the birth of one of the greatest men that God ever raised up to serve His church. John Calvin was born July 10, 1509 in Noyon, a city located in the northern region of Picardy, France. This anniversary must be properly observed by Reformed and Presbyterian churches who owe an immense debt to Calvin. To that end, the Protestant Reformed Seminary plans to host a theological conference in September of this year, the Lord willing. The conference title is: "After Five Hundred Years: John Calvin for the Reformed Churches Today."

The title expresses our conviction that the work and doctrine of John Calvin are crucially important for Reformed and Presbyterian churches in 2009. It would be well nigh impossible to exaggerate the significance of the reformer's work. According to God's sovereign determination, Calvin

set the course for the true church of Jesus Christ. God equipped the stalwart Martin Luther to raze the apostate church of Rome and to uncover the true cornerstone of God's church—Jesus Christ. God then used Calvin to build rightly on that foundation—to build the church that endures to the present day. Jesus Christ preserves His church. In the sixteenth century, He made Luther and Calvin mighty instruments to restore His church to the old paths, the good ways.

Consider just a few of the ways that John Calvin, as Christ's chosen vessel, reformed the church. Start with theology. Calvin wrote the doctrinal work of the Reformation that excelled all in value and lasting significance—the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. This summary and defense of the Protestant faith is the supreme systematic theology of the Reformation, rightly described as its most eloquent theological statement. It is clear, orderly, antithetical, and above

all, biblical. Calvin's *Institutes* raised the ensign for the Reformed truth, and believers yet today study it with great profit.

Calvin led the way in doctrinal purity and clarity. On such doctrines as the church, Scripture, predestination, justification, sanctification, and so many more, Calvin faithfully expounded the Scriptures. He set the right course for the history of doctrine to the present day.

Calvin's power as a theologian is rooted in his exegetical ability. Calvin was a man of the Word. He preached thousands of sermons—sermons based on solid, faithful work with the Bible, for Calvin is the prince of exegetes. His sermons and commentaries continue to instruct and edify hundreds of years after he wrote them.

With his clear exegesis, profound theological understanding, and firm grasp of church history, Calvin was prepared by God to reform the church in many areas. Worship was of primary impor-

tance to Calvin, and he developed a liturgy in harmony with the biblical (regulative) principle, namely, that only that which the Bible commands may be included in the worship service. The form and elements found in faithful Presbyterian and Reformed churches yet today have been largely shaped by John Calvin's writings.

Calvin reformed church government. His church ordinances (a church order) restored the lost offices of elder and deacon to the church. Due to Calvin's influence, Reformed and Presbyterian churches today reject hierarchy, refuse state intervention, and insist on catechism classes for the youth of the flock. Unless they have forsaken their heritage, their current church orders reflect the solid work of Calvin.

Calvin's polemics set forth the truth and annihilated error, and thus benefited the church of his day, and all subsequent ages. He defended the truth against Rome, the Anabaptists, the antinomians, the Lutherans, and more. His exposition on the Lord's Supper finally calmed the storm in the Reformed church world on the presence of Christ in the sacrament. His masterful treatise on predestination demolishes Arminianism of every stripe.

The Presbyterian and Reformed confessions also testify to Calvin's lasting influence. The three Reformed confessions adopted in the Netherlands were directly or indirectly impacted by Calvin. The authors of the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism all studied under or had contact with Calvin. Both confessions bear the mark of Calvin's theology. The Canons of Dordt are the embodiment of Calvin's doctrine of sovereign grace, so much so that the five heads of the Canons are known as the five points of Calvinism (TULIP). The Westminster Standards likewise carry the imprint of Calvin's theology.

That is just a beginning. Calvin's influence is significant in many more areas. God used John Calvin to reform, that is, restore, the church, bringing her back to the Bible in doctrine and practice.¹

That is why John Calvin's work and teaching are relevant for today. The planned conference intends to emphasize this. The conference is not intended to praise Calvin. Nor is it merely a historical study of the man and his significance. Rather, the speeches will demonstrate how the doctrines espoused by Calvin are of enduring significance for the church in the twenty-first century. They should expose significant departures from Calvin, as well as demonstrate doctrinal development beyond Calvin. The conference is for Reformed believers who love Reformed theology and its application to life today. Not light fare, but not ivory-tower by any means. The speeches and speakers are listed below.

The conference is set for September 3-5 in the spacious First Christian Reformed Church in Byron Center, Michigan. This date enables the delegates of Classis West (meeting September 2 in the Chicago area) to attend the conference. It is hoped that many more Reformed people will arrange their summer vacations so as to allow them to attend.

Two other related activities will add to the conference's worth. The three Protestant Reformed high schools (Heritage in Dyer, Indiana; Trinity in Hull, Iowa; and Covenant in Grand Rapids, Michigan) have committed to bringing to the conference student-created displays. The projects will cover the history of the Reformation in various Eu-

ropean countries. These exhibits will be on display through the whole conference.

In addition, the seminary is sponsoring a writing contest on various aspects of John Calvin's teaching. The contest has three levels. The theme for junior high (ages 12-14) is "What does it mean to be a Calvinist?" High schoolers (ages 15-18) are invited to write on "The Protestant Reformed Churches' Debt to John Calvin." Post-high school writers (ages 19-25) can sink their teeth into the issue of evolution—"The Theory of Evolution and Calvin's Teaching on Creation and Divine Providence." Any serious writer will grow by the writing of the essay, and some of the essays certainly will be published. The top three essays in each group will also receive significant prize awards. A panel of teachers has agreed to be the judges of the papers. More details will be forthcoming.

The conference is open to all. I stress this. All who love the truth of the Reformation are heartily invited. And those who love that truth, will enjoy the conference. It promises to be profitable.



"Calvin as Model
for Reformed Ministers"
Prof. Barrett Gritters

"Calvin as Church Reformer"
Prof. Russell Dykstra

"Calvin as Expositor and
Preacher of Holy Scripture"
Rev. Steven Key

"Calvin's Doctrine of Justification"
Rev. Angus Stewart

"Calvin's Struggle
for Church Discipline"
Prof. Ronald Cammenga

"Calvin's Doctrine of the Covenant"
Prof. David Engelsma

"Calvin's Doctrine of
Predestination"
Rev. Chris Connors

¹ *SB* readers interested in more on Calvin's significance are referred to the special *SB* issue on John Calvin, Vol. 80, No. 2. (Available at: <http://sb.rfpa.org/>)

An Introduction to Proverbs (4)

Wisdom as "She"

That wisdom in Proverbs is identified with Christ is something not at all difficult to prove. One objection to that identification might be that wisdom is also repeatedly described as "she" or "her" in the book (1:20, 21; 2:4; 3:15, 16, 17, 18; 4:6, 8, 9; 8:1, 2, 3; 9:1, 2, 3, 4, etc.), and is even referred to as a sister and a kinswoman (7:4). There are several reasons for this, and the feminine reference must not take away from the important truth that wisdom is *Christ*.

The immediate reason for these references is that the word *wisdom* in Hebrew is a feminine word. It is difficult to appreciate that in English, for we have few such words in our language, but many words that refer to inanimate things are masculine or feminine in Hebrew. The closest we come to that in English is in referring to an automobile or ship as "she." Because the word is feminine in Hebrew, anyone who was talking about wisdom in that language would automatically refer to it as "she." In most passages that refer to wisdom, therefore, the word *she* could be replaced in English by *it* or *he* without changing the meaning.

That wisdom is a feminine word in Hebrew is not a com-

plete explanation, however, for there are some passages in Proverbs where wisdom is actually characterized as a woman. In chapter 7:4 wisdom is called the sister and kinswoman to whom we must be married. In chapter 5:15-19 we read,

Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well.

Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets.

Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee.

Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth.

Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love.

These words can and ought to be taken as a reference to godly marriage and to faithfulness in marriage, but the wife to whom we must be faithful is first of all wisdom. That verses 15-19 are speaking of wisdom is suggested in verses 1 and 2 of the chapter,

My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding:

That thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge.

It is even clearer from the comparison that is made in the chapter between the wife to whom we must remain married and the strange woman, who represents

not only the sin of adultery, but all sin.

Sinful folly in the first nine chapters of Proverbs is warned against under the figure of a foolish and clamorous and promiscuous woman whom we must avoid for the safety of our souls (2:16-19; cf. also 5:20-23; 7:5-27):

To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words;

Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God.

For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead.

None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.

This comparison between sin and the foolish woman invites a similar comparison between wisdom and the godly woman. The first nine chapters of Proverbs are built around that comparison.

