

THE *March 1, 2009* STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Volume 85 ◆ Number 11

Isaiah's Call to Serve

"Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not."

Isaiah 6:5-9

Isaiah had just seen a wonderful vision, the LORD sitting upon a throne in the temple. Above the throne were seraphim with six wings. With two they covered their faces. With two they covered their feet. And with two they flew. As they hovered, one of the seraphim cried to the

other, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory."

To this amazing vision, Isaiah responded, "Woe is me! For I am undone." Isaiah, a man of God, saw his uncleanness and the woe that was due to him. When he saw himself in comparison to the holiness of God, he realized how unholy he was. He understood the need for cleansing. The One who would cleanse Isaiah turned out to be the very King who was sitting on the throne. At the King's command, the angel took a coal from the altar and touched Isaiah's lips, proclaiming, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." After this good news had been proclaimed to him, Isaiah heard a voice asking, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Who will be my servant? Without hesitation, in thankfulness, Isaiah responded, "Here am I; send me."

The account of Isaiah being called to serve provides us with a pattern, according to which we may see our own call to thankful service. When our iniquities are graciously covered by the sacrifice of the Lamb, we also become

willing servants of the King. He says, "Who will represent me in this world?" And each of us says, "Here I am, send me."



So terrified was Isaiah at the vision that he had just seen that he cried out, "Woe is me!" Isaiah had the dreadful feeling that some great evil was coming. He understood that his wicked deeds made him worthy of punishment. It is striking that Isaiah's cry was not with regard to the woe that wicked Israel deserved. How easy it would have been to point only at others and talk about their sin. How easy it is for us to criticize others for their uncleanness and forget about our own. But Isaiah did not do that; he did not just point the finger at the nation of unclean lips. He claimed the same for himself. That is why he declared, "Woe is me!" He knew that he was worthy of being cut off from God's holy presence and doomed to the torments of hell.

Why such gloomy thoughts from this man of God? Isaiah had heard the angels praising God with pure lips. But Isaiah was no angel. He was a "man of unclean lips." He was a child of the stock

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

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

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Website for RFPA: www.rfpa.org

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of Adam, born with a sinful nature that manifested itself in his lips. God commands all men to praise Him with their lips. We ought to be crying out, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of Hosts." But, our lips are unclean, speaking unclean words that proceed from an unclean heart. Do we see ourselves as individuals with unclean lips? Do we see that we deserve God's judgment for our sins and sinfulness?

The cause of Isaiah's realization and subsequent confession was his vision of the LORD sitting upon His throne in the temple. Of course, Isaiah, a finite creature, did not see God's infinite essence. But the vision did teach Isaiah something about God. The Lord sitting upon the throne is the King of kings. His throne and long robes indicate that He is exceedingly majestic, high and lifted up. His divine perfections are revealed in all the earth. Even the angels, recognizing His majesty, covered their faces and feet in the presence of the King. Also the posts and door shook as the smoke of God's holy presence filled the temple.

Isaiah realized that this majestic King is the Judge of all the earth, who knows our sin. "The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men" (Ps. 11:4). Isaiah had come to realize his sinfulness in the way of seeing God's holiness.

His response was not unlike others who had seen something of God's glory. For example, Daniel records his response to God's holiness in Daniel 10:6-8:

His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me

saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.

When Peter saw the power of God manifested at the draught of fishes, he also responded by acknowledging his sinfulness:

When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken (Luke 5:8-9).

Do we respond that way when we see God's glory and majesty displayed in Scripture and in creation? We do not deserve to stand in God's presence, because our lips and hearts are unholy. When Isaiah saw his predicament, he understood he needed a Savior.



Perhaps it was not evident to Isaiah that the King sitting upon the throne was, in fact, Christ the Savior. At that moment of great despair, Isaiah saw Him as the holy Judge who would cast the wicked into everlasting judgment. But the King did not leave Isaiah in that miserable state. As Isaiah contemplated his woe, the King sent an angel to Isaiah to touch his lips with a live coal and proclaim that His iniquity was taken away.

The burning coal represents the cleansing power of fire, which burns away the chaff from the wheat and is used to purify gold. Here the fire is used to purify Isaiah's lips, which represent his whole being. That's why, after touching Isaiah's lips, the angel said, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken

away, and thy sin purged." As if to say, "Your twisted and crooked acts of rebellion, which miss the mark of God's holiness, together with their guilt, have been washed and covered." Through that cleansing, Isaiah had become exempt from punishment.

But how could the burning coal have such cleansing power? Only because it came from the altar, where the sacrifice of atonement had been made. This sacrifice brings reconciliation between God and man; it restores the fellowship that was once broken. Of course, the Old Testament sacrifice was only a picture of the real sacrifice of atonement that Jesus offered for us. He shed His blood to pay for our sins. Based on Jesus' perfect sacrifice, God declares us righteous and adopts us as His children.

Notice that even though the sacrifice of atonement had been made, it was still necessary that the coal be brought to touch Isaiah's lips. The Priestly King, as He was sitting in the temple, had already made a sacrifice of atonement. In Isaiah's vision, the same King ordered the coal to be brought from the altar to touch Isaiah's lips. The burning coal is a picture of the cleansing power of the Holy Ghost. The idea is that King Jesus, sitting on His throne in heaven, baptizes us with the Holy Ghost. That is why John the Baptist could say, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matt. 3:11). The Holy Ghost is the fire that applies to us what Christ accomplished for us on the altar of the cross.

The altar and coal of Isaiah's vision were a kind of sacrament that pointed to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. When the angel touched Isaiah's lips, he proclaimed Isaiah's cleansing,

as if to say, "As surely as the coal has been brought from the altar to touch your lips, so surely are you to believe that your iniquity is taken away and your sin purged."



After the good news had been declared to Isaiah, he heard the voice of the Lord asking, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Without hesitation, Isaiah answers, "Here am I, send me." After experiencing justification, Isaiah was a thankful man. So when he heard the call to serve, he responded with eagerness. Of course, even the possibility of serving goes back to the King.

Previously, the angel had spoken to Isaiah and assured him that there was forgiveness for his iniquity and sin. However, after that, the Lord Himself talks to Isaiah. Isaiah refers to Him as "Lord" because he understood that the King was his master and owner; Isaiah was the King's servant. The Lord is none other than Jehovah of hosts. He is the great I AM, who rules over all the hosts of heaven and earth. He is the thrice holy God, whose purpose is always to glorify Himself.

The King asked, "Who will go for us?" Who will go in our service? Who will go on a mission to bring glory to us? By using the plural pronoun, us, it seems the King is referring to the other persons of the Trinity. The triune covenant God sought a servant to accomplish His will in the world. Not that God needs anybody to accomplish His will; but He has chosen to accomplish His will by use of means. That's why the King asked, "Who will go for us?" God wanted a servant to go as an instrument to serve in the cause of the covenant.

Perhaps Isaiah did not know how difficult the task ahead of him was. The mission involved preaching to the people in order that their hearts would be hard-

ened. Who would want to be a prophet whose word hardens the hearts of a nation? Who would want to preach a message that the great majority of people would reject? No doubt Isaiah did not relish the thought of such fruit to his preaching. But he must have known it was for God's glory.

Just as God sent Isaiah on a mission as an officebearer, He also sends us. God calls officebearers to the special offices. But He also calls each one of us to serve Him in our individual stations and callings. Husbands and wives are called to love as Christ and the church love one another. Fathers are called to serve Him as heads of homes, providing for the spiritual needs of the family. Mothers are called to serve Him in the home. Young people are called to serve their God-honoring father and mother, and to work diligently in school and on the job. Older folk are called to serve even in their pains and frailties. The truth is, our duties are not always easy. Sometimes they are downright depressing. But then we remember that God called each of us to the station and calling where we find ourselves. We are right where we are, at this time, for a reason.

What was Isaiah's response to the Lord's call? Did he shirk his duties? Did he say, "Why me? Why not someone else?" Does he say, "I suppose. If I absolutely have to." Not at all. Isaiah responds, "Here am I; send me." Literally, he says, "Behold me! Send me!" It's not that Isaiah thought he was superior and everyone else so unfit. Rather, Isaiah was simply expressing his willingness to go anywhere God wanted him to go.

Isaiah's response was one we

would expect from someone eager to serve his holy God. Previously, he had cried out, "Woe is me! For I am undone." He knew how far short he fell of God's holiness. But, importantly, Isaiah had experienced the forgiveness of God. Isaiah was eager to serve because he was so thankful for God's abundant mercy toward him. The thrice holy God had done so much for him; in response, Isaiah wanted to serve Him.

Do we give the same answer to God when He calls us to serve Him in any way? Do we say, "Here am I, Lord; send me"? Are we willing to go wherever God sends us and to do whatever He calls us to do? That applies to ministers, elders, and deacons. But that also applies to every single person in the office of all believers. God calls husbands to love their wives unconditionally. He calls wives to submit to their husbands and to work in the home to care for their children. He calls young and old alike to live a life of holiness. He calls children to honor father and mother. He even calls the sick and afflicted to serve Him in their

circumstances. He calls us in every particular circumstance to seek first the kingdom of God. What is our answer? Do we say, "Here am I, Lord; I am ready to do Thy will"?

That's the response of someone thankful for God's great mercy.


How is it possible to serve God faithfully? The possibility must rest in the King, who sits on the throne. The King, Jesus Christ, was the faithful Servant of Jehovah. He gave Himself out of love for His people. Now He rules from heaven and gives us the anointing of the Holy Spirit. From heaven, the King sends the Holy Spirit, who brings the coal from the altar and proclaims to our consciences

*He calls us
in every
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to seek first
the kingdom of God.*

that our iniquity has been taken away and our sin purged. The same Spirit also works in us true thankfulness for all His mercies. That is the reason we can say, "Here am I; send me."

