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God's Church Filled with Glory

...fear ye not. For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.

Haggai 2:5b-7

We live in days when the nations of the earth are very unstable. There are wars and rumors of wars. The recession in the United States affects all the nations on the earth. The crash of the twin towers of the World Trade Center was heard from one end of the earth to the other. The effect of terrorism is global.

In the midst of all this turmoil and unrest is the church of Jesus Christ. Small as she is, one would be inclined to think that she should be filled with fear. Yet our text tells us to "Fear not." It is re-

vealing to us the certain triumph of the church from the viewpoint of the Old Testament. One certainly remembers the little stone in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, a stone that was cut out of a mountain without hands and that rolled down the mountain and destroyed the image in the king's dream, an image that represented the kingdoms of this earth. Then the stone that smashed the image became a mountain that filled the whole earth.

This is a picture of Christ as He will destroy the kingdoms of the earth and establish a new heavens and a new earth. This glorious kingdom, which is also the church, has been designed by God in every detail and is realized according to that detail in every part. For God has the plan of His new Jerusalem engraved upon the palms of His hands, the very hands wherewith He works all things. So He has always before His eyes that which He promises to do for His church. He is with that church in His grace, from her very beginning in Paradise and into the everlasting glory of the everlasting kingdom. He goes before her and conquers

all her enemies and never fails or forsakes her. To that church Jehovah comes today with the words of our text.

There will be a shaking of the universe. This has happened before. There was a tremendous upheaval at the time of the flood, when the windows of heaven were opened and the fountains of the deep were broken up. The Lord tells us in Hebrews 12:26 that He will do it again. "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven."

This last shaking refers to the end of time, when all present things shall be shaken out of their present form and into the form of that which God has engraved upon the palms of His hands. That means that both the heavens and the earth shall be shaken, with the purpose that they may become one. This also is according to Scripture, for we read in Revelation 21:1, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." The sea is that which separates. The idea is that there will no longer be any separation between heaven and

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earth as there is now. The shaking of the universe shall serve the realization of God's kingdom by the removal of all things in their present form. "And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain" (Heb. 12:27).

In addition, there will be a shaking of the nations. Historically these nations came into being at the time of the tower of Babel. God formed them and scattered them over all the earth. Ever since, they have been trying to heal that wound, with kingdom rising upon kingdom and nation upon nation. As a result, many kingdoms have been shaken out of existence.

The final realization of this will take place when all nations shall be shaken off the earth and into hell. In reality, there are only two kingdoms, the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light. All nations as they stand apart from the church of Christ are of the kingdom of darkness. Over this world Satan rules as prince.

They shall be shaken out. As in the case with the flood, all the ungodly were shaken into hell, swept into the fire of the wrath of God by the waters of the flood. There was also a shaking at Mt. Sinai, with the solemn reminder, "Who can stand before God?" And again in Hebrews 12, which concludes with the words, "For our God is a consuming fire." The idea is twofold: the nations are removed from off the earth so that the meek may inherit the new earth, and they are shaken into everlasting torment of hell for their rebellion against God and His church. That little stone cut out of the mountain without hands will fill the whole earth, and all the ungodly nations will be removed.

The purpose of the Lord in

this is that His church may be filled. That, in the first place, refers to the church that had returned from the captivity. On their return they found Jerusalem a pile of rubble and the house of God in ruin. With great trouble they rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, but were very slow in rebuilding the temple. They had made for themselves beautiful and comfortable homes, but no one seemed interested in restoring the house of God.

God then sent unto them the prophet Haggai with admonishing words and encouragement. "Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts" (v. 4). Then follow the words of our text in which God says that He will fill His house with glory. The shaking of the universe and of the nations will serve that wonderful purpose that God's church shall be filled with glory and attain to all the wonder of His covenant promises. In verse 5 we read, "According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not."

But the text also points to the completion of the house of God in the day of Christ. God's church is His temple, the house in which He dwells. This includes the whole of God's elect, both Jews and Gentiles. Revelation 5:9 makes that very clear: "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." The same truth is presented to us in Revelation 21:22, 24: "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and

the Lamb are the temple of it.... And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it." The nations walk in the light of the new Jerusalem and are that people with whom God lives. It is that temple that God has in mind when He says that He will fill His house with glory.

The glory is that "the desire of all nations shall come." When all the work of God is finished, when the church appears as He has engraved her upon the palms of His hands, there will be people from all nations in the new Jerusalem. The nations shall bring their glory and honor as literally stated in Revelation 21 (above quoted). The silver and gold of Haggai 2:8 represent the precious souls of God's saints. Thus, the "latter house" (Hag. 2:8) will be far more beautiful than the house that Solomon built. Solomon's temple was made of earthly material. God's temple is the living, vibrant temple of the bodies and spirits of the redeemed. It is a people with whom God lives in covenant fellowship. Through the removal of this present heaven and earth, God's people shall be brought into a richer and more intimate fellowship of everlasting life before His face.

Therefore, "fear not." Do not fear when earthquakes happen in divers places, when there are wars and rumors of wars, when there are terrorist attacks, or when you see the other signs in the universe. All are evidence of the truth of God's Word and give assurance that God's church shall triumph.

We must remember that God does not suddenly realize that church or her glory. Having engraved the church in the palms of the hands wherewith He does all His work, God is continually realizing that church and her glory. Therefore, when finally

this shaking of heaven, earth, and nations takes place in the day of Christ, that church comes forth as a finished product. Fear not when through the shaking the scaffolding begins to fall away. It

must fall away, in order that the church may stand alone in all her beauty and glory.

Look at the church with the eye of faith and rejoice when

the scaffolding begins to be torn away. Look, then, with uplifted heads for Christ to bring His church into the indescribable glory of His everlasting kingdom.



Editorial

Rev. Kenneth Koole

Creeds, the Believer, and the Sufficiency of the Scriptures (1)

By this time perhaps most have seen the little video about the PRC. If you haven't, you can view it at your leisure on the PRC website (www.prca.org). And, we understand, it has made its appearance on YouTube as well. It is a well-designed 10-minute presentation produced by AIM (Active In Missions), done in a professional manner, introducing the PRC to the interested and the curious. Its central message is that we as Protestant Reformed believers are convinced there is such a thing as The Truth, and that this Truth, as set forth in God's infallible Word, can be known and confessed. In fact, it is, as summarized in the great Reformed creeds known as the Three Forms of Unity.

AIM is to be commended for putting together this useful little production. It confronts the viewer with what may well be the issue of the day, namely, that there is such a thing as 'The Truth,' knowable as truth, and that there are still churches composed of believers making the claim, "This that we hold is The Gospel Truth according to God's own Word."

This is exactly what is be-

ing denied and is under assault today. Not simply that, theoretically speaking, there is such a thing as God's truth out there, but that this truth is knowable and can be formulated in propositional form—doctrinal statements with which believers can stand in agreement and which they are able (in fact, are called) to confess with the church of all ages. This is being denied, and, in some circles, with mocking vigor.