The two women, the foolish and whorish woman and the wise and virtuous woman, represent sin and grace, Belial and Christ, the flesh and the Spirit, wickedness and holiness. We must avoid the one and seek the other. We must have the closest possible relationship with the one and no relationship with the other: that is the message of Proverbs.

That wisdom is represented by a virtuous woman and folly by an adulterous woman does not mean that the passages that exhort us to seek and marry the

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Previous article in this series: February 15, 2009, p. 226.

virtuous woman and avoid the whorish woman have nothing to do with actual marriage and the actual sin of adultery. Much of the fatherly advice in chapters 1-9 of Proverbs concerns these two women, and that advice can and ought to be taken in a literal sense. There is no more graphic and straightforward description of the blessedness of Christian marriage to be found anywhere in Scripture than the description found in chapter 2:15-19.

Yet there must be more, for Proverbs clearly speaks of a higher relationship than that of marriage, that is, of our relationship to God in Christ and of the necessity of avoiding all sin in our relationship to God. In fact, our relationship to God and the marriage relationship are connected. Marriage is a reflection of our relationship to God, as Ephesians 5:22-33 teaches, where Paul, having spoken at length of marriage, adds: "I speak concerning Christ and the church."

For this same reason sin is described as spiritual adultery because it involves unfaithfulness to God. Jeremiah describes Judah's idolatry as adultery in Jeremiah 3:9:

And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks.

This close relation between physical and spiritual unfaithfulness means that sexual sin and unfaithfulness to God's command regarding marriage are the inevitable result of spiritual unfaithfulness. Romans 1 makes that point when it shows how God gives over to all sorts of sexual uncleanness, including homosexuality, those who are unfaithful to Him.

Proverbs 6:37-45 demonstrates the same truth by pointing out the unique character of sexual sin.

There can be a reason for theft if a man is hungry, but there is never a reason for adultery, for "whoso commiteth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding." The only explanation for such sins is that man in his unfaithfulness to God will always be unfaithful in his earthly relationships as well. And these earthly relationships will always fail, as we see happening all around us, when we are unfaithful to God.

By the same token, faithfulness to God leads to faithfulness in marriage and is the foundation for faithfulness in marriage. True love for one's spouse is love for God. John makes that point repeatedly in his first epistle. A person cannot love others if he does not love God:

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? (4:20).

The parallel between our relationship to one another in marriage and our relationship to wisdom (which is really our relationship to God) is central to an understanding of the first nine chapters of Proverbs. We may learn about marriage and about the sins that destroy marriage in Proverbs, but the first concern of the book is not our relationship to one another, but our relationship to God in Christ. This makes Proverbs the gospel and the wise counsel of Proverbs more than mere moralism. At the same time, having understood that our relationship to wisdom must be as close as possible, we find the application of that truth in what Proverbs says about marriage and

about every other human relationship.

Wisdom as Christ

All this comes down to three important truths that are woven into the first nine chapters of the book. The first and most important truth is that wisdom is Christ, shown most clearly in Proverbs 8:22-36. The second, that He is the only-begotten and eternal Son who came in our flesh. This is taught in every passage in which the Father speaks to His Son, and again in the description of wisdom that is found in the last part of chapter 8. The third truth is that wisdom is also the wise woman to whom we must be faithful and who is the opposite of the foolish and clamorous woman who

represents sin and who must always be avoided. This third truth is stated most plainly in chapter 7:4: "Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman."

This is somewhat confusing at first. That wisdom is Christ and that He is the Son of God is plain and easy to understand, but when wisdom is further portrayed as a wise woman whom we must court and to whom we must be married, then the matter becomes somewhat confusing. How can wisdom be all of these?

In reading these first nine chapters and the comparison between the wise and the foolish woman, we must to some extent ignore the fact that wisdom is presented as a woman. Certainly it must not suggest that Christ is anything but the most masculine of men. He is eternally the *head* of the church and of all things. He is the eternal *Son* of God. He is the bridegroom of the church and king of the nations. The feminine portrayal of wisdom, who is Christ, in Proverbs, must

...faithfulness to God leads to faithfulness in marriage and is the foundation for faithfulness in marriage.

therefore, to some extent, be set aside as the book is read, and the truth that we are required to have the closest possible relationship to Him as wisdom must stand out.

That is the point of the picture that is drawn in the wise woman. We must have as close a relationship to Him as the living wisdom of God as in any marriage relationship. Our relationship to Him must be intimate, it must be permanent, it must be joyful, and it must be governed by the Word of God, just as is every true marriage. What seems a confusing mix of genders must not obscure the fact that Proverbs is all about our

relationship to Him and that this relationship governs every other earthly relationship—between husband and wife, between father and son, between man and man.

We must be always

holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God (Col. 2:19).

Our confession must be that of Paul in Philippians 3:8-10:

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency

of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death....

Then we have the kind of relationship to wisdom that is recommended in Proverbs. 

In His Fear

Rev. Daniel Kleyn

Holy Pilgrims

The apostle Peter's viewpoint in his first epistle is that we, the children of God's grace, are pilgrims and strangers on this earth. This is so because of God's decree of election. He has chosen us to be those whose home is not here on earth, but in heaven. We do not belong here below, nor do we long to stay here on earth. We live in hope. We are hopeful pilgrims who are eager for the blessedness of heaven.

The hope that characterizes us as pilgrims must come to expression in our lives. This means there is a certain earthly life that is consistent with and that follows from the fact that we live in the hope of heaven. In its broadest terms, that life is to live antitheti-

cally. As pilgrims on this earth, we are to be separate and distinct from the world of the ungodly. Since this world is not our home, we must never try to make it that. It should always be obvious that we do not belong and are not comfortable here on earth.

The main rule by which pilgrims live is holiness. We who long to be in glory do not live as we please on this earth. We do not simply desire heavenly perfection as a future blessing, but we already strive after it. And it is that striving to be holy that constitutes the antithetical walk of pilgrims on this earth. We must be holy as God Himself is holy (1 Peter 1:15).

Since this world is not our home, we must never try to make it that.

That God is holy means He is separate from all sin. He is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all. He is transcendent, highly exalted above all sinners and above this world, which is tainted by and under the curse of sin. He is sinless and pure. He cannot and does not sin. There are no flaws or defects in God. He is personally pure and holy. And He hates sin. He abhors it. He will not and cannot tolerate it. And, therefore, He also punishes those who commit it.

That God is holy also means that God is devoted to Himself and His own glory and praise. God loves holiness, and therefore loves Himself. God rejoices in holiness, and therefore rejoices in Himself. As the holy God, He seeks His own glory. He will not give that glory to another. His

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honor is the goal of all that He has done, all that He is doing, and all that He eternally will do.

In light of all this, holiness for us is that we conform ourselves to that standard. We must be holy as God is holy.

Holiness in us means we separate ourselves from all sin. We always hate and never tolerate iniquity. We despise all evil, and strive with all our might to be pure and undefiled. Sin must not have a place in our hearts, nor in our lives. Sin must not be loved, but hated. Sin must not be continued in, but turned from. Sin must not be flirted with, but fought against. Sin must not be clung to, but forsaken.

Positively, we devote ourselves to God. We consecrate ourselves and all we have and do to Him. Holiness means this: not doing your own will, but His; not pleasing yourself, but Him; not being devoted to yourself, but to Him. Holiness means doing all things for God.



To be holy is not a simple matter. The reason for this is sinfulness within. In our flesh dwells no good thing. That sinful flesh is unholy, and loves to be so. And it is a flesh that is characterized, especially, by sinful lusts.

Lusts are inner cravings. Those inner cravings are natural to us. Our flesh craves after all sorts of things. We lust after riches, success, popularity, and pleasure. We want these things, and we are driven by our lusts to do whatever it takes to get them. We are even willing to lie and cheat and steal and murder and commit adultery in order to satisfy our lusts.

This is something that characterizes the world around us. The ungodly live in order to satisfy their inner cravings. They allow nothing to get in the way of that. They use every part of their bod-

ies to that end. Their ears listen to profanity. Their eyes look at pornography. Their mouths consume excessive quantities of alcohol. Their tongues speak evil. Their hands and feet lead them headlong into every sinful way.

The pursuit of holiness means we must fight against and never give in to our lusts. We must hate all sin, and flee from all sinful use of our bodies. That requires hating and fighting first of all against sin at its source, within ourselves. If we fail to do so, our sinful cravings will lead us into sinful words and deeds.



It seems, in today's sinful world, that especially one lust is allowed to rule: the sexual. Premarital sex, homosexuality, immodest dress, and so on, are all permitted and encouraged. For that reason, we do well to give some extra attention to this aspect of our calling to be holy.

Sexual impurity and unholiness are rampant in our day. Sexual sins are promoted, both for the single and the married. The seventh commandment is completely ignored, even boldly rejected.