Not that we say it perfectly. Our old man will always make our desires and actions imper-

fect. There will be hesitation. Nevertheless, we will say, "Send me." We will say, "Lord I am willing; help Thou my unwillingness." And we will pray that God will grant the strength we need to do His will. The truth is, where God calls, He also equips.

Therefore, when the Master calls, we thankfully volunteer to go. Not for our own sakes, to make a name for ourselves, etc. But, for His sake, to glorify His holy name. For the thrice-holy God is worthy of all praise and honor. He is worthy to be served and glorified. 

Editorial

Rev. Kenneth Koole

Creeds, the Believer, and the Sufficiency of the Scriptures (2)

As stated in the last issue, the recently produced video about the PRC's high regard for the confessions as statements concerning God's truth, as well as our emphasis on the vital importance of church membership, prompted a response by a viewer.

The respondent had a couple of questions, to our mind questions worth responding to because they represent what has become to an alarming measure the trend in the 'Christianity' of our day—men and women cutting themselves loose from the creeds (in the name of freedom and liberty of conscience) and the disparaging of membership in the church institute (reflecting the anti-authoritarian spirit of our age).

In connection with the Reformed confessions, the question asked was, "Why would you need these other writings if the Bible is the absolute truth, straight from God?? I believe that Scriptures are enough, sufficient, authoritative, and God-breathed."

And when it came to the im-

portance of church membership as underscored by the sacraments' being entrusted by Christ to His church, the respondent stated: "I can't find a passage of Scripture that states we must do anything other (or additional) than believe on Jesus Christ for our salvation." For proof he quoted Romans 10:9.

Due to the popularity of these sentiments, a response is warranted. We intend to offer a brief response to the correspondent's second 'question' in the "Letters to the Editors" department in a future *SB*.

The question asked is, Why do Christians and Christ's church "need [!] these other writings [the creeds]?" We like the wording. Not simply, of what *use* are the creeds? Or, will churches that decide to use creeds find them of value? But, "Are the creeds *needed* (of vital necessity) for the New Testament church (and by the twenty-first century church in particular)?" *That* is the question.

The answer is—you had better believe they are needed, which is to say, they are necessary, vital for the well-being of New Testament believers, and not to be laid aside or ignored.

Why? Because the creeds are the work of the Holy Spirit of the ascended Lord Jesus, both *through* His New Testament church and *for* her. And if that is what they are (and we contend they are), then New Testament believers set them aside at their own peril, and a church would do so at the cost of her faithful witness and the right to call herself the continuation of Christ's church.

We do not say that the creeds are the work of the Spirit in the same way as the Scriptures are His work through selected "holy men of God" (II Pet. 1:21). The writings of the apostles alone are infallible and inspired as the foundation of all true revelation concerning Jesus Christ and spiritual things. But, for all that, the great creeds of the historic Christian church are the work of the Holy Spirit.

Consider. It is one thing to *read* the Holy Scriptures; it is another thing to *read them aright* and to desire to be in full accord with them. Could anything be plainer from New Testament church history? Did (does) everyone read the Bible aright? Did (does) everyone *want* to read God's Holy Word aright? Has the Arch-Deceiver been active since the

Previous article in this series:
February 15, 2009, p. 220.

days of the apostles in trying to sow confusion concerning what God's Word says, or has he not? The answers are obvious.

And who can dispute that the ability to read God's Word aright comes from Christ's Spirit? The disciples themselves were deficient in their reading of the Old Testament until the Holy Spirit opened the eyes of their understanding.

The question is, how has the Holy Spirit chosen to combat those who would corrupt the doctrines of God's Word, leading many astray?

The answer is, He has done so by working in the hearts of faithful officebearers (men knowledgeable of God's Word) who came together in church councils to spell out for the church (that is, to draw up statements, propositions in writing, so that there could be no disputing) what is the correct understanding of the apostolic Word and what is false and to be rejected.

That this refutation of pernicious errors (which have varied from age to age) is the special province of officebearers is clearly scriptural (apostolic). The apostle Paul made this plain in Acts 20:17ff. Having explicitly called for the *elders* of Ephesus, he expressly stated, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock [!], over the which the Holy Ghost [!] has made you overseers" (v. 28). Why? "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter among you, not sparing the flock" (v. 29). Can there be any disputing that elders (teaching and ruling) were placed in the apostolic church for the express purpose of defending congregations of believers from heretics and their teachings?

That was Paul's apostolic charge back in the first century. Can anyone honestly dispute that the same charge holds for the twenty-first?

But there is also biblical pat-

tern for great church councils being assembled at crucial times in church history when fundamental apostolic teachings are under assault. This is laid out in Acts 15, a passage most instructive for the church of all ages.

First, note that biblical, apostolic doctrines were being challenged within the churches while the apostles themselves were still on the scene. The Judaizers were busy demanding that Gentiles turn themselves into Mosaic Jews, contrary to what the apostles were teaching. In response, leaders of the church convened at Jerusalem.

Second, significantly, the apostles did not simply take it upon themselves to answer the heresy, but included elders as well. Acts 15 makes a point of this. Reference is made to "the apostles *and elders*" four different times (vv. 2, 4, 6, 22). As well, reference is made explicitly to James, Christ's half brother, and to Barnabas, as contributors, neither of whom was an apostle. We are dealing here with a church council.

And third, after the Holy Spirit (!) (v. 28) had led them to a proper understanding of the error confronting them and to the answer of God's Word (arrived at *through the unified decision of officebearers*—not just left to the judgment of individual believers scattered here and there to try to combat the error), they committed their doctrinal decision and application of God's Word to *writing* (v. 23), to be sent through the churches.

The initial church council of the New Testament committed its decision to writing, the first creed—Gentile believers were under no apostolic commandment to be circumcised; the Christian church was not to return to the Mosaic law (v. 24). To be sure, these are words recorded in the Scriptures. But this is exactly the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. Here

is the pattern for the New Testament church when the apostles were no longer on the scene. The Spirit knew that the Judaizers would not be the last heretics to trouble the church. Many would follow, challenging nearly every apostolic teaching found in the New Testament.

The question was, what was the church to do when heresy challenged apostolic doctrines once the apostles had 'departed'?

Acts 15 is given exactly to make plain what the New Testament church was to do. By Acts 15 the Holy Spirit is assuring the New Testament church (which was going to be around for some time after the apostles died), that when Bible-believing officebearers would gather to bring God's Word to bear on some error (or host of them), errors threatening the very gospel of grace itself, He, as the Spirit of truth, would be in the midst of them to enable them to articulate what was in accordance with God's true Word. And thus the error of Satan on a particular doctrine would be identified for generations following and the gate against that error locked.

This the Holy Spirit has graciously done again and again in the centuries intervening between the apostles and our present age. He has done so via the writing of confessions and creeds.

In reference to that spirit that would disparage the need for the historic Christian creeds, old A. A. Hodge, in his book *The Confession of Faith* (a commentary on the Westminster Confession), states it well.

The real question is not, as often pretended, between the Word of God and the creed of man, but between the tried and proved faith of the collective body of God's people, and the private judgment and the unassisted wisdom of the repudiator of creeds.

That lays bare in clearest terms

what is at issue in this debate over the Bible vs. 'mere man-produced' creeds. It comes down to the "proved faith of the collective body of God's people" vs. "the unassisted wisdom" of self. To borrow a scriptural phrase—"Choose you this day with whom you intend to cast your lot"—with the collective wisdom of the church of all the ages, or the *unassisted* wisdom of self.

Surely the latter is folly personified.

We are compelled to put it in blunt terms.

As I have told my teenage catechumens more than once, for a present-day believer to refuse to subscribe to the great creeds and confessions of the historic Christian church is nothing less than an act of spiritual arrogance. It would be so for me, and for them also. As if there has not been any 'body of believers' going back through the ages who

have understood and confessed the same fundamental truths that I (and maybe a few close friends) do. Or at least I cannot be sure there have been. As if we as believers in the twenty-first century must determine each for himself what is the truth for today, isolated from the church of Christ of the past. As if what our spiritual fathers by the Holy Spirit in them were led to confess and write down for the generations following, generations who would have to face the same Deceiver in a host of disguises but with the same bag of tricks, is of little value for you and me.

Such, we say, amounts to spiritual arrogance and is really to dishonor the Spirit Himself, who

is the one who led these spiritual forbears to understand and articulate God's Word aright.

It is as simple as this, if what one confesses is the biblical truth (and the proper refutation of Satan's corruptions), then one may be sure that it will stand in basic harmony with what Christ's faithful church and people have declared to be their confession in days gone by. If such a harmony cannot be found, one had better reconsider what one is confessing.

Of one thing a twenty-first century believer may be sure, the Holy Spirit did not wait until you or I came along to make His truths clear. If what we are confessing is biblical, it will be consistent with what believers have been confessing all along.

You ask, how is one to know what it is that the faithful have confessed in days gone by? Read the creeds!

To be sure, there may come a time when few stand any longer for what is biblical and true, and

one finds oneself standing all but alone, but that is not the same as standing isolated and separated from the church of the past and at odds with what believers confessed through the ages. If one finds self in the latter position, something is terribly wrong, namely with self, and one had best reexamine one's interpretation of the Scriptures again.

In fact, it is exactly in times of apostasy that the great Reformed confessions are so valuable, strengthening one to maintain one's convictions as biblical. Exactly by means of them it can be demonstrated that what we hold is in accordance with what God's church has confessed as truth through the ages. And therefore

not we, but those teaching some new thing, have departed and are no longer listening to what the Spirit has said to the churches.

To the objection that not all the creeds were written by church councils (by officebearers in concert), but some, like the Belgic Confession, were written by individuals, we respond: first, those individuals wrote what they did only after having taken into consideration what many other faithful Bible-expositors had taught and wrote; and second, and more importantly, those documents written by individuals, such as the Heidelberg Catechism, did not become confessions to subscribe to until church councils (vis-à-vis the Synod of Dordt) had studied them carefully, compared them with the Scriptures, and declared them to be standards of the faith for those who would be true to the Scriptures.