The contemporary perspective is that the various versions of what various people *think* the truth is—*this* can be known. But not what The Truth is in and by itself. That is unknowable. As for what is the 'Real Truth'—well, that can be known but to God.

If the purpose of the video was to engender some response from viewers outside our churches, be assured it is serving its purpose. A member of my own congregation informed me that he directed a friend and business acquaintance to the video both to introduce him to what we as Protestant Reformed believers hold and to get his reaction. The brother kindly sent me his associate's reaction, asking me for my comment on it. Having been

assured of the correspondent's approval, we will comply, using the *SB* as my venue.

This was the respondent's reaction to the video:

I have two questions for you:

Many times the video said that the Bible was the standard of Truth. It is God's word given to us. (I agree with this.) However, then the video states that your doctrines are formed by three "documents": The Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort, and another [the Belgic Confession—kk]. 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.

The video said that God saves people by the administration of the sacraments (Baptism and the Lord's Supper). And that is why it is important to find a good church. If the Bible is the only standard of truth, what about where it says "That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9) Also the Philippian jailer said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" So they

(Paul and Silas) said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved..." (Acts 16:30, 31). 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.

OK... I know I said two, but here is one more. The Church is not a place or building, the Church is alive and made up of all those who believe in Jesus Christ. The Church is people (Christians)....

Before responding to the brother's questions, we would point out that point 3 above is most significant. I say this because, I have been informed, our questioner is one of those who has withdrawn his membership from the church institute and now simply gathers with other professing Christians at various homes on a weekly basis for 'worship' and fellowship. This is not surprising, of course. It is the logical outcome of disparaging the confessions. Once one begins minimizing and setting aside the confessions, by logical necessity one will also disparage the church institute (whose confessions these are, which confessions are binding upon its professing members). And next, one will dismiss needing church membership altogether.

Though grieved with our correspondent's low assessment of the great Christian creeds as well as the importance of church membership, yet, for a number of reasons, I am glad for his "questions." They give opportunity to address some vital issues of our day.

First, the response (as quoted above), while representing an age-old charge against the creeds (No creed but Christ!), is a mentality finding increasing popularity within the twenty-first century church world, namely, being anti-creedal by creed. It is, therefore, a question and charge that ought

not take us by surprise when raised, and one to which we ought to be ready to give answer.

But second, and more importantly, whether the brother who wrote it realizes it or not, his response represents a deeper underlying spirit that pervades the emerging ecclesiastical scene of our day, namely, a deeply-rooted spirit of independentism, an independentism that smacks of individualism, which individualism, in the end, borders on an autonomy of self. To put it simply, it is a spirit that is unbiblical, however much one pays lip service to the one-only authority of the Bible as God's Word.

This, we realize, must be substantiated, but before doing so we want to make clear what is at stake.

We are dealing here with a spirit that is showing itself in a legion of ways today. To name just two: it is this spirit that is feeding the contemporary "Emergent" church movement. And it is this spirit that explains the anti-subscription movement (infection!) that has taken hold of Reformed and Presbyterian denominations today. Officebearers are no longer required to subscribe to (promise to uphold) what is found in the creeds that form the confessional basis of one's church.

And though at present it is a sensitive subject in our own circles, the simple fact is that much of what belongs to the home-school movement today is infected with this same spirit. I do not say this is the spirit governing every homeschooling fam-

ily (circumstances may dictate its present necessity for various Christian homes), but the spirit of individualism is the driving force behind the movement itself.

It is this individualism run amuck that is becoming the popular 'Christian' spirit of the day—no one's spirit will be bound or governed by the spirit of anyone else—as if this is what the Spirit of Christ and the Christian faith is all about.

My short answer to such a sentiment is, "Stuff and nonsense!"

But such terseness I reserve for those who should know better. Our respondent deserves a longer and more patient answer.

Still, admittedly, we have spoken with some sharpness to this point.

Why?

Because, we are convinced, something very serious is at stake.

As a lawfully-ordained minister in one of Christ's true churches, I am mindful of my calling to inform our respondent

It is this individualism run amuck that is becoming the popular 'Christian' spirit of the day—no one's spirit will be bound or governed by the spirit of anyone else—as if this is what the Spirit of Christ and the Christian faith is all about.

that what the above questions make plain (which "questions" are not really questions at all, but assertions and positions of conviction) is that the brother in question has cut himself loose from the church. Mind you, not simply from the

church in her institutional form, but from the church—Christ's church—entirely. Yes, from the body of Christ itself. And such is true not just of this one brother, but of all who share his sentiments and behave as he does, namely, claiming to be part of

Christ's body and church while choosing to live separately from that church in her institutional, confessional form.

It is that serious.

This is what I am convinced the apostles would say, and therefore so must I.

How does the Belgic Confession put it? "We believe...that out of it [the holy congregation] there is no salvation, that no person, of whatsoever state or condition he may be, ought to withdraw himself to live in a separate state from it.... Therefore all those who separate themselves from the same, or do not join themselves to it, act contrary to the ordinance of God" (Article 28).

And the "congregation" to which the Confession refers is the church in her institutional form. This is clear. Immediately following comes the call to submit to its doctrine and discipline.

Yes, we are aware that we have just quoted from a creed, which is the very issue under dispute. But we do so for a couple of reasons.

First, we do so because we are convinced that this creed states what is a biblical truth, a truth that should be clear to all, namely, it is the believer's solemn calling to seek membership in a congregation where Christ functions through godly and biblically faithful officebearers. And yet, for all the brother's claim that "The Bible is enough; who needs its teachings laid out in creeds?" evidently this particular biblical truth (membership in Christ's instituted church) is not so evident to the questioning brother. This in itself should lend some credibility to the need for creeds, namely, biblical teachings (doctrines) spelled out in clear, unmistakable language so that various men, all claiming to be Bible-believing Christians, may know: #1—whether they are really in agreement with each other; and #2—whether they are really reading and interpreting

the Scriptures as the Holy Spirit intended, especially on so vital a point as church membership.

The question that must be asked is, who determines the correct meaning and application of God's Word in vital matters of life and faith? Each individual by his or her own lonesome? If you think this is so, you are reading a different Bible than I.

To this question we will return in a second installment.

But second, we quote the Belgic Confession on this matter because its declaration that those who willfully live separately from the church in her institutional form "...act contrary to the ordinance of God" is so plainly biblical.

You ask for biblical proof and apostolic pattern? Acts 14:23 comes most immediately to mind. "And when they [the apostle Paul and Barnabas] had ordained them elders in every church [gathering of believers], and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."

Are we to suppose that the inspired and Christ-ordained apostles went about ordaining elders as overseers of Christ's flock in every city where the Holy Spirit had prospered their preaching, only to have those claiming to be Christians (anointed with Christ's own Spirit) ignore these very Christ-ordained officebearers in said-cities and set up camp in someone's living room on their own? And what would such actions have said about such men's view of the apostle's wisdom and authority?