The only thing that concerns the ungodly today is to have supposedly "safe sex." With reckless abandon, men and women and even children give themselves over to these sinful pleasures, to the terrible ruin of marriages, families, children, and souls.

The pilgrim people of God are pressured into pursuing sexual pleasures. Perhaps this is especially true of Christian young people. They are often tempted to give up the battle to remain sexually holy and pure.

The temptation is powerful and strong. The spirit is willing to fight, but the flesh is weak. One easily loses his head, throws all caution to the wind, and acts according to the lusts of his flesh.

In light of all this, the calling to sexual holiness and purity is urgent. Both single and married pilgrims need to hear God's Word concerning it, and to hear it often. Remain sexually pure. As soon as such lusts and desires arise, kill them. Say with Joseph, who was confronted with this very sin, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9)

What adds to the urgency of this command is how destructive sexual sins always are. The consequences are terrible. Homes and families are shattered and scattered. Lives of adults and children are ruined. The loss of sexual purity has a lasting, detrimental effect on one's life, an effect that can be overcome only by an almighty work of a merciful God.

How foolish we can be—a few moments of sinful pleasure in exchange for a lifetime of heartache, guilt, misery, and shame. May we heed the call to be holy in this

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area of our lives.



It is not only very difficult for us to be holy; in reality it is impossible. God's standard is high, for He requires perfection. He requires something we cannot attain. Our sinful nature is totally depraved and corrupt, and even after God saves us, that sinful nature remains. Thus, while God's holiness is shared with us as one of His communicable attributes, that holiness is very limited in

us compared to God. In us exists and remains, throughout our earthly lives, much unholiness.

God Himself is the only possibility of holiness in us. I Peter 1:15 points out that the God who commands us to be holy is the God who has called us. He has called us out of darkness into light. He has called us out of the darkness of our former lusts into the light of a holy walk before Him. He has called us away

from the lusts of our flesh unto a sanctified walk as saints. He has made us pilgrims and strangers. He has set us apart for Himself.

That call of God is not simply words. It is powerful, efficacious, and sovereign. It comes to us through the preached Word and changes us within. The image of God is restored in us, which includes true holiness. We are equipped to imitate our holy, heavenly Father.

Not only are we able, but we also want to. The Spirit gives us the desire. We are children who want to be like our heavenly Father. God works in us in such a way that the calling to be holy is not simply a demand we face, but a desire we have, and a goal we seek.

This then is our fundamental calling as pilgrims and strangers on this earth: Be holy as God is holy! May we be faithful to it.



Ministering to the Saints

Rev. Douglas Kuiper

The Congregation's Support of the Ministry of the Gospel (1)

I digress.

My articles in this rubric focus on the office of deacon. The deacons' work is to care for the poor and the needy. In various ways, but primarily by putting money in the collection plate when the collection for benevolence is taken, the congregation supports the work of the deacons.

So the support of the ministry of the gospel by contributing to the General and Building Funds of a congregation *differs from* the support of the work of the diaconate. Even though the men who take the collections for the

support of the gospel ministry are usually deacons, they take these collections not because it is a work that pertains to their office, but on behalf of the church's council, which oversees the financial and earthly aspects of the ministry of the gospel.

But I digress with a purpose.

First, having just finished considering the congregation's calling to support her deacons by giving to the Benevolent Fund, we consider now the question of the extent to which the principles we discussed apply to other aspects of our giving.

Second, the subject is timely because, at the time of this writing, congregations have just held their annual meetings and approved their annual budgets. Perhaps one man voted against it, thinking he could not and would not pay his equal share. Perhaps another voted for it, supposing

that the congregation would easily raise the necessary monies, but not considering his own obligation to pay his part of the budget.

So the questions arise: Is it the obligation of the congregation to support the ministry of the gospel? Is this the obligation of *each member* of the congregation? And is it the obligation of each member to support this work *equally*, so that the "per family" rate of the budget is not merely a guideline for giving, but an assessment or obligation laid upon each family or individual to give the specified amount?

In this and a future article, God willing, we will demonstrate that the answer to each of these questions must be "Yes."

What the support of the ministry of the gospel involves

In speaking of the support

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of the ministry of the gospel, we specifically have in mind *financial* support. It is true that the support of this ministry includes the godly encouragement of the minister (Col. 4:17), prayers for the minister (Eph. 6:19), and other tokens of love and expressions of honor. But for our present purpose, the support of the ministry of the gospel involves contributing financially to the funds out of which the church pays her bills.

This support of the ministry of the gospel involves, but is not limited to, the support of the minister of the gospel. Without question, the work of the minister is an essential aspect of the ministry of the gospel, so that to support the ministry of the gospel includes paying the minister's salary. But the support of the ministry of the gospel also involves provision for pulpit supply, in the case of a vacant congregation, or in the event the minister is absent. And the support of the ministry of the gospel properly involves supporting the cause of evangelism, which is the ministry of the gospel to those near the congregation geographically, but outside it.

Added to this, the support of the ministry of the gospel involves providing a place to worship. Whether the church's worship place is owned or rented, having a place to worship is essential to the ministry of the gospel. So the paying of rent or mortgage, utilities, and janitor's wage is part of the support of the gospel ministry.

Then, the ministry of the gospel includes the work missionaries do on behalf of our churches; the work of the professors in our seminary; the support of students for the ministry; the publication of catechism books and Psalters; and other similar endeavors that the churches in common undertake.

In sum, the support of the

gospel ministry involves contributing to what we in the Protestant Reformed Churches in America commonly call the "General Fund" and, in those congregations in which such a fund is found in addition to the General Fund, the "Building Fund"—for out of these funds the ministry of the gospel is supported.

The congregation's obligation to support this ministry

That the congregation is obligated to support the ministry of the gospel is hardly a debatable issue. She must do so.

None other may. The spiritual right and authority to pay the ministers' salaries, support the denominational causes of missions and training of ministers, and provide and maintain a building in which the church may worship belong to the church alone. The authority and responsibility to do so does not fall to society as a whole, nor to civil government. The reader who is familiar with the concept of a state church, and with the history of Protestant churches in Europe in the centuries following the great Protestant Reformation, knows

the dangers of permitting the civil government to support the ministry of the gospel. If civil government supports the gospel ministry, civil government may also, and will also, govern the gospel ministry—a prerogative that God assigns only to the church, and that the church exercises through the office of elder.

Let us not quickly pass over this point. Such will be the rela-

tionship of the political entity of antichrist's kingdom to the religious entity of the false church, that either the church will rule the state, or the state will rule the church, or a combination of both. In fact, God assigns authority to civil government in civil matters, and to church government in spiritual matters. Any attempt of the government to help support the ministry of the gospel must be rejected. No matter how appealing the offered support might be, no matter how poor the church, no matter what she finds herself unable to do because of limited resources, the church may not receive financial support from the civil government.



That the support of the ministry of the gospel is the obligation of the congregation herself is the teaching of the Scriptures.

In the Old Testament, God commanded the Israelites to bring their tithes, their freewill offerings, and their half-shekels for the support of the ministry of the gospel as carried out in the tabernacle and temple.

When Jesus sent out His disciples by twos, and

later the seventy, He told them to provide "neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat" (Matt. 10:9-10; and cf. Luke 10:4, 7).

The apostle Paul reminded the church of this in I Corinthians 9:14, saying that "the Lord ordained that they which preach

The spiritual right and authority to pay the ministers' salaries, support the denominational causes of missions and training of ministers, and provide and maintain a building in which the church may worship belong to the church alone.

the gospel should live of the gospel,” and gave this as a reason why it would not be improper for him to cease working, and expect his support from the church. He grounded his reasoning in the law of God: “Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn” (Deut. 25:4 as quoted in I Cor. 9:9).

From the viewpoint of the *minister's right* to such support, I Corinthians 9:6-14 teaches that the church must support the ministry of the gospel. In I Timothy 5:17-18, Paul teaches the same from the viewpoint of the *church's obligation*, again quoting Deuteronomy 25:4: “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture saith....”

Reformed churches have historically understood the support of the gospel ministry to be the calling of the congregation. Any practice to the contrary has been a departure from the stated and confessional position of Reformed churches. The Synod of Dordt, 1618-1619, in drawing up the Church Order that Reformed churches have used since, stated in Article 11 of that document: “On the other hand, the consistory, as representing the congregation, shall also be bound to provide for the proper support of its ministers....”



The reason why this calling falls to the congregation is simply this, that she is the beneficiary of the ministry of the gospel.

Spiritually, this is so. God commands the church to support the ministry, because He has provided the ministry of the gospel for her benefit. Insofar as the gospel is administered, the members of the church are strengthened in faith, and defended and preserved from spiritual dangers. Society does not benefit from

such; civil government does not; true believers benefit from the ministry of the gospel.