We follow Proverbs 24:6 as wisdom: "...in the multitude of counselors there is safety."

If one should say, "But there are a great number of confessions out there—Reformed, Lutheran, Romish—all claiming to be biblically faithful. How can one know?" Quite simple: Read the various confessions and compare what they say with the Scriptures point by point, and one will discover which are sound and faithful and which, on various biblical teachings, go astray. And once convinced, a believer is called to join himself with those who make this common confession (Eph. 4:3 and 11-14) and to place himself and family under Christ's rule through His officebearers there.

We say again, not to do so is disobeying the very Lord and Scriptures one claims to esteem.

To the argument that the writing of the great creeds and confessions is an assault on the sufficiency of the Scriptures, we respond: "No, it is not a calling into question of the sufficiency of the Scriptures at all. Rather,

...for a present-day believer to refuse to subscribe to the great creeds and confessions of the historic Christian church is nothing less than an act of spiritual arrogance.

their very writing is proof, demonstration, that the Scriptures are sufficient to meet every error, no matter how these errors may mutate like deadly viruses, and it is sufficient to enable every gen-

eration of believers to give clear, well-reasoned answers to every new error that arises to infect the church."

He who will not adopt the

great historic and Reformed confessions as expressions of his very own faith is bound to fall into the very errors they were written under the leading of the Spirit to safeguard against.



When Thou Sittest in Thine House

Abraham Kuyper

Of Her Living

Charity

A while ago, a policeman fell into a murderer's hand, and his body was found floating in a lake. This man left a widow behind. And at once among the "well-intentioned" and "charitable" the sense awakened that they should do something for the widow. So it was done. A brilliant festivity was organized. Admission was rated high. And after reduction of expenses, the proceeds were given to the widow.

A fine, delicate trait of the modern-times' sense of charity. When by miscreants your husband is killed, ladies and gentlemen "amuse" themselves for a whole evening, and what comes of it is for you.

Of course, they who take religion more seriously took no part in this. Through the Young Men's Christian Association they contributed a sum of money outright.

But for the rest, the whole city took part. Not to take part was considered cruel. It was on behalf of the poor widow of the murdered policeman.

Of this no more needs be said. From our side, warnings have

always been sounded against those false forms of so-called well-doing. He who gives must *give outright*. All concomitant artificial means are unworthy of Christian love.

But what such an offensive occasion lays upon you is that, in your own circle upon giving, yea, upon giving from your own purse and by your own hand, you must let the light shine from Above.

Nothing so much as alms lends itself to show, self-misleading, and misleading of others.

And yet, especially with respect to "giving," our Savior was so strict and inexorable.

What was not given for God's sake had no count. When the right hand knew of it, the left hand was condemned. To give from one's abundance was worthless. Only what was given from one's indigence, from one's living, shone in the treasure-chest of the Lord as fine gold of Ophir.

You remember the Jerusalem widow, on whose behalf no one made a benefit-feast, but *who herself gave* all she had in her house, two small farthings, money for which bread should have been bought, and which she spared her own mouth, to devote it to the Lord her God.

Well, before and after this widow's offering, gold and silver was cast by the handfuls into the treasury-chest. But this did not prevent Jesus from saying in the hearing of all: These two farthings of this woman are more than all this gold and silver. For what the others cast in was from their abundance; what this woman gave, she gave from her poverty (Luke 21:3).



"Giving" is a trait of beauty of soul, for which, when you may observe it among your people, in your own circle, in your own house, and in your own heart, you should give thanks.

"Giving" by way of exception, to make a great show, was indigenous with the heathen, and

to a certain extent is this to this day. But *giving* as we see it in our Christian circles, and more strikingly still in English, Scotch, and American

lands, is a fruit of *Christian faith*.

We stand far behind England's colossal gifts. But he who considers what especially not the well-to-do, but the people of small means among us give; give in church offerings; give to sub-

*Only what was given
from one's indigence,
from one's living,
shone in the treasure-chest
of the Lord as fine gold
of Ophir.*

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

scriptions; give to associations, for school and church; and then what is given at times privately, to help unfortunates, finds that it reaches a total that is truly astonishing.

One cannot estimate such sums. *True* giving escapes statistics, and is bound to do so. But so much can be said, that all money devoted in other circles to pleasure and travel and excursions is in these circles to the last cent brought to the altar of love. And that there are savings and privations, and garments worn somewhat threadbare, for the sake of the greater joy of making somewhat more liberal contributions, or of giving to something for which thus far no gift had been set apart.

There hides in this one of the vital powers of soul on the part of our lesser well-to-do people. It is a larger grace that is given them of God, the strengthening and ennobling of which reacts upon all their life and existence.



There is *an art* in giving, which you must learn of God or never know it.

There is first the ordinary, general giving to be rid of it. Laying up and accumulating so many thousands, and then also ten dollars or more for the needs of all Christendom together.

One drop from the abundance. And therefore without moral value, because there is no saving, no privation, no restriction of luxury back of it.

That was giving *without art*. Giving for the sake of doing our part with others. Well meant, but with no inner address from the heart behind it.

One gave nothing for his church. No penny for Christian schools. A small contribution to three or four associations. And then a bit of loose money for the coming and going man.

But by "need" God has modified this, and introduced *art* therein.

Ten times as much more is

estimated too little to express the difference between what the ordinary man now contributes yearly, compared with what he used to give before.

He who took the trouble to count all the budgets, great and small, of all diaconates, churches, schools, and associations, etc., which in our country keep head above water, and thereby in his thoughts kept apart *grosso modo* what comes from the pockets of the humbler classes, would ask himself with astonishment, how from such people, counting so few rich among them, such colossal sums could have been raised.

Yet no one has less because of it. The general feeling has rather been heightened thereby than depressed. Of becoming poorer by giving there has been no mention.

And if in connection with money you refer to the wondrous mystery, which is implied in "the blessing of our God," confess freely, that here the blessing is seen.

Something of the oil in the vessel from which continually went out and was not emptied.



Such giving as fruit of higher, holier art, was at the same time productive of indirect benefits.

Think of your *church* life.

It is almost universally recognized among the confessors of the Lord that conditions in Reformed and Lutheran churches subsidized on the part of the State are unbearable. Nothing was more desired than to make an end to them. But...this meant standing on feet of one's own. Then the goldstream of the State freezes over and flows no more. Then everything must be paid by themselves. Who will be able to meet it? Who dares to face it?

That is the rock on which the churchly zeal of so many foundered.

But it was altogether different

in those circles in which the holy art of giving had been learned. There was no need there to ask how the money was to come. There was known what the art of giving was capable of doing. And the happy outcome was that, through the art of giving, one regained his liberty in Christ, while the other brothers from lack of power to give remained in the clutches of their chains.

So it is with respect to social interests.

There is no equality on earth, but Love can do all things, and is the power in this world that smoothes many unevennesses, and thereby dulls the sharpness of the same.

Here also this power of Love has shone out. Not the pride of the benefactor who dispenses charities from the heights, and thereby insults, but the love that gives for God's sake, and thus on the part of God distributes to those of lesser and humbler estate.



Of course, giving of princely gifts is something altogether different, belonging to an altogether different order of things, and in our country one knows merely from hearsay what is ordinary in America.

Gifts of a million dollars at once, or even of seven millions as a while ago was given by one man to the University of Chicago, we know nothing of. Only at times, such as recently, when we were taken by surprise by a large gift of many thousands. But for the rest the impulse of such large gifts, in life or at death, is not yet indigenous with us. Though we must not forget that fortunes among us do not begin to measure up to accumulations elsewhere. Also that no little human vanity and jealousy find expression in such gifts.

Yet we do not relinquish hope that, among us also, great capital

shall come to the practice of this noble art. Of course, according to the measure of our power, but still as exhibition of higher enthusiasm. There are so many institutions that only in this way can be founded and maintained.

But whatever course this takes, it is certain that, after Jesus' standard, the bottom of the money-chest of mercy is yet by no means seen.

Already now we give ten times more than fifty years ago, but in the fifty years to come this already large sum may well be doubled or tripled.

If he who is just a little above the humbler class could be persuaded to apply this system of giving, an incredibly large sum would thereby be rendered available.

Even then the point would not be reached at which finally Jesus would have us.

Jesus desires self-restriction in spending, so that giving may be enlarged. Jesus does not disapprove, but calls it praiseworthy,

that the poorest take part in giving.

Take the two together, both that you come to the art of needing less for yourself, and of giving what you save thereby for God's sake and for His cause, and that on every hand you widen the circle of givers, and guess yourself what this would imply.

The poor widow who gave her two mites out of her living has, age upon age, been the means in God's hand of making rich the church of God in the world; and surely the sum cannot be estimated that the memory alone of this woman, by putting self to shame, has brought to the altar of Christian charity.

This woman gave her two farthings in the treasury, but by the mention of her on the Gospel-page millions and again millions to Christ's church.

And this propaganda goes on not only among the more poor. Relatively the members of your household also are not rich in

money, and your children, who live on you, have but a small sum of money weekly or annually at their disposal.

All these must learn to *give*, give from a need of their own soul, give of what is saved and of what they have denied themselves, that later on, when God shall have entrusted more to them, they will of themselves give more abundantly.

So the treasures of Christ's church are well-nigh numberless.

Provided she casts it upon her Lord, He, whose the gold and the silver is, shall neither forsake her nor put her to shame.

This is the mystery of self-sufficiency in the love of Christ. It always demands more, but is also always ready to make still greater demands upon itself.

It is with this as with the vapors that rise up to the heavens, presently in abundant rains to descend from thence again.

The need itself here brings provision. 