The respondent believes the Scriptures to be absolute Truth, straight from God? Then, good brother, the question we put to you is, how is it that you can ignore the above pattern and, as well, passages such as Hebrews

13:7, 17, 24? (These are but three verses we could quote that lay down the vital importance of officebearers for the life of Christ's people and church.)

No doubt the brother has some answer. But it is that very answer attempted that troubles us and ought to give the brother second thoughts about needing no creeds. Whatever the attempted answer, it must somehow get around passages that any Bible-loyal man would think are self-evident and can be interpreted in but one way.

And this is exactly one of the great purposes of the creeds, namely, to prevent men from ignoring plain, basic, essential teachings of God's Word, and to bind each professing believer, and the officebearers in particular, to these biblical truths.

The question is, why would one who professes the Christian religion ignore a plain biblical teaching? Could it be because it just happens to be one of those truths one does not happen to like. At the moment it chafes against one too much?

This, we are convinced, is what ultimately is behind the anti-creedal spirit of our age. Creeds have this troubling way of binding one where one does not want to be bound (though any honest reading of the Scriptures makes plain it is the Lord's truth and will).

Serious charges? Admittedly so, and exactly why these things need to be addressed. If what we claim is true, then every serious, Bible-believing Christian will want to consider very carefully our claims. After all, it is every true believer's calling to strive to be in step with the Holy Spirit.

Further analysis of the issues raised by our correspondent will have to wait until our next issue.

Creeds have this troubling way of binding one where one does not want to be bound....



Chapter Three

The Millennium (1)

Introduction

With the subject of the millennium, we turn from “personal eschatology” (the truth of the intermediate state of the believer) to “cosmic,” or “general,” eschatology. The intermediate state concerns the end of the believer personally at death. The subject of the millennium begins the treatment of the end of the human race, of history, and of the present form of the universe in the second coming of Jesus Christ. Of course, the believer also participates in cosmic eschatology, not only because during his life he observes the signs of Christ’s coming and lives in the hope of this coming, but also because at the coming of Christ his body will be raised, he will be judged in the final judgment, and he will inherit the new world with all the elect church.

In treating the millennium first, I deliberately differ from the usual order of the treatment of cosmic eschatology by Reformed theologians. The usual order has the treatment of the precursory signs (the signs of Christ’s coming and of the end of the world) preceding the treatment of the millennium. Having explained the intermediate state, Herman Hoeksema at once proceeds to

an explanation of the precursory signs with special attention paid to the Antichrist. Only then does he take up the subject of the millennium.¹ Louis Berkhof follows the same order, as does the more recent book on eschatology by Cornelis P. Venema.²

The reasons for treating the millennium at the very beginning of cosmic eschatology, before taking up the subject of the precursory signs, are, first, that, rightly understood, the millennium of Revelation 20 is the entire period from Christ’s ascension to the time immediately preceding His return. Chronologically, it is proper and defensible to take up the matter of the millennium at the very outset of the treatment of cosmic eschatology.

Second, one’s view of the precursory signs depends upon his conception of the millennium. Because of their erroneous doctrine of the millennium, both the postmillennialist and the premillennialist deny that there are precursory signs for the church. According to the premillennialist, Christ will come for the church saints in the rapture “at any moment” without any signs or warning. Such events as the rising of Antichrist and the great tribulation will occur after the saints have been removed from

the world. The postmillennialist, on the other hand, holds that the signs have taken place in the past, either at the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 or in the persecution of the early church by the Roman empire.

Only the Reformed amillennialist maintains that there are signs of the coming of Christ for the church in the twenty-first century. This distinctive position regarding the signs depends squarely upon his understanding of the millennium.

Third, not only does one’s doctrine of the precursory signs depend upon his view of the millennium, but also one’s doctrine of the second coming of Christ itself is significantly affected by his understanding of the millennium. Because of his doctrine of the millennium, the dispensational premillennialist teaches two future comings of Christ, one coming for the church in the secret rapture and another visible coming to set up the earthly kingdom of the Jews, seven years after the rapture.

The postmillennialist looks for one coming of Christ in the body in the future, but that postmillennial coming will not be the deliverance of the beleaguered church from sin and from the persecuting Antichrist. Rather, it will be Christ’s appearance to a church that has already accomplished the earthly victory and supreme, if not final, realization of the messianic kingdom and is now living comfortably in earthly peace, prosperity, and power. The implication is that the church

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Previous article in this series: December 15, 2008, p. 132.

¹ Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics* (RFPA, 1966), 772-829.

² Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Eerdmans, 1965), 695-719; Cornelis P. Venema, *The Promise of the Future* (Banner of Truth, 2000), 79-360.

in the world never has a burning longing for Christ's return. Christ's return is not her one, intense hope. Prior to the millennium, the church in the world is longing for the millennium. During the millennium, the church will be contentedly enjoying the full realization of the kingdom of Christ.

Reformed dogmatics must establish the right doctrine of the millennium, and expose the errors of both forms of millennialism, at the very outset of its treatment of cosmic eschatology.

The Millennium in Scripture

In itself, the biblical truth of the millennium is of comparatively little importance. The attention paid to it and the space devoted to it in dogmatics and other theological writings are disproportionate to its own intrinsic significance. The millennium is merely one of the many elements of the book of Revelation's symbolical instruction concerning the last days.

The millennium is mentioned in only one passage of Scripture: Revelation 20:1-10. Six times the passage speaks of a period of a "thousand years." Verse two has Satan being bound "a thousand years." According to verse three the purpose of the binding of Satan is that Satan not deceive the nations anymore, "till the thousand years should be fulfilled." After that, Satan must be "loosed a little season." Verse four reveals that certain souls live and reign with Christ "a thousand years." Verse five adds that the rest of the dead do not live until the "thousand years" are finished. Upon those who thus reign with Christ "a thousand years," verse six pronounces a blessing. Verse seven prophesies that at the expiration of the "thousand years" Satan will be loosed to deceive the nations, so that Gog and Magog attack the camp of the saints and the beloved city.

The Latin for "thousand years" is "*mille anni*," whence "millennium." Revelation 20:7 reads in the Latin (which was, of course, the language of the church for many ages): "*Et cum consummati fuerint mille anni, solvetur satanas de carcere suo*" ("And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison").

The Greek for "thousand years" is τὰ χίλια ἔτη (*ta chilia etay*). Revelation 20:7 reads in the Greek: Καὶ ὅταν τελεσθῇ τὰ χίλια ἔτη, λυθήσεται ὁ σατανᾶς ἐκ τῆς φυλακῆς αὐτοῦ." Therefore, those who teach a literal thousand-year period in the future during which Jesus Christ will reign over the restored nation of Israel are known as "chiliasts."

The eschatological topic of the millennium concerns the thousand-year period of Revelation 20. The truth of the millennium is established by sound interpretation of Revelation 20:1-10.