Even from an earthly viewpoint, this is so. As a business man hires employees to help him in his business, and thus obligates himself to support them, so the church calls a pastor to preach to her, sends out missionaries, and calls men to be professors in her seminary, thus obligating herself to support these men.

The obligation of every member

Is it sufficient that the congregation as a whole supports this work, or is every member of the congregation required to support it individually? The latter is the case. None may justify withholding his own support of the gospel ministry by saying that, in the end, the bills will be paid without his help.

In saying that this is the obligation of *every* member, I recognize that minor children and wives or mothers who devote all their time and energy to the home are unable to support the gospel ministry by their own earnings. Our churches recognize this, too, by the common practice of assessing a “per family” rate for the General and Building Funds. But the wife and minor children are represented by the father and husband; when the head of household supports the ministry of the gospel, he does so on behalf of every member of his household.

In saying that this is the obligation of every member, then, we mean it is the obligation of every head of household, and of every other mature individual

with means, or every other individual not represented by his or her father. When a young man or woman reaches maturity and has an income, he or she must consider it to be his or her calling to support the ministry of the gospel.

I say as much on the basis of principles set forth in Scripture.

In the Old Testament, every head of household, rich and poor alike, was required to bring his tithes to the temple. Every individual male member twenty years of age (mature!) and older, rich and poor alike, had to bring his half-shekel for the service of the tabernacle (Ex. 30:14-15). In his epistle to the Corinthians, Paul addressed not only the church as a whole, but the individual members “that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints,” and indicated that the doctrine set forth in the epistle was intended for “all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours” (I Cor. 1:2). That Paul wrote to Timothy as a mature individual indicates that the teachings of that epistle are for the benefit of all mature believers, and the exhortations are to be taken to heart by all.

Every Reformed believer confesses this personally. The fourth commandment binds every child of God. And the Heidelberg Catechism sets forth the positive implications of this commandment for each child of God, when it says that in keeping this commandment, “the ministry of the gospel and the schools [must] be maintained.”

Every individual member of the church must support the min-

When a young man or woman reaches maturity and has an income, he or she must consider it to be his or her calling to support the ministry of the gospel.

istry of the gospel, because every member benefits from it.

Principles of giving

In an article appearing in the October 1, 2008 issue of the *Standard Bearer* (p. 13 of this present volume), we examined various principles of giving to the support of the diaconate. Some of these principles apply also with regard to giving to the support of the gospel ministry. We are to give to the support of the gospel ministry in the same manner as we are to give for the relief of the poor: with sincerity and simplicity of heart, willingly and cheer-

fully, trusting God to supply our needs. The support of the causes of God's kingdom must be our first priority; we give to these causes, trusting God to put food on our tables and clothing on our backs. Jesus reassured His disciples that God would indeed do so, when He said: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). This promise must encourage us to carry out our obligation in supporting the gospel ministry.

But in our October 1, 2008 article, we also addressed the question of how much to give to

the relief of the poor. We saw that the Bible teaches that we are to give generously to this cause, but that God permits us to give as He has prospered us. One gives more, having more; another gives less, having less; thus both serve God faithfully in their support of the work of the deacons.

Is the same true with regard to the gospel ministry? Every member of the church must support this cause; but must all do it equally, or may each give a different amount, as God has prospered him?

This question we will answer next time, God willing. 

All Around Us

Rev. Audred Spriensma

The Religious Case for Gay Marriage

The title for this article comes from the cover story of *Newsweek* magazine December 15, 2008. It included lots of glossy pictures of married bliss of young and old gays and lesbians. "What," you say, "a liberal American magazine is going to try to make a religious case? They are going to make an argument from the Bible?" When one starts reading the story, he will immediately see that the author of the story, Lisa Miller, is obviously one who has little or no use for religious conservatives or for the Scriptures that we hold dear.

Looking to the Old Testament, Ms. Miller quickly discounts it. She begins, "Shall we look to Abraham, the great patriarch, who slept with his servant when he discovered his beloved wife Sarah was infertile? Or to Jacob, who fathered children with four

different women (two sisters and their servants)? Abraham, Jacob, David, Solomon and the kings of Judah and Israel—all these fathers and heroes were polygamists."

Miller then argues that the New Testament model is hardly better. Why? "Jesus himself was single and preached an indifference to earthly attachments—especially family. The apostle Paul (also single) regarded marriage as an act of last resort for those unable to contain their animal lust. 'It is better to marry than to burn with passion,' says the apostle, in one of the most lukewarm endorsements of a treasured institution ever uttered." The author finally, after this tirade, asks, "Would any contemporary heterosexual married couple...turn to the Bible as a how-to-script?" And her answer is, "Of course not, yet the religious opponents of gay marriage would have it be so."

In this battle over gay marriage, California recently legalized it, but a ballot initiative in November amended the Califor-

nia constitution to prohibit it. The worst of it is what Lisa Miller calls the "religious-rhetoric slinging" that enters into the full scale war. She laments that, sadly, all the religious rhetoric seems to be on the side of the gay-marriage opponents, who use Scripture as the foundation for their objections.

What is the religious argument? Miller quotes a United Methodist minister, Rev. Richard Hunter: "The Bible and Jesus define marriage as between one man and one woman. The church cannot condone or bless same-sex marriages because this stands in opposition to Scripture and our tradition."

How does Miller react? She has two responses: 1. "While the Bible and Jesus say many important things about love and family, neither explicitly defines marriage as between one man and one woman." 2. "As the examples above illustrate, no sensible modern person wants marriage—theirs or anyone else's—to look in its particulars anything like what the Bible describes."

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The gist of Miller's cover story for *Newsweek* is that while opponents of gay marriage often cite Scripture, what the Bible teaches about love argues for the other side. She writes that "the Bible is a living document, powerful for more than 2,000 years because its truths speak to us even as we change through history. In that light, Scripture gives us no good reason why gays and lesbians should not be civilly and religiously married—and a number of excellent reasons why they should."

We need to look first of all at her attitude toward the Scriptures: "a living document, powerful for more than 2,000 years because its truths speak to us even as we change through history." What is a living document? What does it mean when she says that its truths speak to us? What does it mean that the Scriptures speak even as we change through history? Second, we will have to look at the case she tries to make. What is her argument? And finally, as those who have been given grace and faith to hear what the Spirit has to say to His church, we will have to make the case why such illicit sexual relationships are an abomination to God and should also be to those who love Him and honor His Word.

First, there is Miller's view of Scripture. Quoting liberal theologians, she insists that "the Bible was written by men and not handed down in its leather bindings by God." In Old Testament days, marriage was the arrangement between "one man and as many women as he could pay for." The verse "Therefore shall a man leave his mother and father; and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh" was written by people for whom polygamy was a way of life. As for the text "Be fruitful and multiply" as an argument that homosexual couples cannot procreate, the Bible authors simply could

never have imagined the brave new world of international adoption and assisted-reproductive technology. The "truths" of the Bible, which can only speak to us who change through history, are relative truths that need to be reinterpreted and reapplied by each culture and age. Jesus is pictured as merely a man who was unmarried and who preached a radical kind of family, a caring community of believers whose bond in God superseded all blood ties. The apostle Paul is written off as one who was unmarried and who "echoed the Christian Lord's lack of interest in matters of the flesh." Paul's condemnation of homosexuality is said to be really a critique of the worst kind of wickedness: self-delusion, violence, promiscuity, and debauchery. Quoting the scholar Neil Elliott in his book *The Arrogance of Nations*, Miller declares that "Paul is not talking about what we call homosexuality at all." Rather, supposedly, Paul is referring to the depravity of the Roman emperors, the craven habits of Nero and Caligula, not at all to anything like gay love or gay marriage. "He is speaking of really, really violent people who meet their end and are judged by God." So Miller argues, "Religious objections to gay marriage are rooted not in the Bible at all, then, but in custom and tradition...a personal discomfort with gay sex that transcends theological argument."

Miller writes: "A mature view of scriptural authority requires us, as we have in the past, to move beyond literalism. The Bible was written for a world so unlike our own, it's impossible to apply its rules, at face value, to ours.... Most of us no longer

heed Leviticus on haircuts or blood sacrifices. Why would we still accept its stance on homosexuality?...We cannot look to the Bible as a marriage manual, but we can read it for universal truths as we struggle toward a more just future."