All Around Us

Rev. Clay Spronk

Father Richard John Neuhaus

Father Richard John Neuhaus died on January 8, 2009. Father Neuhaus was an influential man. Some even give him partial credit for the two-term presidency of George W. Bush. Daniel Burke (in an article posted January 9, 2009 on christianitytoday.com) began his report on Neuhaus' death stating, "The Rev. Richard John Neuhaus, an eminent Catholic intellectual who tutored President Bush in Catholic social teaching and helped build the political coalition that made his election possible, died Thursday at age 72." Not only is

Neuhaus credited with helping Bush get elected, but he also had the President's ear and influenced him regarding political issues. In a statement quoted by Burke, President Bush credited Neuhaus with helping him formulate his position on abortion.

As impressive as Neuhaus' connection to President Bush was, we take note of his passing for different reasons. We take note of his passing especially because he, along with Charles Colson, was the instigator of the prominent ecumenical movement towards reuniting Protestants and Roman Catholics, known as Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT). Interviewed by Susan Wunderkind for *Christianity Today* ("The Post-Neuhaus Future of Evangelicals and Catholics

Together," christianitytoday.com) Colson reported,

In 1992 [Neuhaus and I] were at a meeting where he had convened a number of Catholic and evangelical scholars, theologians, and activists to consider a report which was coming from two British sociologists about proselytization and open conflict in Latin America, the state persecuting evangelicals, evangelicals desecrating sacred objects. It was during that two-day meeting that I felt this real moving of the Holy Spirit to say to Neuhaus, "We need to have discussions like this frequently and pursue common ground." That's where ECT was born.

After its birth, Neuhaus became a leader as a Roman Catholic representative in ECT's efforts to

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heal the breach between Roman Catholics and Protestants.

As a leader and active member of ECT, Neuhaus shares responsibility for perhaps the most significant document the group published in 1997, entitled "Gift of Salvation" (this document can be found on this website: www.leaderu.com/ftissues/ft9801/articles/gift.html). This is an important document because it deals with the all-important doctrine of justification, which stands at the heart of the division between Roman Catholics and Protestants. In this document the members of ECT set forth the doctrine of justification in a way that they believe is acceptable to both Roman Catholics and Protestants. Colson is confident of this document's success, stating, "I make no pretense that the Reformation is over; but the issue which precipitated it has been solved."

Did ECT really solve the issue of justification and make reunification possible for Roman Catholics and Protestants? The answer to this question is very important for evaluation of the work of Neuhaus and ECT.

A detailed evaluation and critique of ECT's doctrine of justification will not be given here; for that I direct you to Professor David Engelsma's 1999 articles in this magazine on the ECT (see also Dr. R. Scott Clark's evaluation found at: <http://www.ws-cal.edu/clark/regensburg.php>). Suffice it to say that the ECT's doctrine of justification is not the doctrine of justification by faith alone taught by Luther, Calvin, and the Reformed confessions. It is a compromise that in clever and devious ways mixes man's own righteousness with the righteousness of Christ as the basis for justification and salvation.

Father Neuhaus believed in and promoted a form of the false gospel of justification by faith and works.

In light of this fact alone it is

almost beyond comprehension that Father Neuhaus' work is being lauded, or at best lightly criticized in Evangelical/Protestant magazines.

Christianity Today's evaluation of Neuhaus in the article by Burke cited above is entirely positive in its summary of Neuhaus' work and influence (probably not surprising, considering that Colson is a columnist for the magazine). *World Magazine's* Mindy Belz recognizes that Neuhaus' work drew criticism from both Roman Catholics and Protestants, but she begins her article about Neuhaus' death stating, "Protestant evangelicals have lost a friend who himself was a Roman Catholic." Belz goes on to praise Neuhaus for his fairness in treating both Roman Catholics and Protestants, writing, "[I]t was a rarity indeed for anyone on either side of the divide to charge Neuhaus with unfairness in his portrayal of friends or foes—a record that was more remarkable because of the sheer volume of his literary output and notable for his kindness in engaging opponents."

Perhaps the most startling positive evaluation of Neuhaus is found on the pages of *Christian Renewal*, which advertises itself as "A magazine of distinctively Reformed faith and vision," in an article entitled "The Rev. Richard John Neuhaus: *Loved and mourned by many.*" In the last two paragraphs of this article, Harry Antonides writes,

Neuhaus was a brilliant polemicist but always magnanimous toward his critics and adversaries. He was unapologetic in his defence of the Christian faith as an indispensable guardian of freedom. He suggested

that on that score we may be in for a time of severe testing.

It is fitting for us Protestants to recognize and celebrate this convert to Roman Catholicism as a brother in the faith who was a gifted yet humble servant of Christ. His life and work have much to teach us about living faithfully, and yes even joyfully and exuberantly, in an age of great spiritual confusion and turmoil.

A lost friend? A defender of the Christian faith? A brother in the faith and a servant of Christ? Is this really how we Protestants should evaluate and therefore celebrate the life of a man who denied the great *biblical* and *Reformed* doctrine of justification by faith alone? Not hardly!

Scripture's evaluation of the denial of justification by faith alone and of those who deny justification by faith alone is much harsher. Therefore our evaluation must be harsher. In Galatians 2:4 Paul does

not speak of the Judaizers who taught works righteousness as brethren in Christ but calls them instead "*false brethren.*" Father Neuhaus' false teaching concerning the doctrine of justification alone

must not be excused because he was fair and magnanimous towards friend and foe. His false doctrine must be condemned. And so serious was his corruption and promotion of a false gospel that it prevents us from viewing him as a brother in the faith. His faith was different from ours. He did not share with us in the faith that holds to Jesus Christ as the complete Savior (LD 11). He believed in a Christ who only partially saves, who started the work of salvation that must be completed by the works of the believer.

Father Neuhaus' false teaching concerning the doctrine of justification alone must not be excused because he was fair and magnanimous towards friend and foe.

Neuhaus' teaching and promotion of the false gospel of Rome is enough for us to refrain from proclaiming him a brother in the faith and celebrating his life and work. But there is more. Neuhaus was raised a Lutheran. In the 1960s he was ordained as a minister in the Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod). In 1990 he left the Lutheran church for the Roman Catholic Church. In 1991 he was ordained a priest in the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, Neuhaus was not raised on Roman Catholic doctrine, but was raised on Lutheran doctrine. He was taught Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone. He was also taught the other differences between Protestantism and Romanism. When he joined the Roman Catholic Church, Neuhaus consciously repudiated all the great doctrines of the Reformation and accepted not only the Roman Catholic false doctrine on

justification, but also the worship of Mary, the supremacy and apostolic succession of the papacy, the accursed idolatry of the mass, and all of the other abominations of Rome.


One who falls away from the truth into error is not worthy of being called a brother in the faith. The word that describes what Neuhaus was guilty of is apostasy. He was an apostate Lutheran. This is all the more reason that we ought to condemn rather than celebrate Neuhaus' actions.

At this point some might be thinking this is all rather negative and judgmental. I assure the reader that the point is not to judge father Neuhaus. He will be judged and at death was preliminarily judged by Jesus Christ. We leave the judgment to Him.

Though we must not presume to be Neuhaus' judges, we must in light of Scripture condemn

his apostasy and promotion of the false doctrine of justification. Warning bells ought to go off as we see that Evangelicals/Protestants are willing to overlook these faults. To overlook these faults is to give the impression that apostatizing from the Protestant faith to Rome is not so serious.

It is time for us to remind ourselves of the importance of justification by faith alone. We must remember that justification by faith alone is the heart of the gospel and the source of unspeakable comfort. We must teach our children to know, love, and never compromise the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

Richard John Neuhaus was an influential man. The pressure is on. It will only become greater. May God grant our churches and our children the strength to withstand it and to hold tightly to Christ and His righteousness alone. 

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. James Laning

The Millennium of Dispensationalism (1)

A Bizarre Mixing of the Earthly and the Heavenly

Dispensationalists maintain that, prior to the final judgment, the Israelis must rule on earth for a thousand years. This millennial reign, they insist, must take place for the covenant promises made in the Old Testament to be fulfilled. In

their mind, if there is no earthly millennium in the future, then God will be going back on His word.

We often refute this idea by pointing out that God promised Abraham a heavenly land, not an earthly one. To prove this we turn to passages such as Hebrews 11:13-16, which refers to the city promised to Abraham as a *heavenly city*. Dispensationalists, of course, are aware that passages such as this are found in the

Scriptures. So they know they have to attempt to explain them. And when they try to do so, their efforts actually serve to make even more evident the bizarre and erroneous conclusions to which dispensationalism leads.

To see what I mean, all one needs to do is consider how the dispensationalists explain what life is going to be like during the millennium. Their erroneous view of the covenant is clearly manifested in the strange way

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Previous article in this series: January 15, 2009, p. 176.

these covenant promises are supposedly going to be fulfilled. Thus it will be worthwhile to consider a few of their central teachings about the coming age that they say has to take place. Doing so should help to prepare us to point out to the dispensationalists where they go wrong. It should also serve to get us to consider some truths that we may not have noticed if God had not raised up the dispensational system.

Heavenly Land Promised to Abraham

Let us begin by considering what kind of land God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We all know that He promised them the land of Canaan. But how are we to interpret this promise? In the mind of a dispensationalist, this promise needs no interpretation. He thinks it should be obvious to everyone that the reference is to the present-day land of Palestine. But is this the way Scripture interprets this promise? Is this what God led the patriarchs themselves to believe?

To understand the answer to this question, we must first consider the fact that when God promised Abraham the land of Canaan, He made known that this was something Abraham would receive, not in this life, but in the life to come. Proof of this is found in the fact that Abraham himself never owned the land God promised him.

The Scriptures make this clear. God showed Abraham the land of Canaan and said to him:

I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it (Gen. 15:7b).

Yet Abraham died before he ever owned the land. Stephen, speaking of what God gave Abraham,

placed emphasis upon this very point:

And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession... (Acts 7:5a).

God promised it; yet in this life he never received it. Thus it is easy to see that God was promising to give Abraham this land in the life to come.