Controversy

Despite the comparative insignificance of the millennium as merely one of many symbolical elements of the book of Revelation, the topic has come to have great, even decisive, importance for the whole of eschatology, forcing Reformed dogmatics to treat it at length. This is due to the fact that serious errors have attached themselves to the modest mention of the millennium in Revelation 20. There is misunderstanding of the thousand years. The millennium is controversial. In the controversies, grave theological issues are at stake, including the unity of the covenant in Old and New Testaments; the fulfillment of Old Testament Israel

in the New Testament church; the right interpretation of Old Testament prophecy, whether literal/carnal or figurative/spiritual; the calling of the church, whether the "Christianizing" of the world or the saving of the elect church (including the sanctified lives of the members in all areas of human life and all spheres of creation); and the nature of the earthly future for the church and the elect believer, whether the struggle and suffering of tribulation culminating in the Antichrist or the earthly peace, prosperity, and power of a "golden age," or the escape from tribulation of a "rapture."

The issue of the nature of the earthly future for the church points out that what is at stake in the controversies over the millennium is nothing less than the Christian hope. Is the "blessed hope" of the church and of the individual child of God (Titus 2:13) a carnal kingdom of Christ within the future history of this world, whether before the second coming of Christ (postmillennialism) or after the second coming

of Christ (premillennialism)? Or, is the one, blessed hope of the church and of the believer the second coming of Christ as the end of the history of this world and the perfected, spiritual kingdom of Christ that will be reared up in the new creation

and that will be everlasting (amillennialism)?

Views

The various views in the debate should be identified in a preliminary way at the outset of the study of the millennium. Basically, the error is millennialism:

The issue of the nature of the earthly future for the church points out that what is at stake in the controversies over the millennium is nothing less than the Christian hope.

the doctrine that there will be a more-or-less literal fulfillment of the thousand years of Revelation 20 in the future, within the present history of this world. The significance of this millennial age will be the realization of the kingdom of Christ in an earthly form—large numbers of Christians, likely a majority of the human race, and earthly peace, power, and prosperity. According to millennialism, there will be a carnal victory of the church or of the kingdom of Christ within history.

By a “carnal” victory of the church (postmillennialism) or of the Messianic kingdom (dispensational premillennialism), in distinction from a “spiritual” victory, I mean great, if not superior, numbers; social, political, and economic power; earthly ease, riches, and general well-being; and physical health and security. In short, the carnal victory of the church or of the Messianic kingdom dreamed of by the millennialists is that which the Jews craved of Jesus in John 6.

I speak of a “more-or-less” literal fulfillment of the thousand-year period because some postmillennialists envision a period of many thousands, even hundreds of thousands, of years during which the church will dominate in the world. David Chilton has written, “This world has tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of years of increasing godliness ahead of it, before the Second Coming of Christ.”¹ Chilton was echoing the older postmillennial writer, Loraine Boettner: “The Millennium to which the Postmillennialist looks forward...is an indefinitely long period of time, perhaps much longer than a literal one thousand years.” Boettner then suggested a millennium of as many as two

hundred thousand years.²

Millennialism takes two distinct forms, although there are variations within the forms. Postmillennialism teaches that Christ will come again *after* the millennium. Premillennialism insists that Christ will return to this world, personally and visibly, *before* the millennium. The prefixes, post- and pre-, refer to the second coming of Christ with respect to the millennium.

The orthodox, confessional Reformed view is commonly described as amillennialism. This name, which is too entrenched to be changed, is unfortunate, if not objectionable. First, it implies that Reformed eschatology is millennial like the others, only of a different stripe. This is a mistake, as the prefix, “a-,” makes clear. “A-” in the label, “amillennialism,” means ‘not.’ Reformed orthodoxy is not millennial in its doctrine of the last things. Rather, it is anti-millennial. Thus, it differs radically from the other two views of the millennium.

Second, however, for the Reformed faith to call itself amillennial, or to accept the description from others, involves the Reformed faith in at least the appearance of a contradiction of Scripture. How can a faith that claims to be biblical be anti-millennial when Revelation 20 obviously teaches a millennium?

Third, acceptance of the name amillennialism tends to cause even the Reformed believer to think of his belief as one option among three, all of which are legitimate theories of the last days, so that every Christian is at liberty to choose his own preference. There may then be some friendly sparring among the advocates of the three positions, but all unfriendly charges of false doctrine are ruled out.

This is the thrust of the volume, *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*. In his introduction to the book, editor Robert G. Clouse assures the reader that “each of the systems which have been briefly mentioned in historic context has had devout evangelical Christian adherents.”³ The truth is that the orthodox Reformed doctrine of the millennium in particular and of eschatology in general—the doctrine known as “amillennialism”—condemns, or ought to condemn, both basic forms of millennialism as false doctrines.

Fourth, the name amillennialism is negative, indicating rejection of millennialism, when, in fact, the Reformed faith’s explanation of the thousand years of Revelation and the Reformed faith’s doctrine of the last days in light of this explanation are essentially positive.

If usage demands that we refer to our doctrine of the last days, in light of a sound interpretation of the millennium of Revelation 20, as amillennialism (and usage does demand this), let it be clear that we do so grudgingly, only in order to be understood. Let it be clear also that amillennialism only intends to deny those explanations of the millennium of Revelation 20 that make the millennium a more-or-less literal period in the future, within present history, during which the kingdom of Christ is realized in an earthly form, whether as a carnally triumphant church or as a carnally victorious Jewish nation.

Basic to amillennialism is the positive conception of the New Testament kingdom of Christ, fulfilling Old Testament prophecy, as heavenly and spiritual, not earthly and carnal.



¹ David Chilton, *Paradise Restored: A Biblical Theology of Dominion* (Dominion Press, 1985), 221, 222.

² Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1958), 14, 136.

³ *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, ed. Robert G. Clouse (InterVarsity Press, 1977), 13.

An Introduction to Proverbs (3)

Wisdom's Doctrine

The most important parts of the book of Proverbs are Wisdom's three speeches, found in chapter 1:20-33, chapter 8:1-36, and chapter 9:1-18. In those three speeches Wisdom identifies Himself as the Son of God and demands a hearing of all who come within the range of His voice. In those speeches is found the principal doctrinal content of Proverbs, the doctrine applied in all the wise sayings of the book.

The doctrines taught in these discourses are especially two: the doctrine of eternal generation and the doctrine of the antithesis. It is these doctrines that are a foundation for the practical, everyday wisdom of the proverbs.

The doctrine of eternal generation is part of the doctrine of the Trinity. It is the truth that Christ is the second person of the Trinity, the eternal and natural Son of God (Heid. Cat., 33). He is not only born in time in our flesh out of the womb of Mary, but also eternally brought forth within the Trinity as the eternal Son. That doctrine is taught especially in Proverbs 8:22-31:

The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.

I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.

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When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water.

Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth:

While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world.

When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth:

When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep:

When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth:

Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him;

Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.

Christ is the living Wisdom who is from everlasting, was with the Father before the worlds were created, and was brought forth before there was anything created.

That Christ is the eternal Son of God is the reason why He as Wisdom must be heard and obeyed. That He comes forth from the Father eternally means that He is the one through whom the Father reveals Himself. He is the source of all wisdom.