What is this more "just future"? Acceptance for all. Don't leave anyone out of the sacred tent. Reach out to everyone, especially those on the margins. Misusing Scripture, she quotes Paul: "There is neither Greek nor Jew, slave nor free, male or female, for you are all one in Jesus Christ." The argument then is that the Bible is "bent toward inclusiveness." "The practice of inclusion, even in defiance of social convention, the reaching out to outcasts, the emphasis on togetherness and community over and against chaos, depravity, indifference—all these biblical values argue for gay marriage.... Jesus does not want people to be lonely and sad." This is the case made by the world and the

liberal church. It is a religious case, the religion of humanism.

A Christian religious case made regarding the matter of gay marriage is totally different. It is a scriptural case. The Bible is not the words of men, tied to a particular cul-

ture and age, but it is the living and abiding Word of God. The child of God by faith bows to the authoritative, infallible Word of God in all humility and obedience. He that created mankind said, "It is not good that man should be alone, I will make a helpmeet for him." Showing Adam the animal kingdom and the pairing of the animals, God brought to Adam a woman, Eve, from his own flesh. This was the first marriage, a marriage made not by humans, but by God the

The Bible is not the words of men, tied to a particular culture and age, but it is the living and abiding Word of God.

Creator. And it was good. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." This is the marriage that is pleasing to God. This is the marriage that the Lord Jesus Christ highly honored with His presence in Cana of Galilee. This is the marriage in which a man and woman, avoiding all uncleanness and evil lusts, may live with a good and quiet conscience.

Sexual alliances outside of this marriage of one man and one woman are nothing but fornication and adultery that defile, a defilement that Romans 1 says is "uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves." It is evidence of the wrath of God, who gives up such people unto vile affections: for "even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise

also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another: men with men working that which is unseemly (shameful), and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.... God gave them over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not convenient (fitting)" (Rom. 1:26-28). Such perversity is the judgment of God, and it incurs His wrath. As God destroyed the Sodomites of old with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, so He will also in His wrath destroy today's Sodomites and their culture.

We and our children live in this godless age. Our leaders, educational systems, and places of employment seek to bring acceptance, tolerance, and approval to this depravity in the name of political correctness. Where do we stand? What do we teach our children and their chil-

dren regarding this issue? The religious case, based solely on God's unchanging Word, is that gay marriage is detestable, gross immorality, perversion, and debased lust! And what is its end? "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 6:9, 10). The religious case is that all of us need to know our sin, hate and flee from it, be washed and sanctified in the blood of Jesus Christ. That is the religious case that we need to make to those who are deluded and enslaved in their sin. It is all-inclusive. This is the only way to be accepted by God. This is the way to a life of joy and happiness. 

When Thou Sittest in Thine House

Rev. Arie denHartog

Spiritual Conversations in Our Covenant Homes

The daily conversation in the covenant home will do much to determine the character of this home—whether or not it is in reality a covenant home.

This is beautifully illustrated by the passage we have been considering in this rubric for some time. Moses the man of God commanded the Lord's people

in Deuteronomy 6 to teach the statutes and commandments and judgments of the Lord in their homes from day to day. In the whole book of Deuteronomy Moses urges upon God's covenant people the great importance of keeping the law of God in their daily lives. God's people will experience the great blessing of the Lord in the way of keeping the law of God. But Moses also warned about the fearful curse of God that shall come upon those that forsake the law of God and forget the Lord, the covenant

God of His people. In the way of keeping the law of God, Israel will be a peculiar treasure unto the Lord, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation. They will be a wise and understanding people, above all the peoples of the earth. God will be with His people as their God. He will dwell among them as with no other people, and will be near unto them, guiding and protecting them from their enemies and preserving and keeping them from all evil. (See Exodus 19 and Deuteronomy 4 and 7.)

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Over and over again in our covenant homes the commandments and statutes and judgments of the Lord must be rehearsed and talked about, so that they are not forgotten. We must teach them to our covenant children in our homes in the fear of God, with reverence for God, and with earnest concern for the spiritual life and nurture of our children. We must discuss with our covenant children the broad scope of the commandments of the Lord. They govern every area of our Christian life and have many great applications.

The perspective from which we teach God's law in our home must be our own real and personal and fervent love for God, as we considered in our last article. Teaching our children in our covenant home may not be done with ritual and formalism. We must not teach our children to be Pharisees or hypocrites. Father must not rule in his home as a harsh and cruel dictator without any compassion in the tone of his voice or mannerism. Rather, Moses reminds covenant parents that they must first of all have the love of God in their own hearts. For this we must pray daily, for ourselves first of all. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. If we have the love of God in our own hearts, then there will be a proper warmth and affection evident in the very manner in which we speak to our children, in the manner in which we discipline them, and in the manner in which we encourage them in their own Christian walk. For the covenant family, the keeping of the law of the Lord our Redeemer is not grievous but joyous.

The law must be taught in

our covenant homes so that children know the great seriousness of keeping the law of God. Sin against God is grievous. It brings the displeasure and chastisement of God on our lives. Sin must be confessed and repented of. It must be judged not by human standards but by the perfect standard of the law of God. Sin that is not confessed separates us from God. In the day-to-day life of the covenant home, conflicts will arise between its members. We are all still sinners. These conflicts must be resolved in biblical ways. Father and mother, with their children, must go daily to the cross of Jesus Christ in deep

humility, pleading for His forgiving mercy. Then the promises of God's forgiving mercy will be our comfort and en-

couragement, and we must convey this to our children also.

Every covenant home should have times of regular formal instruction in the truth of God every day. There must be order and discipline and structure in the home so that there is a time of family devotions, for the reading of the Word of God, for prayer together as a family, and for some discussion of the meaning and application of the Word of God to the lives of the members of the family. Events that take place in the home and the circumstances that the Lord in His providence orders from day to day in the course of the life of the home must be used as occasion for instruction from the Word of God.

Besides this regular formal instruction, the covenant home must have on-going spiritual

conversation. This is beautifully stated in Deuteronomy 6. "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in the thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." This is a very comprehensive statement. In the course of life in the covenant home, there will be many subjects that are talked about. Circumstances will arise. Trials and difficulties will be faced from day to day. There will be joys and sorrows, progress and failures, triumphs and disappointments. All of these must be addressed with reference to the Word of God and the fear of God. Decisions have to be made in life, some far more important than others. Some will be so minor as what we will eat for breakfast or how we will be able to fit all the necessary work and activities of our day in the next twenty-four hours. Others will be so tremendously important that they will seriously impact the course of our life for many days to come, maybe even for the rest of our life and the lives of our children. For the child of God, the things of God's Word are the concerns of salvation, eternal life, the glory of God, and the coming of His kingdom.

Not only the behavior but the conversation of the covenant home will show to children from day to day how husbands and wives, and fathers and mothers, must behave in a truly covenant home, how each must honor and respect, support and encourage, influence and direct the other.

The daily conversation in the home will clearly indicate what is most important in the home and for our families. If all we talk about is sports or adventure, or the next purchases we will make in order to make our homes more luxurious or to enable us

The daily conversation in the covenant home will do much to determine the character of this home—whether or not it is in reality a covenant home.

to spend our lives in more and more earthly pleasure and excitement, our children will grow up with the imagination that these are the most important matters in life. This conversation will definitely impact the thinking of our children. The conversation of the covenant home can help make the members of that home carnal and worldly, covetous and materialistic—or truly godly and distinctly different from the world.

Inevitably there will be times in the course of the life of our covenant homes that discussions will be had about world events. In some homes, whether good or bad, everyday news events will play a large part in the daily conversation of the family. Father will impart to his covenant children his own perspective on events taking place in the world in which he lives. He will often do this almost without realizing it. When world events are the subject of conversation in the home, these are occasions for us as parents to teach our children a true biblical and Reformed world and life outlook. Necessary judgments must be made that often will mold the thinking and perspective of our children. Even the world recognizes that this will happen in the normal course of life in the home. In our covenant home this is far more important. In the course of conversation on all these subjects, we must mold and shape the values, opinions, and outlook on life for our children. All must be from the perspective of the fear of God and the keeping of His commandments in our daily life. In the daily conversa-

tion of the covenant home, our children will learn their own purpose and calling and perspective in life.

The attitude we have towards our material possessions, whether we are truly thankful to God for them, and how we use

the possessions that God gives us, will influence our children. Moses warns concerning the grave danger of forgetting God in the days of material prosperity. It should be

the case that the more abundance we have, the greater reason we have for thanksgiving to God. But because of our natural sinfulness and proneness to covetousness and materialism, this is not reality. Listen to the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 8: "When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. Beware lest thou forget the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day" (vv. 10, 11). Moses continues in the succeeding verses to give detailed instruction regarding this. The perspective that we have on the wealth that God has given us will inevitably be revealed in the daily conversation of our covenant homes, and our children will learn how they themselves must view material possessions in their own lives and future homes.