That this was what God meant was indicated also by the fact that God told Abraham that this land would be his *everlasting* possession:

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

Certainly Abraham was going to die. So how was he going to own the land forever? The only possible answer is that this land was going to be possessed by Abraham after he was raised from the dead.

This then leads us to yet another question: What kind of land could and would be possessed by someone who had been raised to a heavenly life? When Christ returns, our bodies will be made heavenly, like unto His. Those with heavenly bodies will live in a heavenly land, as is pointed out by the fact that our bodies and the earth on which we live will both be made heavenly on the last day.

Thus it is not surprising to see that Scripture refers to the promised land as a heavenly one. We read of this in the passage from Hebrews that was mentioned earlier. Speaking of the patriarchs, the inspired writer states:

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and

were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city (Heb. 11:13-16).

Thus the Scriptures clearly teach that the land God promised, and the land the patriarchs looked for, was a dwelling place that was not earthly, but heavenly. It is referred to as a heavenly city, as is stated explicitly in the next chapter of Hebrews:

But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels (Heb. 12:22).

The heavenly Jerusalem is the place where Abraham, according to God's promise, would one day live.

The Dispensational Response

So what do the dispensationalists do with this passage? Well, as is often the case, when dispensationalists come across passages that refute their system, they invent a distinction:

It should be noted that this heavenly Jerusalem is not the sphere of the living saved who go into the millennium, for they will look to the rebuilt earthly Jerusalem as their capital city, but is rather the dwelling place of the resurrected saints during the millennium. The living will realize the fulfillment of the national promises of the Old Testament in the millennium, while the resurrected will realize the fulfillment of the expectation of

a “city which hath foundations” during the millennial age.¹

John Walvoord explains this strange distinction in more detail.

Much of the confusion that exists in regard to the millennium and the eternal state stems from a failure to distinguish between the promises that are given to the last generation of saints who are on the earth at the time of the second advent and the promises that are given resurrected or translated saints in both the Old and New Testaments. The prophecies of the Old Testament give adequate basis for the doctrine that Israel has an earthly hope. The prophets in Israel’s darkest hours painted the most glowing picture of the coming earthly kingdom in which Israel would participate as a favored nation and possess their promised land under the reign of the Son of David. The promises as given, however, clearly refer to those who were not resurrected and are directed to the nation of Israel as it is to be constituted at the time of the second advent, that is, the Israelites who will survive the great tribulation. They and their seed will inherit the promised land and fulfill the hundreds of prophecies that have to do with Israel’s hope in the millennial kingdom. These promises are delineated in the Abrahamic, Davidic, Palestinian, and new covenants.

The Old Testament, however, also records promises to saints which are individual in their character. They, for instance, are promised resurrection (Job 19:25–27; Isa. 26:19–20; Dan. 12:2–3). Along with the promise of their resurrection is the promise of reward such as characterizes God’s dealings with the saints in eternity (Dan. 12:3; Mal. 3:16–17)....

This conclusion seems to be confirmed by the New Testament revelation concerning the heavenly city....²

It is here that he brings up Hebrews 11:10 and Hebrews 11:13–16 referred to above. Then he goes on to say:

It is evident from these verses that the hope which was Abraham’s in resurrection had to do with a heavenly city rather than an earthly kingdom.³

So here we see how one schooled in dispensational thought would answer one of our most common objections. They take all the passages that speak of God promising His people a heavenly land, and claim that this heavenly land will be the dwelling place of all believers who die before Christ returns. The earthly promised land, they say, will be possessed only by those who live through the great tribulation and remain alive when Christ returns. These are the people who supposedly will enter the millennial kingdom, continue to live in their corruptible and mortal bodies, marrying and reproducing just as they do today, while enjoying a great abundance of earthly things. But the people who die before the great tribulation or during the great tribulation will miss out on all this. They will receive the heavenly things in the heavenly city, while the earthly people will enjoy earthly peace, prosperity, and dominion on this earth.

A Commingling of Resurrected and Nonresurrected Saints

But what, supposedly, will be the relationship in the millennium between the resurrected

saints who have heavenly bodies and the nonresurrected saints who still have earthly bodies? Will these two groups actually be mingling with each other during this time? Indeed, says the dispensationalist, this will be the case—at least to some extent. Scripture, they say, leaves us in the dark concerning a lot of the details of this time period. But that such a commingling will take place is something they say they are confident will take place:

Though the free mingling of resurrected and nonresurrected beings is contrary to our present experience, there is no valid reason why there should not be a limited amount of such association in the millennial earth.⁴

To prove that this is possible, they make reference to the fact that our resurrected Lord mingled with His disciples, and the heavenly angels have conversed with earthly human beings.

So here we have yet another example of the bizarre conclusions to which dispensationalism leads. A strange mixing of the resurrected and the nonresurrected, the heavenly and the earthly, the immortal and the mortal.

But what is wrong with that? asks the dispensationalist. That it is different from life as we now know it does not mean that it should be ruled out as impossible. How can we prove that such commingling would never take place? We begin by considering this, Lord willing, next time.



¹ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (1958; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Dunham Publishing Co., 1966), 542.

² John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Findlay, OH: Dunham Publishing Co., 1959), 324–5.

³ Walvoord, 326.

⁴ Walvoord, 330.

The Place of Laity in Missions (3)

Leading a Godly Life (2)

Missions and the organic life of the church

What does a godly witness in our lives at home have to do with work on a mission field? A godly witness at home is just that, a work at home. The mission work is many miles away from my witness at home. What does one have to do with the other? The answer is found in the organic relationship between the established church and the mission work of that church. No doubt this is more true in the work of home missions than foreign missions, but foreign missions may not be altogether excluded from this.

The church institute is organically one with its mission work doctrinally, first of all. The doctrines of Scripture that are taught in the church institute are also taught on the mission field. The members of the mission are therefore one in faith with believers in the established church.

But not only doctrines are taught on the mission field. A world-and-life-view, the way the churches view how we ought to live in this world, is also taught. As a result, the members of a mission work also begin to understand what God calls them to do as His children in this world. Through the labors of the missionary, these new saints begin to understand that they have been transformed from this world of sin

and therefore must discard many practices of their former lives and relationships. The saints on the mission field are instructed in what Paul writes to the Ephesian believers in chapter 5:8-11:

For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of the light: ... proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

This instruction can be difficult to put into practice for new converts, since they have families and old friends who are yet lost in sin. Believers on the mission field, therefore, naturally seek out new friendships within the body of believers of which they are a part. They become involved in the organic life of the church itself. When this happens, the lives of God's saints in the established church must serve to reinforce what is being taught to God's saints on the mission field.

This is why faithfulness in our lives at home is the most important way that lay people can become involved in mission work. The members of Christ's church cannot separate the way they live at home from the labor that is being performed in missions. The life of the members of the church will have a direct bearing on missions—especially home missions.

For example, parents who recently have come to faith and repentance have a deep concern for their children, especially for the youth of their families. They want their teenage son or daughter to seek out and find godly friends and eventually spouses. So they send them to a young people's convention. If these sons of tender faith become involved in a basketball game with young men of the church who use foul language and boldly take the name of God in vain, then this leaves a horrible impression on these young men who are new to the church. If these young people of the mission field are exposed to youth of the church who brag about their drunkenness and sexual exploits, these recent converts begin to wonder if a godly life is a requirement of Scripture as the missionary told them it is.

When families from a mission field visit families of the churches because they desire the fellowship of like-minded saints, but the evening is spent talking about

movies they have attended, how does this reinforce the preaching of the missionary? If the members of the church invite a group of friends to their house to visit

with these new converts, but spend the night in drinking alcohol and in empty chatter and laughter, what witness have they left to the gospel that is being preached on the mission field? If members of the established church go to a res-

...the lives of God's saints in the established church must serve to reinforce what is being taught to God's saints on the mission field.

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Previous article in this series: February 15, 2009, p. 229.

restaurant for a Sunday-night snack after church, if we spend our Sunday skipping church in order to travel (activities the members of the mission always seem to hear about), how are the saints on the mission field going to learn to keep the Lord's Day holy?

The first thing that we can do for our mission work as the laity of the established church is to be faithful at home! We must lead a life of godliness at home! If we fail personally to live a life that is consistent with what we teach in our churches, we ought never complain that our mission work is unsuccessful! How can we expect God's blessing on our mission labors if our own lives are not a godly witness to the gospel?

What was it that made the early church grow so rapidly even in the midst of persecution? J. Herbert Kane observes:

Immorality was rampant in all parts of the empire, especially in the urban centers where most of the Christians lived. Such cities as Ephesus, Corinth and

Rome were cesspools of iniquity, in which, according to Tacitus, "vice had charms for all orders of men." In contrast to all this was the wholesome life of the Christians whose business practices, domestic arrangements, civic responsibilities and social relationships reflected the new life in Christ....

Once baptized, the Christian was expected to avoid all sinful practices. If he sinned, he was required to confess. If the sin were grave, he was expected to demonstrate his sorrow by becoming a public penitent. Those who persisted in sin were excommunicated.

Nowhere was the principle of separation from the world


more scrupulously carried out than in the matter of entertainment. The arena, the circus, and the theater were scrupulously avoided....

The church frowned on the theater because of the immorality of the gods and men portrayed there....

Marriage was regarded as an honorable estate, but celibacy was recommended as ideal. Christians were permitted to marry only within their own circle.

Divorce, so common in Roman society, was permitted only if the unbelieving partner demanded it....¹

The life of Christians was different from that of the wicked world about them. Their lives were orderly and secure, as opposed to the dysfunctional and insecure life of unbelievers. The people of the world about them witnessed the conviction and the love of God that was so much a part of the Christian life. Christians were called by their very churches to live what they believed. If they did not, discipline was administered. In many cases God used such a witness to gain converts to Christ. The godly lives of God's saints in the church served the purpose of church growth.

What was true of Christians so long ago must be true of us as God's people today. We ask the question: how can the lay person become involved in mission work? The answer, first of all, is: live godly in Christ Jesus. This witness will make its mark in mission work. 