The doctrine of the antithesis, the second doctrine taught in Proverbs, is a part of the doctrine

of God's holiness and refers first to the fact that God is eternally separate from all evil. He is the one of whom Scripture says: "Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee" (Ps. 5:4). He is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:13). This doctrine is taught in the first part of Proverbs (2:1-7:27) in the extended comparison that is found there between the wise woman and the foolish woman.

The comparison that is made in chapters 2-7 is all instruction from a father, whom we know to be *the* Father. He knows the difference between good and evil, between wisdom and folly, for He is the holy one, the one who is eternally separate from evil.

That doctrine of the antithesis is the foundation for the instruction that is given in the proverbs concerning the practice of wisdom and the forsaking of folly. Wisdom consists in heeding the good instruction of a Father who is holy and in keeping oneself from evil. The antithesis means in practice that we are holy as God is holy. Every proverb in Proverbs teaches the antithesis.

Wisdom's Call

Wisdom does not only teach doctrine in Proverbs, but issues a call as well, a call that must be obeyed and that is the call of the gospel. As our creeds teach, the gospel did not begin with the sending of the apostles in the New Testament, but has always

been heard. The Heidelberg Catechism reminds us that we know the Mediator

From the holy gospel, which God Himself first revealed in Paradise; and afterwards published by the patriarchs and prophets, and represented by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law; and, lastly, has fulfilled it by His only begotten Son (19).

The Canons of Dordt add:

What therefore neither the light of nature nor the law could do, that God performs by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the Word or ministry of reconciliation, which is the glad tidings concerning the Messiah, by means whereof it hath pleased God to save such as believe, as well under the Old as under the New Testament.

This mystery of His will God discovered to but a small number under the Old Testament; under the New (the distinction between various peoples having been removed) He reveals Himself to many, without any distinction of people (III/IV, 6, 7).

That call, even here in Proverbs, is universal. Wisdom tells us that His words are for all the sons of men (8:4), but especially for men as sinners, that is, as fools (1:22; 8:5, 36; 9:4). They are for everyone who comes within the range of Wisdom's voice; for all who hear the gospel. Thus Wisdom's message is heard everywhere. Wisdom speaks in "all places in the city" (1:20, 21; 8:2, 3; 9:3), that is, wherever men dwell (8:4). The city, then, is not any particular earthly city, but the whole world as the dwelling place of mankind: it is the city of man. That this universal call is found in the Old Testament is all the more remarkable in that during the Old Testament, Wisdom spoke almost exclusively to the Jews.

Wisdom even has her own house within the city (9:1-5):

Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars:

She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table.

She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city,

Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,

Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.

It is difficult to see that Wisdom's house can be anything else than the church. There Christ dwells among us. There He furnishes His table and calls us to eat of His bread and drink of His wine.

These three speeches of Wisdom are the gospel. They cannot be anything else if it is Christ speaking in them, speaking to the sons of men and calling them from folly to wisdom. When we compare Wisdom's speeches with what the word of God says about the gospel in II Timothy 3:15, 16, "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," then we find that all the things that are part of the gospel are found in these speeches.

There is doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness in Wisdom's speeches.

We might notice especially chapter 1:23: "Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." Or chapter 8:8-10:

All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them.

They are all plain to him that

understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.

Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold.

Not only can a comparison be made between such passages, but also Proverbs 1:24 is as much as quoted in Romans 10:21 with reference to the gospel: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded."

Wisdom's speeches, therefore, have three parts, each of them representing an aspect of the gospel. In the first speech folly is reproofed, men are called from their foolish ways and threatened with dire consequences for their failure to turn. This is especially the gospel call to repentance, or the negative part of the gospel call, though the whole of the gospel is there. Thus we find in the first speech a warning against foolishness (v. 22), a call to conversion (v. 23), a promise of the Spirit (v. 23), a threat of judgment (vv. 24-32), and a promise of peace and safety (v. 33) to those who hear and heed. This speech can very nicely be compared with Matthew 13:14-15, Acts 28:26-27, and II Corinthians 2:15-16.


In the second speech, which includes all of chapter 8, wisdom is recommended and blessed. Here the emphasis is on the positive aspect of the gospel call, the call to faith in Christ. In this speech Wisdom calls to faith (vv. 5-6), speaks of righteousness and truth (vv. 7-9), shows the value of true wisdom (vv. 10-11), warns against evil (v. 13), describes Himself (vv. 12-31), blesses those who hear (vv. 32-35), and curses those who sin (v. 36).

In the third speech, which includes all of chapter 9, Wisdom promises blessing, and the emphasis is on the promise of the gospel. What Wisdom says can very nicely be compared to Isaiah 55:1, 2, Matthew 22:1-4, and Rev-

elation 19:6-10, where the blessings of the gospel are promised in similar terms under the figure of a great feast.

This chapter also includes a conclusion to the comparison found in chapters 1-7 between the wise woman and the foolish woman, advice from father to son concerning both women, and an introduction to the proverbs found in chapters 10-29, including some of the most common

and most important proverbs in the book, proverbs that express the fundamentals of true wisdom (note especially the five proverbs in chapter 9:7-12). Chapter 9 also serves as transition to the rest of the book, therefore, but the main things are the spiritual blessings promised in the gospel under the figure of a place in Wisdom's house and at His table to those who hear and obey Wisdom's call through the work of the Spirit (1:23).

Learning from the book of Proverbs, therefore, is a matter of hearing and obeying the call of Christ in the gospel and of learning from Him who is the fount of all wisdom, the living and abiding Word of God. As He says in chapter 8:35, 36: "For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death." 

All Around Us

Rev. Audred Spriensma

He Got the Boot

This might seem like the line for an employee let go from his job in our depressed economy, or for a lawyer whose case got thrown out of court. But rather this is the recent story reported in *Time* magazine (Jan. 5, 2009) of President Bush when he went to Bagdad. Unlike the time when, in 2003, elated Iraqis in Firdos Square rained their loafers and boots on a fallen statue of Saddam Hussein, now it was President George W. Bush who had to duck flying footwear at a 2008 Bagdad press conference in the last official visit of his term.

Time magazine author Bobby Ghosh writes, "In many Eastern cultures, hurling a shoe at someone is a grave insult. Iraqi TV reporter Muntazer al-Zaidi's decision to fling his size 10 shoe made him an instant hero to many, although some noted that it broke Arab rules of hospitality, not to mention the journalist's code of objectivity. But the sentiment behind the shoe leather was widely shared: Iraq may

have more of a future now than it did under Saddam, but Iraqis are never going to be grateful for having been invaded." At home, the pelting of the President led to more merriment than anger. This was the plight of his Administration in its final days: unpopular at home and unloved even by those for whom it expended American blood and treasure to free from tyranny. We might say that our past President got the boot in more ways than one.

In *Newsweek* magazine this past week, Dhiaa al-Saadi, lawyer for Muntazer al-Zaidi, is quoted as asking the court, "Have you ever heard of anyone being killed by a shoe?" The lawyer was arguing that al-Zaidi should face the lighter charge of insulting a visiting head of state, which comes with a maximum two-year jail sentence, rather than assault against a foreign head of state, which could result in fifteen years.