The attitude we have toward the church of the Lord, the work of the officebearers, and the happenings in the lives of the members of this church will and

must be the subject of our daily conversations in the home. Our conversations in the home must reveal that we love the church of God and that we love the truth that is preached and maintained there. This ought to be a very important part of daily conversation in the home. The Sunday sermons should regularly be discussed in the home. The glorious, comforting, and blessed doctrines that the church preaches and maintains should in a very natural and spontaneous way be often discussed in our home. This can of course be done in a very evil way, a way that will result in children having wrong and sinful ideas regarding the church. This can and should be done in the fear of God, to foster love and concern for the church and her ministry. There ought to be conversations in our homes about the fellow members of the church. These conversations can take on the character of gossip and evil judgments of fellow saints. Or these conversations can reflect hearty concern for fellow saints and an interest and compassion for them in the trials they face and the burdens they bear in life. The conversations of the covenant home can and must foster the communion of the saints and practical love and concern for them. How many things happen regularly from week to week in the church: marriages, baptism, sickness, trials, some very severe, and loss of loved ones through death! The conversations in our covenant home will teach our children the proper, godly perspective on these events.

How we should pray that all our conversation in the home might be truly godly and serve for the building up of our home, the molding of the lives of our children, and the glory of God.



The conversation of the covenant home can help make the members of that home carnal and worldly, covetous and materialistic—or truly godly and distinctly different from the world.

Our Sanctuary

Reformed Witness Hour

A distinctively Reformed radio ministry,
proclaiming the truth of the
sovereignty of God.

"A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary."

Jeremiah 17:12

These words are a very beautiful and powerful affirmation of faith made by Jeremiah in a day of deep darkness and personal anguish.

There are very few who have suffered the sorrows and difficulties in the service of God that Jeremiah did. His words, which he faithfully delivered from God, were opposed and ridiculed every inch of the way by false prophets. He not only saw God's Word rejected, but he saw the word of false prophets embraced and most cruel reproach heaped upon himself.

Jeremiah ministered the Word of God in a day when people were hardened in their heart to do evil. Repentance was clean gone, and their sins, says God in the first verse of Jeremiah 17, were written upon their heart with the indelible ink of hardness. And God had spoken through Jeremiah that He would punish. No reform was to come. Jeremiah would see Jerusalem and the temple of Judah wasted. He himself would be cast into a miry pit. The horrible reality of his day is stated in verse

13 of Jeremiah 17: "they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters."

Yet, in the midst of this, Jeremiah went on with a courage that almost startles us. He tells us that God's Word burned within his bones, and he was driven to speak. Facing a ministry of difficulty, each day a weariness and struggle, questioning whether he could go on, his flesh trembling—yet he went on, following God as a faithful pastor. How? The answer is found in this declaration, the verse that we have chosen for our meditation today, a verse that is inserted right in the middle of the chapter because it stood at the heart of Jeremiah's life and comfort: "A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary."

Jeremiah was made strong in the conviction that the throne of God to which he might go in prayer was a sanctuary, a place of perfect protection, peace, purity, rest for his soul. He found and experienced the truth that, humbly bowing before the absolutely majestic and almighty God, he was in a sanctuary of perfect peace and contentment. That is very beautiful, is it not?

To the unbelieving and rebellious, any thought of the glorious throne of God is one of terror. But to those who, by the grace of Jesus Christ, have been subdued, their hearts changed, cleansed in Calvary's fountain of blood, humbled and now kissing

the hand of Him who sits upon the throne, God's throne is a place of sanctuary, where nothing can touch them, nothing can disturb their soul. The mighty God of Jacob, our Father in heaven, is the place where we are lifted up above the swirling troubles of this present time. No matter the difficulty you face, no matter the burden of your sin, no matter the sorrows of your heart, child of God, by faith, go to your sanctuary, the place of perfect peace and rest, the glorious throne of God. Go there through the blood of Jesus Christ. All is well.

This is the message of God's Word to us right now. Turning away from Jeremiah and all the circumstances in which he lived, we take these words of holy Scripture as our own. Because of what Jesus did for us upon Calvary's cross, we declare these words to be a statement of truth for ourselves. God's throne is *our sanctuary*, our place of protection and

peace. If a man or woman, a child, a teenager would find sanctuary, he must find the throne of God. He must be brought in

complete submission before the mighty God. If a man seeks a place of refuge and quietness, a place of peace in the midst of turmoil and trouble, he will not find it, he cannot find it, anywhere except before this throne.

*If a man or woman,
a child, a teenager
would find sanctuary,
he must find
the throne of God.*

Rev. Haak is pastor of Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan and radio pastor for the Reformed Witness Hour, on which this message was aired.

He will not find peace in man, in man's philosophies, in wealth, in health, in pleasures. No! Only before the throne, submissive, by the grace of God, to Him who sits upon the throne in perfect majesty. *There is peace, our sanctuary.*

The idea of a sanctuary is a very common one in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament Scriptures. We read in Psalm 73 of Asaph, who had many soul troubles and was questioning the ways that God dealt with him and was envious of the wicked, who he thought had everything, while he as a believer was sorely chastened every day—until he made his way to the sanctuary, to the temple. There he was brought to understand the mighty purposes of God always to work His salvation through all things.

That is the meaning. When Scripture tells us that the throne of God is our sanctuary, it means that here upon earth we are filled with unrest. We come under the attacks of Satan and sin and grief and trouble. And our souls desire rest. The only possibility of rest is that we be brought before the throne of God, through the blood of Christ.

Usually when we think of a sanctuary we associate it with worship, as a holy place, a chapel of God. But here Jeremiah uses the word in the sense of a place of refuge, a place where he might hide himself, where he could find quietness and privacy.

What is a sanctuary to those who are bruised and broken in the battle? What is a sanctuary to those who are weary and struggling in their souls? A sanctuary is a place of rest from the storm. We use the word that way as well. We speak of a wildlife sanctuary, a refuge for birds or wild-life where predators are controlled and hunting is illegal. That is the idea of this Word of God. And, you understand, the reference is not to a physical sanctuary, an

earthly sanctuary. It is not referring to some place where you can come out of the cold or find shelter from the heat, but it is a place for your soul.

A sanctuary, then, is a place of purity. That is the root meaning of the word in the Hebrew language: a place of holiness, God's heavenly throne. That sanctuary in the heavens is a place that is separate from evil. It is guarded by the fire of God's holiness. There is no deceit. There is no lie there. We live in a world of deceit and evil. We live in a world that is cutthroat, dog-eat-dog. Newspapers and news broadcasts bring us reports of abounding evil. We struggle with our sins. We are bruised, scarred, and battered. But now there is a place where evil does not reign, where we shall find refuge from the forces of evil that surround us and would seek our destruction.

Still more. A sanctuary is a place not only of purity but of peace. A place of silence. A place where very few are permitted to enter, where stillness awaits us and everything is untouched by turmoil or unrest. Sin cannot molest us. Fears cannot enter. Doubts must stop. Satan is barred entrance. There is privacy, peace.

And still more. A sanctuary is a place of protection. We are removed from the arrows that the devil would shoot. We become safe and secure. We are lifted high above all that would harm us and drag our hearts down into despair and hopelessness. If we find this sanctuary, then we find defense from all the accusations of the devil and of our own conscience that we have sinned and deserve to be condemned. We find refuge from sorrows.

A sanctuary is a place of purity, peace, protection.

Men seek a sanctuary for their hearts and souls. Foolishly they travel to huge cathedrals. Massive oak doors greet them. Their footsteps echo off the marble and they think that they shall escape the stress of life by kneeling and making the sign of a cross or throwing "holy" water over their shoulder and looking upon an idol. They go to a therapist. They go to a doctor. They enter the halls of universities. They journey to remote places in the wilderness. They call friends around them. They seek a place of protection and rest and quietness for their hearts.

And today the stress of life is more terrible than ever. It invades places where previously men thought they were safe. It invades the home. The home for many is no longer a sanctuary. It becomes filled with fighting and bitterness between husband and wife. Children are subjected to abuse. The church is no longer a sanctuary for many because it departs from the truth and then can provide no refuge; or it becomes torn apart by fighting and bickering and party spirits and there is break-down. And man says, "I must find a place to escape the storms of life, someplace where I can rest my soul." But he cannot find it. Not of himself. All his attempts at building his sanctuary: building up his inner fortitude, delving into New Age, downing

another bottle, tripping out—all these prove futile.

There is only one place of sanctuary for the soul—a glorious, high

throne from everlasting is the place of our sanctuary. The throne of the eternal. The glorious, the infinitely majestic, the almighty God—that is our sanctuary.