¹ J. Hebert Kane, *A Concise History of the Christian World Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1982), pp. 27, 28

If we fail personally to live a life that is consistent with what we teach in our churches, we ought never complain that our mission work is unsuccessful!

Translated Treasures

Not Anabaptist But Reformed (12)*

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

Chapter 6. A Sad Conclusion

* 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: January 15, 2009, p. 184.

Except for the questions that Rev. Jan Karel Van Baalen thinks he must put to us, and which, as he seems to think, must be resolved by us, the brother really concludes his pamphlet with a chapter that claims to demonstrate that our view is Anabaptistic.

After all that we have read and criticized up to this point, we did not have high expectations for this chapter. For, in the first place, Rev. Van Baalen never took pains to form an accurate depiction of our view, which he thought was "single track" and rationalistic. Hence the two

chapters that followed, which were supposed to demonstrate that we oppose Scripture and the confessions with our view, were a complete failure. Proceeding now to this chapter, we do not expect that Rev. Van Baalen will make it clear that we are Anabaptistic.

Yet, even though we did not have high expectations, we are still disappointed by the brother. The attempt on his part to smear us with the paint of Anabaptism is definitely sad from almost every point of view. We will explain the reason for our disappointment.

Rev. Van Baalen begins once again with his resentment of our having attacked Dr. Janssen. It is certainly clear that the brother intends to defend Dr. Janssen with this pamphlet. We will not get into that. That matter is truly finished. Rev. Van Baalen will certainly have to be much bolder if he hopes to advance the cause of Janssen. It simply amazes us all the more that our church papers have so highly recommended this pamphlet. Especially Dr. Beets ought to be rebuked for this. He even thought it should have been written in English. He offers no criticism. Gratuitously this veiled defense of Dr. Janssen is again recommended to the people!

Moreover, the first section of this chapter merely serves to inform our people that Rev. Hoeksema once wrote a challenge in the *Banner* for someone to show that he is Anabaptistic. Rev. Van Baalen says he will gladly take that challenge. Now *that* we can accept.

The content of the chapter amounts to this. First of all, Rev. Van Baalen says it is his conviction that an Anabaptist can indeed be a Christian. No one should think, then, that Rev. H. Danhof and Rev. Hoeksema no longer belong to Christendom. We are thankful for that. But an Anabaptist, so writes the brother, is not a Reformed man. He does not belong to our churches. And

we heartily agree with that as well.

Furthermore, Rev. Van Baalen says that the main characteristic of an Anabaptist cannot be identified with a single word. The question, "What actually makes an Anabaptist an Anabaptist?" cannot be answered so easily. Not all Anabaptists thought alike. There were many differences of opinion among them. They did not all think alike even concerning such things as the incarnation of the Word, or on a matter like polygamy. Therefore, if Rev. Danhof and Rev. Hoeksema are accused of Anabaptism, one must not think that this accusation implies that these brethren also are inclined to polygamy, or defend it. And also, according to Rev. Van Baalen, Rev. Danhof's claim went much too far when he wrote that the Anabaptists actually did away with the Scriptures, and especially the Old Testament.

So, according to Rev. Van Baalen, Prof. Berkhof is also quite wrong. Berkhof wrote on "The Spectre of Anabaptism" in *The Witness* and wanted to give the impression that there are absolutely no Anabaptists among us, because there is no one among us who agrees with the Anabaptists in everything. But this means nothing. According to Van Baalen, Prof. Berkhof just wants to lull our Church to sleep. He says: "There is no fire in the city! Just go back to bed! Rest easy!" And brother Van Baalen says "no thanks" to that. He does not want to go to bed before he is certain that there is no fire. Now that is certainly commendable of the brother. But we would still like to remark that a citizen who continually screams "fire," whereas he only sees the moon shining through the trees, and who gets the citizens of the city out of bed with his fire-cry, will eventually become quite a nuisance.

The main characteristic of an Anabaptist, which is so difficult to find, has indeed been found by Rev. Van Baalen. For him it resides in one's interpretation of grace. If, therefore, the brother can just demonstrate that we think exactly like the Anabaptist on the doctrine of grace, then the prosecution has won and we stand forever branded as Anabaptistic. To this endeavor Rev. Van Baalen now devotes what follows in this chapter. Therefore, it is important that we pay close attention here. If the evidence that the brother provides here is conclusive, then we stand condemned. If it is no evidence, then the endeavor is a failure.

What then is the Anabaptistic view of grace?

Rev. Van Baalen gives us two sentences in which the chief characteristic of that view must come to light, which are as follows:

"All salvation is from grace, but that grace is common to all; in so far he [Adam Pastor] goes along with Hoffman."¹

"This universal call presupposes the power to answer it. The cause of one's damnation never lies with God. Many claim that they have not sufficient grace to accept the gospel, and thus they are unwilling to use what they have got."²

Now you must note well, reader, that, in the whole chapter, these are the only two quotations in which Van Baalen draws out the Anabaptistic view of grace for us. These two sentences give us the characteristic view of the Anabaptists on the doctrine of grace. Now read them once again. What is the main characteristic in those sentences? Most certainly this: that they held to

¹ Van Baalen's pamphlet, p. 80. Van Baalen quotes Dr. Dosker, who is writing about the Anabaptist Adam Pastor.

² Van Baalen's pamphlet, p. 81. This is also a quote from Dosker's work.

the view of the Remonstrants and denied the doctrine of free grace, of election and reprobation. Apart from that, there is nothing distinctive in these sentences.

Well then, Rev. Van Baalen himself says that we differ radically from the Anabaptists on this point. Read it yourself: "Fairness demands that we emphasize this point of difference. For the Anabaptists it was the one grace which was offered but not accepted so that the sinner did not will to be saved. And for Rev. Danhof and Rev. Hoeksema it is the one grace which is offered but cannot be accepted so that the sinner cannot be saved."¹ But apart from this there is nothing distinctive in the sentences quoted by Rev. Van Baalen. Everyone will assent to that. Both Pastor and Hoffman universalized saving grace. Well then, we do not agree with the point of this distinctive; we differ radically from it.

What, then, has Rev. Van

Baalen proven? Up to this point his argument goes like this:

a) The main characteristic of an Anabaptist is his view of grace.

b) Rev. Danhof and Rev. Hoeksema differ in principle from the Anabaptists on this point.

c) Conclusion (of Van Baalen): both brothers are Anabaptist.

But our conclusion is that Rev. Van Baalen proves the exact opposite here of what he wanted to prove. So far the endeavor of this chapter is a complete failure.

But we have still more criticism for this section.

Rev. Van Baalen writes: "And for Rev. Danhof and Rev. Hoeksema it is the one grace which is offered but cannot be accepted so that the sinner cannot be saved." This sentence is in the first place evidence of Rev. Van Baalen's thoughtlessness and inaccuracy in writing. Certainly we have never said that grace can be offered but not accepted, and that

the sinner cannot be saved. And the author does not mean it that way either. What he meant is undoubtedly that the sinner cannot accept grace and be saved of himself, even though it is preached to him. But in the second place, we would like to ask whether Rev. Van Baalen's view is different. One gets the impression that he also condemns that view of grace. And that view, brother, is indeed Reformed. You should not write, then, that Rev. Danhof and Rev. Hoeksema think of it that way, but rather that this is the only Reformed position that has ever existed. We think here also of the way in which Van Baalen quoted "God wills that all men be saved," and we ask: Is there not something wrong with you too, brother? Is not something also wrong with your position in regard to election and the total inability of natural man? It makes such a strange impression.

But we are not to the end of the chapter.

... to be continued. 

Ideas Have Consequences: Political Correctness (1)

"And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment."

I Chronicles 12:32

Mr. Kalsbeek is a teacher in Covenant Christian High School and an elder in Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, Michigan.

The ideas of Lukacs, Gramsci, Adorno, and Marcuse have saturated Western civilization in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, yet only a tiny fraction of those who populate the nations with their roots in Western civilization have heard of even one of them.

And the consequences of their ideas have not been for the better! In fact the ideas of these men have had the effect that, "[i]n half a lifetime, many

Americans have seen their God dethroned, their heroes defiled, their culture polluted, their values assaulted, their country invaded, and themselves demonized as extremists and bigots for holding on to beliefs Americans have held for generations."²

Today we commonly label a consequence of their ideas as

² Patrick J. Buchanan, *The Death of the West* (St. Martin's Press, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York, 2002) 5.

“political correctness.” Thus it is our intent in this article (and one to follow) to examine political correctness: what it is, where it came from, how it is being promoted, its serious consequences, and why present-day Issachar ought to be concerned.

What is it?

Political correctness is not all that easy to define. By Wikipedia we are told,

Political correctness is a term applied to language, ideas, policies, or behavior seen as seeking to minimize offense to gender, racial, cultural, disabled, aged or other identity groups. Conversely, the term “politically incorrect” is used to refer to language or ideas that may cause offense or that are unconstrained by orthodoxy.¹

As can be seen from this definition, some key terms come into play when considering political correctness—terms that in themselves seem quite innocent and harmless, but terms nevertheless that are loaded with meaning when connected with their politically correct ideology. Brannon S. Howse writes about four of these terms and the ideas they represent when defined from a politically correct viewpoint:

Tolerance means that one person never expresses a judgment about someone else’s ideas, beliefs, and values from a worldview of absolute truth. Tolerance demands that you not only accept the other worldview but that you value their worldview—unless, of course, their worldview is Biblical Christianity. Tolerance is very intolerant of Bible-minded Christians.

Diversity or sensitivity training is about the normalizing of the homosexual lifestyle.

Multiculturalism is not the study of many cultures but the

criticism of the Western Culture and its founding worldview of Christianity. Multiculturalism also desires to destroy patriotism.