I want to comment on that question: "Have you heard of anyone being killed by a shoe?"

We read twice in the Psalms of the throwing or casting of the shoe (Psalm 60 and Psalm 108), and each time that the Psalm in

question would be read, members of our family would break out in giggles over the phrase. What did the psalmist have in mind? Psalm 60 is a Psalm of complaint. Has the Lord cast His people off? The Lord had shown His people hard things, and caused them to drink the wine of astonishment! It is a prayer that the Lord would turn again to His people to deliver them. And in answer to the complaint, the Lord declares that He is jealous for His people and faithful to them. He will deliver and save them and crush His and their enemies. The Psalm ends with the cry of God's people, "Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man. Through God we shall do valiantly; for he it is that shall tread down our enemies." Psalm 108 is a song of confidence. The psalmist's heart is fixed (full of trust and confidence in his God). The psalmist will sing and give praise to God among his own people and among the nations for God's mercy. The psalmist has this confidence because his God has spoken and His Word is unbroken! His people will be delivered and His enemies will be broken. God has not cast off His people but goes forth with His

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people. God is their help. Again God's people sing, "Through God we shall do valiantly; for he it is that shall tread down our enemies."

The shoe is a symbol of legal possession. It is an object of treading down and oppressing; it signifies metaphorically that a man is weak and incapable of defending himself against oppression. In the case of an Iraqi reporter throwing a shoe at our President, it is a gesture of hatred and contempt, but really an empty gesture. No, I have not heard of a shoe killing a person. But now let us go to God's declaration, "over Edom will I cast out my shoe." This is not an empty phrase. The Edomites were the descendants of reprobate Esau. They hated and despised God's people, seeking their destruction. God has not cast off His people, but in His

faithfulness and great mercy God says that their enemies shall become His slaves and that they are fallen under His feet. "I will walk through Edom and subdue it." Not empty words. God through His anointed King David completely subjected the Edomites.

"God has spoken in his holiness" (Ps. 60:7). This forever precludes the possibility of His failing to fulfill his Word. We can rely upon it. God's Word is as good as His oath. David's victory over the Edomites, in which twenty thousand fell, is a type of the victory of Christ, God's anointed, over all His and the church's enemies. They may rant and threaten and hurt, but God says in his holiness, "Over Edom will I cast my shoe." And this is no harmless threat. "Have you ever heard of anyone being

killed by a shoe?" Yes, with confidence we can say of all God's and our enemies, "they got the boot." That trampling of His enemies took place at the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the perfection of this will take place when Jesus Christ comes again in glory and judges all the inhabitants of the land, and says to His and our enemies, "Depart ye workers of iniquity" (Matt. 7:23). "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41).

The times that we live in look dark. God's enemies oppress His church and try to silence her. Wickedness abounds. But we will not despair, but will sing a song. A song of confidence. As the devil got the boot out of heaven, so all those who are the enemies of God and His church will get the boot. 

Go Ye Into all the World

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

The Place of Laity in Missions (2) Leading a Godly Life

The church is a witnessing church. It is not just the duty of the church to witness. It is not just her calling. The true church always leaves a witness. She does so in her preaching, but she also does this in the lives of her members. True believers will always be a godly witness in their confession and

in their walk. This forms the foundation of the involvement of laity in mission work. Because the church is a witnessing church, members of the church ought to be actively involved in missions.

There are good and proper ways they can serve in missions.

The first way members of the church institute must be active in missions is by a godly witness in their everyday lives at home. A denomination of churches whose members have become complacent in their faith and have lost their first love of the truth do not make for a very attractive denomination. That same denomination

is even less attractive when its members walk in ungodliness and worldliness in their lives. This is why we say that the foremost way members can be active in mission work is by leading a godly life right at home in their families, churches, and communities.

Resisting modern trends in missions

This is not, however, what many want to hear as an answer to the question: how can members of the church become more involved in missions? To be busy at home in the place God

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has given each of us in life does not fit the trend of modern missions. For some time now, the mission work of most churches has become a social work. By social work we mean seeking to improve the earthly conditions and social status of certain members of society. Emphasis is placed on going to needy countries, or to poor communities in one's own country, specifically for the purpose of helping these people out of their poverty, or to overcome their social problems. In other words, the emphasis of modern missions is not to proclaim sin and salvation in Christ alone. It is not to proclaim the kingdom of heaven. The emphasis of modern missions is to preach that Christ has come into this world to make it a better place in which to live.

Modern mission work reflects this kind of social gospel. The church involves herself in all kinds of projects to help improve humanity, all in the name of Christ. The only difference between the mission work of many churches and the work of such organizations as the Red Cross or the United Way is that the church's mission work is "Christian." The emphasis of the church's mission, it is said, is to *show* the love of Christ—by humanitarian deeds—in the hopes that this will pique someone's interest in the gospel.

To accomplish this type of "mission work," the skilled lay member is really more important than the minister of the gospel. So the call is issued by the church to her members that they must spend some time on the mission field. The preaching in the established churches begins to revolve around this theme, as if this is the sole purpose of the preaching: to incite the membership to the work of helping others in this world. Sermons are specifically prepared (one wonders how exegetical these are) to lay upon the hearts of Christians the need

to join a mission group that will perform short-term projects on the mission field. As a result, the members of the church begin to see this as their Christian obligation. In fact, so much stress is placed on this obligation that those who are not able to go on such a trip begin to view themselves as second-rate Christians. They begin to feel that they are not mission-minded, that they do not care about the needs of others, that they have no desire to share their faith.

So much is this the push of modern missions that the church or denomination that does not become involved in such social service in her missions is quickly labeled. Such a church, it is said, has no desire to do mission work. The members of that church do not have a genuine concern for the world. They are not interested in making this world a better place for Christ. They are not interested in witnessing to others of God's love for this world.

As a result of this pressure in those churches that do not give in to this modern trend, there are members who begin to think their own churches are indeed backward. Where are the evangelistic services that promote mission work? Where is the preaching that helps train the members to go on mission trips or to perform community service? Such members begin to think that their churches are holding them back. They blame their churches for not doing mission work.

Over against this trend of modern missions stands the clear testimony of the Word of God: preach the gospel to all nations. Make disciples of all nations. Call sinners to repentance and to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Proclaim the good tidings of salvation to a world that is lost

in sin and unbelief. Herald the coming of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of heaven. That is the task of the church in her mission work. How is this done? By means of the preaching of the gospel through the mouth of one called and sent to preach. This has been the emphasis of all our articles. Mission work is the official work of the church through her offices. It is not a work that belongs first and foremost to the laity.

All this being said, this does *not* mean that the church only preaches the gospel—without helping people in their earthly, material needs. Of course the church must aid and assist those to whom they preach the gospel when these people are needy. The church may not withhold her compassion and mercy toward those who struggle with their earthly survival. But helping people in their earthly needs is a secondary and subordinate labor to the preaching of the gospel. For that reason it is not wrong for the established church to send

*...helping people
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out individual members or mission groups to help out on a field of labor. In future articles we will address this as a legitimate labor of the laity.