The sanctuary never was Mo-

*The glorious,
the infinitely majestic,
the almighty God—
that is our sanctuary.*

ses' tabernacle in the wilderness. It was not Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. It is not some beautiful cathedral made with men's hands. It is not the peak of a mountain, or a lonely wood and stream. The sanctuary is not a hospital with the latest in medical technology. It is not a couch in a therapist's office. It is not found in some book on life. The sanctuary for your soul is the throne of God. The majestic and the eternal, the fair and glorious God. Go there!

That is the whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. The one truth the Bible declares is that the throne of God is man's resting place. The Bible declares to you, God says to you, if you would find sanctuary, by His grace, you must bow before His throne and know Him as the only God. If you would find a place of peace, you must submit to His rule. If you would be safe, then you must be brought to know your problem. Your problem is this: you are a rebel before the only God. You have revolted against the only true God. You are a sinner in His sight. And it is only through the blood of His Son that you can be placed in a right relationship to Him who sits upon the throne and who abides upon that throne as the eternal God only. And, by the grace of God working in your heart, only when humbly bending before Him, trusting and worshipping Him, adoring Him, being cleansed in the blood of His Son—only then is there a sanctuary for your heart.

Shall we look at that sanctuary? A glorious, high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary. It is the throne of God. God's throne is a symbol to us of His authority. It declares to us that God's is the right and the power to rule and govern all things. His throne is fixed in the heavens. He reigns supreme (Ps. 97). From His throne issue edicts governing everything from the

most minute particle of the creation to earthquakes and other great events. Before His throne all disputes are settled. He judges in righteousness and justice among men. Every man, *you*, must appear before His throne, the throne of Him who looks into the heart.

It is a glorious throne. It is splendid. It shines with the excellency of God's own being. It radiates with a light no man can take in. It is glorious in holiness. It is majestic in its power. All before that throne bow down and worship before Him. Think of it! That is our sanctuary. The sanctuary is *not* in the god preached by many today, the god who cannot do something unless man first allows him to do this or that. It is not a god so desperate for man to acknowledge him that he allows a man to remain a rebel and says to man, "Well, you can go on in your sin, just give me a little part of your life, would you please?" Oh! There is no sanctuary in that god.

But the sanctuary is God's throne on high. It is lifted up in majesty and in power. His throne is fixed. It is on high from the beginning—that is, it is eternal. God never contested for dominion. He does not contest with man today for dominion. God reigns over all! How could Jeremiah endure in his ministry when he was so weary, so hopeless, so alone? His sanctuary was God's throne. There he stood unmoved.

The fixed point in the universe is the throne of God.

Today man peers through his Hubble telescope theorizing about the beginning, looking for the center and the source of the universe. Man is overwhelmed, he is mystified. He cannot find it. His theories change yearly. But here is the center! All laws

proceed from this source. Unchanging wisdom controls all things from this throne. The center of all things is the throne of God. It always has been and it always will be!

Are you tossed in your soul? Are you troubled in heart and mind? Do you seek a place of peace and safety and rest? Here is the sanctuary: the glorious high throne of God. Shall we go there? Shall we call it our sanctuary?

How can we do that? How can we do that when Adam and Eve, our first parents, were expelled from the garden of Eden and a flaming sword kept the way of the Tree of Life? How can we who are sinners come to this sanctuary of God's majesty and holiness? There is only one way: through the blood of Jesus Christ. We read in the Scriptures (Rom. 5:2), "By whom (by Christ) also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." Through the blood of Jesus Christ, says the Word of God.

Apart from Christ's providing an entrance to that throne, it becomes a place of terror. But through Jesus Christ the believing child of God enters. Jesus said in John 12:32, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." The Lord did not simply mean, "if I be lifted up a few yards from the earth on a Roman cross." But He meant this:

"If by the pathway of My suffering and sorrow I take the sins of My children given to Me of the Father's election, if I take those sins upon

My own breast and extinguish them in My own blood; if I be lifted up to make atonement for sin and then be raised from the dead and ascend into heaven; if I be brought as the Head of the church to that place where I am free from all condemnation—

*The fixed point
in the universe
is the throne of God.*

then I will draw you to Myself." Through His cross, by which our sins were judged, through His resurrection and ascension, we come to the throne.

But we enter that sanctuary in submission. Cast yourself before the throne. Renounce your own way. We do not enter God's sanctuary by hiding from God. We do

not enter the sanctuary by rebelling, accusing, and refusing to be content with His ways. Then the throne is far away. Then the thunders of the throne threaten us. But humbled low, yielding, by His grace, confident that all that the Father has willed is for His glory and for our salvation—

in that faith we come to the sanctuary, a place where fears and sins and sorrows cannot follow us. A place of rest and peace and safety. A place where we may lift up our hands and bow our heads and experience the peace of worshiping Him who sits upon the throne.

Go to the sanctuary. 

Translated Treasures

Not Anabaptist but Reformed (13)*

By Rev. H. Danhof and Rev. H. Hoeksema
Chapter 6. A Sad Conclusion (2)

After Rev. Van Baalen has proven that we differ radically from the Anabaptists on the doctrine of grace, and thus, according to his own spoken judgment, his attempt to brand us as Anabaptistic has failed, failed completely, he comes at it from another side. Once again it must be chanted by way of the little "World Flight" ditty that we are Anabaptists. To say that it had to do only with the doctrine of grace was not good enough. Therefore this: "But both have this in common, that they only know of one grace, and therefore they utterly condemn the world and cannot

see any good in it."¹

Now, the author had not demonstrated that this was actually the view of the Anabaptists. It was not implied in the words that were quoted. But we will grant that this is true. Then the question is this: does it apply to us? Will brother Van Baalen ever demonstrate this?

We would like to take the word "world" once in the approximate sense in which you take it, namely, in the approximate sense of "nature." (You surely will not take it ill of us that we condemn the "world" in the sense of the wicked, which "world" Scripture always warns us against?) Then we ask, brother Van Baalen, where have you ever heard us say that we want to go out of the world? And we will even tell you frankly that you will exert yourself in vain if you look for something resembling that in anything that has appeared from our hand. Where have you ever heard us claim that we must avoid all kinds of civic institu-

tions, that we must not occupy any governmental office, or that we may not wage any war?

That seems to be roughly Rev. Van Baalen's notion of our view, as appears from his quotation of Westerbeek Van Eerten on pages 81 and 82.

However, the brother can be assured that this is absolutely not our view. Our position is just the opposite. We do not want to go out of the world at all. It is exactly our intention not to abandon any area of life. We have called God's people exactly to occupy the entirety of life. However, we want this people of the Lord, His covenant people, not to forsake or deny her God in one single domain. His people are called to live out of grace in every domain, out of the one grace through which they were incorporated into Christ and through which they love God, so that they keep His commandments.

This is what we have written and preached. And Van Baalen could certainly have known this. In fact, already in the *Banner* of June 12, 1919 we wrote:

* *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 1, 2009, p. 256.

¹ Van Baalen's pamphlet, p. 81.

Also, the child of the Kingdom does not go along with this identification with the world as he strives to manifest himself in every domain of the life of that world. This is indeed his clear calling. In industry and commerce, in science and art, in state and society the citizen of the kingdom may never fail to manifest himself by drawing back into the closer sphere of the church as such. Then he would have to go out of the world whereas it is his calling to be in the midst of it.

"World flight," therefore, does not apply to us, brother, as you yourself will certainly now admit. If you take "world" in the sense of "nature," then you will certainly see that we do not separate nature and grace but wish to live everywhere out of grace. And if you take "world" in the sense of the wicked, then we do not take flight, but we fight the good fight until the very end so that no one may take our crown.

So up to page 82 of his pamphlet he still has not proven anything at all.

And with this before our minds, we note that the author leaves a most strange impression, which we would rather not describe, when he asks, "Now does the reader want even more proof?" (p. 82). Apparently the author himself is under the impression that he has already given more than enough evidence. Whatever else could be added, therefore, would be redundant. There is so much proof that we are Anabaptistic that the author can be generous in providing it.

But our answer to that question would have been, "Yes, brother, we have not had any yet. It still has to come. You have not yet proven anything at all except for the opposite of what you wanted to prove!"

But the reader will have it. And we will follow this proof very closely.

Kuyper wrote that the doc-

trine of common grace is "of paramount importance exactly for the present juncture of time." He says that this doctrine is an "indispensable part of the Reformed confession." He says he has "proven that particular grace cannot do without common grace for a moment, and demonstrated how the great work of God's grace in Christ presupposes the fruit of common grace in all things."¹

Good, brother! We will not criticize any of that right now. But what do these quotes have to do with your subject, "The Denial of Common Grace, Anabaptistic?" Nothing, am I right?