Feminism is not about equal rights for women but about the destruction of a patriarchal society in favor of a matriarchal society. In other words, the goal of feminism is the destruction of the family by eliminating the husband and father as the provider, protector, and principled leader of his home.²

Consequently, according to the doctrines of political correctness, for one to say that affirmative action is unfair results in being labeled “racist.” Or to say that homosexuality is a disorder (as the American Psychiatric Association said it was prior to 1973) is to be labeled “homophobe.” Or to say that women should not be placed in military combat positions is to be labeled “sexist.” Or to say that your culture is superior to another is to be labeled “xenophobe.” Or to say that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation is to be labeled “bigot.” Or to say that radical jihadists have support for their actions in the *Koran* is to be labeled “Islamophobe.” And so it goes. By means of this labeling tactic, those advancing the cause of political correctness effectively stymie meaningful debate of their ideas.

Where did it come from?

Contrary to much conventional wisdom, the roots of political correctness can be found long before the hippies and the peace movement of the American student rebellion of the 1960s. Rather, the fascinating history of political correctness can be connected to the time of World War I. It may be worth the effort to

examine this history in some detail, for the history of the movement explains why many refer to political correctness as “cultural Marxism.”

Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, and their disciples had confidently predicted that when war broke out in Europe the workers (proletariat) of those nations would rise up in rebellion against their rulers (bourgeois) rather than fight their fellow workers. But, alas, to their dismay it never happened.

When the call came, the worker, whom Marx declared to have no Fatherland, identified himself with country, not class. He turned out to be a member of the national family like anyone else. The force of his antagonism, which was supposed to topple capitalism, found a better target in the foreigner. The working class went to war willingly, even eagerly, like the middle class, like the upper class, like the species.³

Could it be that Marx had been wrong?

Two of Marx’s disciples, Georg Lukacs and Antonio Gramsci, concluded that indeed Marx had been wrong! They observed that capitalism was not impoverishing the workers as Marx had said, and the workers had not risen in rebellion. The reason: two thousand years of the indoctrination of Christianity had blinded them to their true class interests. The solution, they said, was to uproot Christianity and Western culture from the soul of Western man. Only then could Marxism proceed as Marx had said it would.

In keeping with this proposed solution, Lukacs, as Deputy Commissar for Culture in Hungary, put his self-described “demonic” ideas into action in what came to

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_correctness

² Brannon S. Howse, “Political Correctness is Cultural Marxism,” *Worldview Weekend Digest*, Summer/Fall, 2008:16.

³ Barbara Tuchman, *The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World Before the War: 1890-1914* (Ballantine Books, New York, New York, 1993), 462.

be known as “cultural terrorism.” Part of his program was to impose a radical sex education program in the Hungarian schools, where children “were instructed in free love, sexual intercourse, the archaic nature of middle-class family codes, the outdatedness of monogamy, and the irrelevance of religion, which deprives man of all pleasures. Women, too, were called to rebel against the sexual mores of the time.”¹ Lukacs’s purpose, of course, was to destroy the family, which he believed was the core institution of Christianity and Western culture.

The second disciple of Marx who believed Marx had been wrong was an Italian Communist, Antonio Gramsci. As a communist, Gramsci was not welcome in Mussolini’s fascist Italy. Consequently he fled to Russia in 1922, only to discover that communism wasn’t working there. As Gramsci saw it, the Russian people loathed communism and were kept in line only by means of a reign of terror. Like Lukacs, Gramsci concluded that it was their Christian souls that had prevented the Russian people from embracing the Communist revolution. A regime grounded in Judeo-Christian beliefs and values could not be overthrown until those roots were cut. If Christianity was the shield of capitalism, then to capture the West, Marxists must first de-Christianize the West.² The disillusioned Gramsci left Russia and returned to Italy to lead the Italian Communist Party. Upon his return, Gramsci would spend many years in Mussolini’s prison and die shortly after his release in 1937. However, Gramsci left behind his *Prison Notebooks* containing his

plans for a successful Marxist revolution in the West.

Rather than seize power first and impose a cultural revolution from above, Gramsci argued, Marxists in the West must first change the culture; then power would fall into their laps like ripened fruit. But to change the culture would require a “long march through the institutions”—the arts, cinema, theater, schools, colleges, seminaries, newspapers, magazines and the new electronic medium, radio. One by one, each had to be captured and converted and politicized into an agency of revolution. Then the people could be slowly educated to understand and even welcome revolution.³

That plan Gramsci encouraged his fellow travelers to implement wherever, however, and whenever they could. That they *did* is obvious to all those who are “understanding the times.” A specific example of this was experienced by the undersigned in an assigned reading years ago for a college history class: *The Greening of America*, by Charles Reich. In the inside cover of this 1970 bestseller, Reich echoes Gramsci’s road-map for the future:

There is a revolution coming. It will not be like revolutions of the past. It will originate with the individual and with culture, and it will change the political structure only as its final act. It will not require violence to succeed, and it cannot be successfully resisted with violence. It is now spreading with amazing rapidity, and already our laws, institutions, and social structure are changing in consequence.... This is the revolution of the new generation.⁴

Step by step the ideas of Lukacs and Gramsci appear to be

winning the day in the West, but how did their ideas wend their way to America? To answer that question we must direct our attention to the Frankfurt School. In 1923 Lukacs and members of the German Communist party set up at Frankfurt University an institute for Marxism originally named the Institute of Social Research. Later it would be renamed the Frankfurt School and here, to make a long story short, the difficult work of translating Marxism into the cultural terms of Lukacs and Gramsci took place. But in 1933 events in Germany interrupted their work when Adolf Hitler ascended to power. Since the leaders of the Frankfurt School were Jewish and Marxist, to put it mildly, they were less than a good fit in the Third Reich. Consequently they looked for a new home and found it at Columbia University in New York City, where they “redirected their talents and energies to undermining the culture of the country that had given them refuge.”⁵

A key weapon used by the Frankfurt School to undermine the culture of their adopted country was “Critical Theory.” Although the term sounds rather bland and harmless, what it stands for is not. A definition of “Critical Theory” by one of its adherents makes that clear: it is

essentially destructive criticism of all the main elements of Western culture, including Christianity, capitalism, authority, the family, patriarchy, hierarchy, morality, tradition, sexual restraint, loyalty, patriotism, nationalism, heredity, ethnocentrism, convention, and conservatism.⁶

“Critical Theory” is put into practice by the cultural Marxist by simply repeating over

¹ Buchanan, 75.

² Gerald L. Atkinson, “What Is the Frankfurt School?” August 1, 1999, p. 2. <http://www.newtotalitarians.com/FrankfurtSchool.html>.

³ Buchanan, 77.

⁴ Charles A. Reich, *The Greening of America* (Bantam Books, New York, New York, 1971) 2.

⁵ Buchanan, 80.

⁶ Michael Lowy, *Georg Lukacs: From Romanticism to Bolshevism* (London: NLB, 1979), p.112.

and over how the West is guilty of genocide against every culture. Over and over he repeats that Western societies are racist, sexist, homophobic, fascist, etc. Over and over an attitude of pessimism, hopelessness, and despair in Western society is promoted. The idea behind the theory is that by means of its continuous drum-beat criticism, the people (particularly the captive audience in the public schools, colleges, and universities) will be conditioned to see its society and country as oppressive, evil, and unworthy of its loyalty and love.

In 1950 Marxist Theodor Adorno promoted "Critical Theory" in his book *The Authoritarian Personality*. His book would become a handbook for a national campaign against any kind of prejudice or discrimination on the theory that if these evils were not removed, another Holocaust might occur on the American continent. This campaign, in

turn, provided a basis for what we call today "political correctness." Adorno's book would also promote the concept of "cultural determinism." Thus, according to Adorno's way of thinking, for example, if a family is deeply Christian and capitalist, ruled by an authoritarian father, you may expect the children to grow up racist and fascist. One can easily see where this thinking leads: that which once was considered merely old-fashioned now becomes a psychological disorder, which very likely will need treatment. The "secret formula," as described by psychologist Thomas Szasz, is this: "If you want to debase what a person is doing... call him mentally ill."

With the Frankfurt School's ideas of cultural Marxism in place, all that was needed was a "new" proletariat to replace the old one. Remember, Marx's proletariat hadn't come through;

the working class had *not* risen to the task of the Marxist revolution. Enter Herbert Marcuse! Marcuse would provide the answer to the question: "Who will play the role of the proletariat in the coming cultural revolution?" His candidates for this important task would include radical youth, feminists, black militants, homosexuals, the alienated, the asocial, and Third World revolutionaries—in other words, all the persecuted "victims" of the West.¹

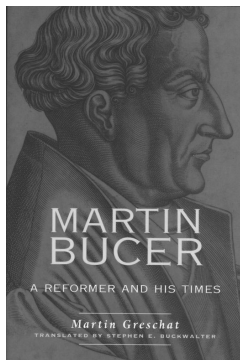
Not only would Marcuse provide the manpower (person-power?) for the revolution that would overthrow Western culture, he would also provide the revolution's slogan. Against the backdrop of an increasingly unpopular Vietnam War his battle cry captured what the cultural revolution was all about: "Make love, not war."

... to be concluded. 

¹ Buchanan, 85.

Bring the books...

Rev. William Langerak



Martin Bucer: A Reformer and His Times, by Martin Greschat. Tr. Stephen E. Buckwalter. Westminster John Knox Press (2004). ISBN: 978-0664226909. Paper. Reviewed by David J. Engelsma.

This is a fine, well-written, and authoritative account of the life, work, and theology of the important, if secondary, Reformer Martin Bucer. Bucer was an early convert of Martin Luther, an instructor in important respects of

John Calvin, and a Reformer in his own right. Greschat's work, originally published in German in 1990, is the first biography of Bucer in seventy years.