Yet, members ought not believe that it is the obligation of every member, or even of most members, to become involved in this way in mission work. The church may not put this kind of pressure on her members, as if they are not fulfilling their obligation to Christ if they do not go out to work once or twice on a mission field.

This is not to say, either, that ministers in the church institute ought never to preach a sermon on our need for zeal and labor in missions. There are appropriate

times when a minister may and should preach such a sermon. The membership of the church should be reminded that mission work is not a secondary labor of the church, but is as integral a part of the calling of the church as are the labors in the established churches. But it is wrong when ministers use the pulpit as a soapbox for missions.

In contrast to this modern trend of missions, the church

ought to make her members understand that mission work begins in their own lives *exactly in the place God has ordained them to be!* Do you want to assist the mission work of your churches? This is where it starts: every Christian must live a life of godliness in the home, in the school, in the workplace, in the neighborhood where God has placed him. Being unable to go on a mission trip does not reveal a lack of interest in mission work. What truly reveals a lack of

interest in mission work is when members of the church have lost their love and zeal for the truth! When the laity (and clergy, for that matter) no longer view the gospel as the most precious of all possessions, when they become spiritually lazy, when they live for the pleasures of this world—then, truly, they are not interested in mission work. This is the attitude against which the church must battle. 

In His Fear

Rev. Daniel Kleyn

Hopeful Pilgrims

As God's people, we are pilgrims and strangers here on this earth. This world is not our permanent home. We are here for just a short time. Each of us is traveling through this world and life with a view to reaching our eternal destination in heaven. And once we arrive there we will say: "Now I'm no longer a stranger. Finally I'm home!"

Consider Abraham. Abraham was called by God to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldees and to live in Canaan. In that new land, he lived among a people who worshiped and served other gods. He was obviously a spiritual stranger among them. But that was not all. Abraham and his family were instructed by God to live in tents. They could not and did not build a permanent home. They did not establish and build towns and cities. In fact, they did not even set up their tents in one

place and remain there. Repeatedly Abraham and his family uprooted themselves and moved to different locations. This served as a constant reminder to them of what they were. They were pilgrims. They were simply traveling through this life with a view to reaching their eternal home in heaven.

All of this is summarized beautifully in these words: "By faith Abraham...sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles [i.e., tents] with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:8-10).

What was true of Abraham, and what was made clear to him in a very concrete way, is true of all God's people. This earth is not our home. We live this short and trouble-filled life with a view to reaching our eternal destination in glory.

These truths are very clearly set forth in the book of I Peter. Under the inspiration of the Spirit, Peter explains that the

people of God are pilgrims on this earth. And he writes his epistle from that perspective, keeping in view throughout the book that we are "strangers" (1:1) who are "sojourning here" (1:17). And the instruction and admonitions he gives are always with that in mind, as is evident from these words: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims..." (2:11).



Why are God's people pilgrims on this earth? Peter answers that question in the opening part of his letter. This is the case, not because of men, but because of God and His decree of election. We are pilgrims because we are God's elect. God, in choosing us eternally in Christ, has chosen us to be those who will live forever in heaven. The decree of election, therefore, means that heaven, and not earth, is our home.

That sets us apart from the ungodly. To them, this earth is home. They were not chosen by God. And because they were not chosen, they have not been given

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and will never have the new life of heaven in their hearts. Thus they do not consider or desire anything else but this earthly life. They feel at home here below. They are comfortable in this world with all its sinful deeds and evil pleasures. They are satisfied with this life and want it to last forever.

The children of God, however, desire heaven. We have been chosen unto life eternal in glory. We have been regenerated by the Spirit so that we know and believe we are the children of God. We do not feel at home on earth. We realize that our home is that house of many mansions that Christ is preparing in glory; that city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Our home is the heavenly inheritance that God has reserved for those who love Him. Our home is the place that is incorruptible, and undefiled, and never fades away; a home whose glory will never diminish, and whose splendor will never grow dim. We and God will dwell together in heavenly perfection, and that for ever and ever.



Because all this is true, there is especially one thing that characterizes those who are pilgrims: Hope!

The hope of the pilgrim is biblical hope. Biblical hope is not a mere wish, as is the case when we use the word in our day-to-day talk. Biblical hope is absolutely certain. The pilgrim is absolutely sure of that for which he hopes. There are no doubts or questions. As pilgrims, we are certain that when our journey ends here on earth we will go immediately into heaven. Why are we sure? Because the object of our hope is not dependent on us, but is the sovereign work of almighty God.

Another aspect of the pilgrim's hope is longing. We are

eager for the object of our hope to arrive. We cannot wait for the end of time and for the return of Christ to come so that we might receive the full joys of eternal glory. Our longing is great, for the blessedness of heaven that awaits us is so desirable. There is nothing better. There is nothing on earth that can compare.

On earth we struggle continually with our sin and have to live with its terrible consequences. But in heaven that will all be over. No more sin, and no more of its terrible effects. On earth we face opposition from the ungodly. For some of God's people this persecution is so grievous that it makes their earthly lives unbearable. But in heaven that will all be over. We will be freed

from the hatred of the wicked and the assaults of the devil. On earth we experience many trials and hardships. Our afflictions are numerous and constant. This places a great burden on our souls. But in heaven that will all be over. Every tear and sorrow and distress will be wiped away. In light of all this blessedness, the faithful pilgrim longs earnestly for the day when he will arrive in his eternal home.

This hope comes to expression in the life of the pilgrim. It is the driving force in all that we think and say and do on earth. It explains why we are very different from the world around us. As pilgrims, we live an antithetical life, one that is completely distinct from that of the ungodly. We speak a different language. We have different interests. We do different things. We have a different focus and purpose in life. All of this is true of us because we realize we are not here on earth for the sake of this earthly life itself, but are merely

traveling through to reach our eternal home in heaven.



Because we still have the old nature with us, we all fail to long, as we ought, for our eternal home. Therefore God must frequently (if not continually) strengthen our longing.

He does this in various ways. He sends troubles. He makes us suffer sickness and pain. He takes away loved ones in death, so that we experience deep loneliness. He causes an economic

downturn, thus making us struggle to find work and to support ourselves and our families. He causes us to lose all our savings. He destroys or takes from us our earthly possessions.

He makes the world unstable by sending war, disease, and natural catastrophes. He sees to it that our freedoms as Christians are denied us.

All of this is done, however, in His mercy and love. By means of the things He sends, God uproots us from our earthly-mindedness. He stops us from pounding our tent stakes too deeply and too firmly in the ground. He makes us lift our eyes heavenward and pray, more earnestly than ever, that our Savior might come quickly to take us home. He makes us mindful of how desirable heaven is in comparison to earthly life, and causes us to long all the more for its arrival. Thus the pilgrim's hope is strengthened.

What a blessing it is to have this hope as pilgrims. In the midst of a hopeless and despairing world, which can only face eternity with dread, we as pilgrims have something most wonderful to long for. May our daily prayer be, "Come, Lord Jesus!"