We have come to the middle of page 83; still no proof.

But now there comes something that looks like it. Dr. Bavinck wrote, "the second ones (Anabaptists) despise *gratia communis* and know of nothing but grace."² And this does not apply to us either. We despise nothing. When Dr. Bavinck writes that the Anabaptists despise *gratia communis*, he is referring to the natural gifts that the Anabaptists actually despised. This has nothing to do with our view. And the second phrase of this sentence applies to us even less. It is not true that we have "nothing but grace." You can surely sense that there is an essential difference between the view rendered by the words "he knows of nothing but grace" and the view stated with "we know of only one grace." And therefore, even if a word from Dr. Bavinck was decisive proof, this still does not apply to us.

We are at the bottom of page 83.

Still no proof....

The chapter is coming to an end. With the greatest suspense

¹ Quotations from Kuyper's *De Gemeene Gratie* cited on pp. 82-83 of Van Baalen's pamphlet.

² Quotation from Bavinck's *De Algemeene Genade* cited on p. 83 of Van Baalen.

the reader asks, "Is it still coming?"

Yes, of course!

There are still two quotations from Dr. Kuyper.

The first quotation: "And with just one more small step you emerge imperceptibly with the Anabaptistic viewpoint.... Then science becomes unholy..." (p. 83). This is a disappointment: it does not apply to us. We do not take that small step; nor does it lie within our way of thinking. We do not consider science unholy, only unbelieving science. We wish to live out of grace and keep God's commandments also in the domain of science.

The second quotation:

This Anabaptistic standpoint (namely, the shunning of everything that is in the world as absolutely sinful) which is still defended in many circles under the name Reformed would have never been taken in if the confession of common grace had lived continuously in the midst of the churches (pp. 83, 84).

Now we have already clearly demonstrated that we never preached this Anabaptistic shunning. We *have* preached the scriptural notion of separation from the wicked world.

But still, apart from this, the proof so greatly sought after that we are Anabaptistic is not in this quote either.

Just pay attention, reader.

In the words quoted above, Dr. Kuyper says that whoever maintains the viewpoint of common grace is kept from the Anabaptistic shunning. Whoever believes in common grace is not an Anabaptist. But it is not stated that all who do not believe in common grace are Anabaptistic. Just read the quotation one more time. That is how it appears. Everything that walks on two feet is not a horse. But everything that does not walk on two feet is not yet proven, therefore, to be a horse. There is a

lack of logic and distinction here.

And then once again all this is concluded with the call to repentance: "Once again, acknowledge that you have gone astray."

Now then, brother, we have gone

astray. We have wandered about in your pamphlet. And we have come back from it with a sigh of relief!

For yourself and also for us, brother, (for we do still feel a sort of solidarity and joint responsibility as preachers in the same de-

nomination) if you ever write again, conduct a more thorough study, consider your subject a bit better, and then supply a bit better work. We still refuse to believe that this is the best you can offer. 

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Congregation Activities

The members of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI were invited to their Fellowship Hall after their evening worship service on February 8 for a program on the PR Fellowship of India. Joel and Ellen Bruinooge, along with Dave and Nancy Ondersma, showed slides and gave a talk on their recent trip to Vellore, India. This evening provided a wonderful opportunity for Georgetown to become better informed of their involvement with Paul Raj and the saints under his care. Tom Schimmel also gave a brief report of his time in the Berean PRC of the Philippines with Rev. R. Van Overloop in mid-January.

On Saturday, February 7, the members of the Wingham, Ontario, CN PRC, were invited to the Belgrave Arena for a time of skating and fellowship. There was also a reminder that helmets were required for hockey.

The congregation of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada gathered together the evening of February 6 to bid goodbye to their pastor of the past five years, Rev. Richard Smit, and his wife, Tricia, and their family. The evening farewell included dinner, a short program, and a time of fellowship together. The following Lord's Day, February 8, Rev. Smit

preached his farewell sermon as Immanuel's fourth pastor, choosing for his text the Word of God found in II Corinthians 13:11, and preaching under the theme, "Finally, Brethren, Farewell."

An announcement in a recent bulletin from the Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI caught our attention. The notice simply informed the congregation that the "Caring and Sharing Used Clothing Rooms upstairs in their building were newly organized and full of both adult and kids clothing available for anyone in the congregation. Please help yourself." We did some investigating and found that Trinity has for several years made donated children's clothing available for anyone in the congregation. Recently that benefit has grown to include adult clothing as well. Trinity's members are encouraged to donate their gently used clothing, both child and adult, and in turn take any items off the rack for their own personal use. This is not a fundraiser, but a free program for all the members of Trinity.

As many of our readers know, the Hope PRC in Walker, MI continues to offer financial help to the PR churches of Myanmar. With that thought in mind, we noticed a quote from a recent bulletin from the Hull, IA PRC detailing current persecution in Burma (Myanmar). "Dublin, January 21 (Compass Direct News). Burmese authorities last week increased restrictions on Christian activity in the capital city of Rangoon and surrounding

areas, including the closure of several churches. Orders issued on Jan. 5 had already forced many Christians meeting in residential homes or apartments to cease gathering for worship. Officials last week ordered several major Rangoon churches to cease holding services and continued enforcing the Jan. 5 ban on meetings held in unauthorized facilities. In the late 1990's authorities stopped issuing permits for land purchase or the construction of new churches, leading many Burmese Christians to conduct services in rented apartments or office buildings. The Kyauktada Township Peace and Development Council on Jan. 5 invited pastors from more than 100 Rangoon churches to a meeting where they were told to sign documents pledging to cease operation of their churches. About 50 pastors attended. The documents threatened punishment, including jail terms and the sealing of church facilities, for pastors who refused to obey the closure orders. Another local online news source, the Democratic Voice of Burma, claimed officials from the Ministry of Religious Affairs had summoned the owners of a building where churches met and ordered them not to rent their properties to religious groups."

Evangelism Activities

The Council of the Wingham, Ontario, CN PRC has decided to renew their commitment to broadcast the Reformed Witness Hour on CKNX for another year.

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

Young People's Activities

The Young People's Society of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, CN planned a skating party for February 16, which was Family Day in Canada. Everyone was invited to Les Walker Park at noon. The skaters were also encouraged to bring hot dogs, etc., for lunch.

The Young People's Society of the First PRC in Edmonton, AB, CN planned a day of sledding and a hot dog/sloppy joe supper fundraiser on Family Day, February 16. Donations from the supper were for this year's Young

People's Convention. Sledding was scheduled from 2:00 - 4:00, with the supper following from 5:00 - 7:00 at the church.

Recent meetings of the young people at the Lynden, WA PRC have looked at the question, "Are You a Discerning Christian?" Can you discern the truth from the lie? Can you distinguish what God says from what man says? The young people recently also considered the question, "Should we (can we?) love the sinner and hate the sin?" They were challenged to come to each meeting prepared to discuss and debate, defend or deny, on the

basis of Scripture: "18 common sayings of Christians."

School Activities

The PTA of Hope PR Christian School in Walker, MI met Thursday evening, February 12. Part of the evening included several presentations on the topic, "Motivating Our Children to be Lifelong Learners."

Minister Activities

Sunday, February 15, the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, CN extended a call to Rev. W. Langerak to become their next pastor. 

Announcements

TEACHER NEEDED

The Genesis PR School in Lacombe, AB, Canada is looking for applicants to teach in a multi-grade classroom for the 2009-2010 school year. Those who are interested should contact board President Dr. Hilgard Goosen at (403) 782-7901 or e-mail hilgoosen@shaw.ca.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Byron Center PRC express their sympathy to Leroy and Marilyn Brower in the death of their son,

GREGORY BROWER.

"For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counselor?" (Romans 11:34).

Sid Miedema, Vice-President
Dale Bartelds, Clerk

TEACHERS NEEDED

The Protestant Reformed School Society in Wingham, of Wingham, Ontario, Canada, is planning to start a Protestant Reformed school in September 2009, Lord willing. We are seeking an elementary teacher to teach a class of 16 students of grades K-6. Volunteer assistance will be available. We also will need a teacher for a class of 9 students of grades 7-12. Teaching will be assisted by online curriculum for the upper grades. For more information please contact board vice president Mr. Harvey Kikkert at (519)523-4823 or email hkikkert@hurontel.on.ca.

NOTICE!!

All standing and special committees of the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as individuals who wish to address Synod 2009, are hereby notified that all material for this year's synod should be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than April 15. Please send material to:

Don Doezeema
4949 Ivanrest Ave.
Grandville, MI 49418



EASTER SPECIAL

When I Survey

By Herman Hoeksema

Go to www.rfpa.org for details, or call (616) 457-5970. An addition for your church library?