The author, a leading Bucer scholar, does justice to the fascinating life and important work of the Strasbourg Reformer. Bucer lived and worked at the center of the developing sixteenth century Reformation of the church. The book examines Bucer's prominent role in the reform at Strasbourg, his influence upon Calvin, his deep involvement in the controversy among Protestants over the Lord's Supper, his efforts on behalf of the unity of the church, and his work in England at the end of his life to bring about the kingdom of Christ there.

To follow Bucer in this book is to come into close contact with

almost every major figure in all the churches, to attend virtually every important conference, and to plunge into every controversy, during the early, heady, crucial days of the Reformation.

Bucer's distinctive theology is outlined. Sharing the gospel of salvation by grace alone with all the Reformers, Bucer had his own emphases, including the law as the demand for love of one's neighbor and the pervasive work of the Holy Spirit in church and state to build the kingdom of Christ.

Regarding Bucer's grievous faults and sins, the author is uncritical, if not sympathetic. These include Bucer's compromise of the truth for the sake of outward church unity and his atrocious doctrine of the lawfulness of divorce and remarriage for almost

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any reason. According to Bucer, husbands and wives may divorce if they are not happy in their marriages. John Milton seized on this teaching to justify his own divorce as an escape from an unhappy marriage. Greschat sees in Bucer's doctrine of marriage the influence of Erasmus.

Bucer showed his love for Luther, as well as his own commitment to the gospel of grace that Luther proclaimed, in his comments on Luther's death. Despite the fact that Luther had violently condemned him for his

doctrine of the Supper and for his readiness to compromise, as well as having notoriously referred to him as "a chatterbox" on account of his garrulousness, Bucer wrote the finest obituary of Luther I have ever read.

I know how many people hate Luther. And yet the fact remains: God loved him very much and never gave us a holier and more effective instrument of the Gospel. Luther had shortcomings, in fact, serious ones. But God bore them and put up with them, never granting another mortal a

mightier spirit and such divine power to proclaim His Son and strike down the Antichrist. If God so accepted him and drew him near to Himself in spite of his being a sinner—a sinner, of course, who abhorred evil like no other—who am I, a wretched servant and miserable sinner who shows so little zeal in pursuing justice, to reject him and turn him down on account of his failings, which we, of course, should not condone? Do we not often ask others to tolerate even greater failings in ourselves? (pp. 207, 208).



News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Seminary Activities

Our seminary recently extended a thank-you to the council and congregation of the Hull, IA PRC for their gracious hosting of the internship of Seminarian Cory Griess this past year. These internships have proven to be very profitable for the students and congregations involved, and with God's blessing will continue to be in the future. In addition, our seminary was also grateful to Hull for their love and kindness shown to Cory and his wife, Lael, during Lael's long hospitalization in Sioux Falls, SD and after the birth of their twin sons, Simeon and JohnOwen.

However, the story does not end there. Because JohnOwen needed to undergo further testing and treatment of his stomach issues, doctors in Sioux Falls recommended that the family return soon to Grand Rapids, MI to begin that transition in his care. Since the preemie twins were not

allowed on a commercial flight, the only other option appeared to be a long drive back, with stops every two hours to feed the babies. Thankfully, Mr. Tim Talsma, a member of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI, learned of the Griess' plight and offered to fly the family back to Grand Rapids in his plane. Christmas Day was the only day that provided a window of good weather to fly, so Mr. Talsma graciously flew himself and Lael's father out to Sioux Falls. He picked up Lael and Lael's mother, who was out in Sioux Falls helping with the twins, and flew them back. They returned to Grand Rapids in two and a half hours time.

Cory and his father-in-law drove their family vehicle back to Grand Rapids. The two of them left as soon as the plane took off and drove all day Christmas, arriving back at 3:30 A.M. the following morning.

Before they got back, some of the Griesses' extended family, with volunteers from Georgetown PRC and the seminary students, had already moved all Cory and Lael's belongings into a new

duplex, so that all they had to do was pop into their already-moved-in and made-up bed. And for the first time in four months they had the whole family under one roof again.

We join with our Hull congregation as we thank God for the six months the Griesses could spend in the Hull congregation. We rejoice with them that, arriving as a couple, they left as a family, and we pray for God's continued blessing upon them for all their spiritual and physical needs.

The consistories of the First PRC in Holland, MI and the Randolph, WI PRC have agreed to the request of the seminary faculty that they host the internships of Seminarian Martyn McGeown and Seminarian Daniel Holstege, respectively. These two men are currently in their third year of seminary and, the Lord willing, will serve those internships from July through December of this year.

Congregation Activities

Once again this year the members of the Georgetown PRC

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

in Hudsonville, MI enjoyed their yearly church conference. This year's conference was held over a two-day period, January 30, 31, at the Camp Geneva Retreat Center in Holland, MI. Rev. Ken Smith, from the Biblical Counseling Center, addressed the conference on the subject, "Conflict Management for Peaceful Living."

Mission Activities

As many of our readers know, Rev. R. Smit, pastor of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada, accepted the call from the Doon, IA PRC to serve as missionary in the Philippines. Our denomination's Foreign Mission Committee and Doon are presently making preparations for the Smit family to move to NW Iowa during the second week of February, the Lord willing. They will live there for several months as Rev. Smit prepares for the move to the Philippines. He will be doing some mission course work, intensive language training in Tagalog, and other preparation work assigned by the FMC. May God bless the saints in the Philippines, the saints in Immanuel, the Smits, and our denomination as we seek to heed our Lord's calling in Matthew 28:19-20.

The Pittsburgh Mission has scheduled the celebration of the Lord's Supper to take place for the first time there on March 15. In anticipation of that event, Pittsburgh's confessing members were encouraged to learn more about the sacrament through a series of classes by Rev. Bruinsma on the meaning, implications, and importance of the Lord's Supper. These three classes were scheduled for February 11, 18, and 25.

School Activities

The kindergarten and 1st and 2nd grade students of Hull PR Christian School in Hull, IA gave a chapel on January 22 at the Hull PRC. Rev. A. Brummel

spoke on the theme, "Treasures of Snow," from Job 38:22.

Have you noticed, as we have, the increasing number of teaching positions that are currently open in at least nine different PR schools? By our count, and this is early February, so that number will change, there are eleven positions currently open.

Young Adult Activities

The Young Adults of the South Holland, IL PRC hosted a special music night on February 1 at Cornerstone PRC. The young adults were looking for volunteers of all ages to share their God-given musical talents. Instruments of all kinds were welcome, as well as solos, duets, quartets, etc. A collection was

taken to benefit the South Holland Young Adults Retreat of 2009.

Minister Activities

Rev. G. Eriks of the Hudsonville, MI PRC declined the call he received from the Calvary PRC in Hull, IA.

The Byron Center, MI PRC has extended a call to Rev. R. Kleyn, pastor of the Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI, to be their next pastor.

The Lord blessed Rev. Andy and Stephanie Lanning, of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI, with the addition of another daughter, Megan Elisabeth, to their family. Megan was born on January 22.



Announcements

NOTICE!! 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?

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council of Grandville PRC expresses its Christian sympathy to Tom and Dan Bodbyl and their families in the death of their mother,

MRS. TILLIE BODBYL.

May the families find comfort in the knowledge of our deliverance found in Psalm 116:7-9: "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living."

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

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 the Lynden PRC express Christian sympathy to Mrs. Jenny Tolsma and Mr. and Mrs. John B. Tolsma and family in the calling to his eternal home of husband, father, and grandfather,

MR. JOHN TOLSMA, SR.

May the family find great comfort in God's word from John 17:24, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am."

Rev. Ron Hanko, President
John Heystek, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of the Lynden PRC express Christian sympathy to Mrs. Chris DenHartog, Calvin and Bethany DenHartog and family, and to Herman and Janny Molenkamp and family in the death of their husband, father, grandfather, brother, and uncle,

MR. JACK DEN HARTOG.

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

Rev. Ron Hanko, President
John Heystek, Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With thankfulness to God, we celebrated the 65th wedding anniversary of our parents,

HENRY and ANN KAMPHUIS,

on February 29, 2009. We thank our heavenly Father for providing us with parents who gave us covenant instruction, and for the many blessings He has given them, and to us through them. May God graciously provide for them in the remainder of their earthly pilgrimage.

"For this God is our God forever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death" (Psalm 48:14).

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| * Phyllis King | * Dan Kamphuis |
| * Roger Kamphuis | * Tom and Irene Kamphuis |
| * Jim and Beverly Langerak | 31 grandchildren |
| * Don and Mary Kamphuis | 47 great grandchildren |
| * John and Sally Kamphuis | |
| * Bob Kamphuis | |

Grand Rapids, Michigan

CALL TO ASPIRANTS TO THE MINISTRY

All young men desiring to begin studies in the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the 2009-2010 academic year should make application at the March 19, 2009 meeting of the Theological School Committee.

A testimonial from the prospective student's consistory that he is a member in full communion, sound in faith and upright in walk, and exhibits the qualities and personality necessary for a gospel minister; a certificate of health from a reputable physician; and a college transcript must accompany the application. Before entering the seminary, all students must have earned a bachelor's degree and met all of the course requirements for entrance to the seminary. These entrance requirements are listed in the seminary catalog available from the school.

All applicants must appear before the Theological School Committee for interview before admission is granted. In the event that a student cannot appear at the March 19 meeting, notification of this fact, along with a suggested interview date, must be given to the secretary of the Theological School Committee before this meeting.

All correspondence should be directed to the Theological School Committee,

4949 Ivanrest Avenue SW
Grandville, MI 49418.

Jon Huiskens, Secretary

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The Protestant Reformed Seminary admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin.

Reformed Witness Hour

March 2009		
Date	Topic	Text
March 1	"Jesus' Trial Before Pilate"	Mark 15:1-5
March 8	"Jesus Sentenced to Death"	Mark 15:6-15
March 15	"Jesus Mocked by the Soldiers"	Mark 15:16-20
March 22	"Jesus Brought to Golgotha"	Mark 15:20-23
March 29	"Jesus Crucified and Derided"	Mark 15:32