*As pilgrims,
we live an
antithetical life,
one that is completely
distinct from that
of the ungodly.*

Censura Morum (2)

“The ministers of the Word, elders, and deacons shall before the celebration of the Lord’s Supper exercise Christian censure among themselves, and in a friendly spirit admonish one another with regard to the discharge of their office.”

Church Order, Article 81.

Introduction

The practice of *censura morum* is longstanding in the Reformed churches. From the beginning of their existence, the Protestant Reformed Churches have followed the practice. Last time we began our consideration of Article 81 by tracing the history and background of the article. We also took note of the two main principles that underlie the practice of *censura morum*. The first of those principles is the sinfulness of the officebearers. There is a need in the officebearers themselves for mutual supervision. The second important principle underlying *censura morum* is the biblical truth of the parity of officebearers. The officebearers in the local congregation exercise equal authority. No one officebearer is over other officebearers. Because of the parity of officebearers, the ministers, elders, and deacons are called to mutual supervision. We also took note of the focus of *censura morum*. *Censura morum* is not to be an examination of morals or doctrine. But the focus is to be on “the discharge of their office[s].” The focus must be the work of the

officebearers in their respective offices. Are they doing the work to which they have been called? Are they doing it faithfully? Are there concerns that need to be addressed or improvements that can be made?

In this article we want to conclude our consideration of Article 81 and the practice of *censura morum* that it mandates. We want to look at the method for conducting *censura morum*, the matters that may properly be raised at the time of *censura morum*, and the purpose for this unique practice in the Reformed churches.

Method for Conducting Censura Morum

The method for conducting *censura morum* is not spelled out in Article 81. The article requires only that *censura morum* be conducted before each celebration of the Lord’s Supper. In most of our congregations, therefore, the practice takes place four times annually, although in some it takes place six times per year. But nothing is said in the Church Order about how this mutual censure is to be conducted. Over the years a number of different methods have been followed. In our congregations at present, no one method is followed by all, and there exists a certain variety.

Early in the history of the Reformed churches each consistory member by turn stepped outside

the meeting room while his fellow officebearers discussed his conduct and work. This method was recommended by the Synod of Wezel (1586). But this method did not promote brotherly relationships and too easily became the occasion for suspicion and distrust. Over time it was seen that conducting *censura morum* in the presence of the whole consistory was more conducive to maintaining a spirit of brotherhood among the officebearers.

One method that is followed today is that the chairman introduces *censura morum* by reading Article 81 and inviting anyone who has any matter that he wishes to raise to speak up. The floor is opened to any member of the council. When no one any longer desires the floor the chairman concludes that *censura morum* has been conducted and hopefully all has been found in good order. Such ought also to be noted by the clerk in the council’s minute book, as well as any matter that was raised at *censura morum*.

Another method that is followed in some church councils is that after the chairman introduces *censura morum*, he or the clerk asks each officebearer by turn whether he has any matter to raise for *censura morum*. When all the officebearers have been asked, ending usually with the minister, *censura morum* is concluded and so noted in the minutes.

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

Previous article in this series: October 1, 2008, p. 11.

Although Article 81 requires that *censura morum* be conducted “before the celebration of the Lord’s Supper,” it does not specify whether it is to be conducted at the regular council meeting before the administration of the sacrament or at a special meeting. In our churches, *censura morum* is ordinarily conducted at the regular council meeting the week before the Lord’s Supper is administered. Some consistories, however, have at times devoted an entire special meeting to *censura morum*. Even if this is not their regular practice, some do this occasionally, perhaps once a year. There is something to be said for this practice. In my own experience it too often happened that *censura morum* was the last thing on the council meeting agenda and the hour was often late. I sensed that members hesitated to raise any matter because of the lateness of the hour and the desire to conclude the meeting. Unfortunately, *censura morum* got short shrift. It might be good for councils to consider setting one evening a year aside for *censura morum*, especially in our larger congregations, in order to ensure that justice is done to the practice. It also might be worthwhile to consider conducting *censura morum* earlier in our council meetings than is often the case. Reserving it for the last item on the agenda tends to slight the importance of the practice and minimize the benefits for the officebearers.

Matters to be Raised at *Censura Morum*

Matters to be raised at the time of *censura morum* must be in harmony with the focus of the practice of mutual supervision of the officebearers. The focus, according to Article 81, is to be “the discharge of their office[s].” Matters raised at *censura morum* ought to concern the work and the manner of the work of the

officebearers. The chairman and the council as a whole must maintain this focus. It may be necessary for the chairman to rule or for the council to decide that a certain matter is inappropriate for *censura morum*. Not every matter raised by officebearers is necessarily proper to *censura morum*.

In this connection, in some instances, a private, heart-to-heart talk with a fellow officebearer may be preferable to raising a matter at *censura morum*. Hopefully the spirit in a council is such that the officebearers are open to criticisms and suggestions from their fellow officebearers. Especially the senior officebearers ought to mentor the younger and first-time officebearers. And the younger ought to be receptive to the wisdom and insights of their more experienced fellow officebearers.

Here is a sampling of matters that might legitimately be raised at the time of *censura morum*: not getting committee work done promptly; not providing thorough, written reports of committee visits; officebearers too harsh in dealing with the members of the congregation; too lengthy prayers in the council room prior to the worship services; too lengthy remarks made at the meetings that unnecessarily extend the meetings; officebearers monopolizing the discussion at the meetings; officebearers who are consistently late for meetings or arrive at the last minute before the worship services begin; officebearers negligent in attending the Bible study societies of the congregation; the minister’s sermons too long and frequently extending beyond the expected hour of the conclusion of the worship services; the content of the minister’s congregational prayers. These and any number of other possible concerns are legitimate matters for officebearers to raise on *censura morum*.

This is not to say that *censura*

morum ought to be viewed as entirely negative, a time to raise criticisms of fellow officebearers. *Censura morum* also provides an excellent opportunity for the officebearers to encourage one another. That, too, is needed. The deacons who faithfully seek out and assist the poor of the congregation ought to be encouraged in their work by the elders and the pastor. At present the deacons in a good number of our congregations find themselves very busy. Encouragement is needed. Elders who faithfully and patiently labor with the wayward—an exceedingly difficult work—need to be encouraged by the deacons and by the pastor. And pastors who diligently bring the Word and minister to the pastoral needs of the congregation need the encouragement of their fellow officebearers. We do not labor for the praise of men, to be sure. But that does not preclude a word of encouragement and appreciation. In that way the officebearers build each other up and promote the work of their offices in the congregation, “provok[ing] unto love and to good works” (Heb. 10:24).

Purpose of *Censura Morum*

The purpose of *censura morum* is closely connected to the focus of the practice. The focus is “the discharge of their office[s].” Since that is the focus, the purpose is clearly that the officebearers will the better carry out the work of their offices. The purpose is to assist one’s fellow officebearers in fulfilling their duties in the congregation. With a view to this purpose, the officebearers must be open to improvement, open to criticism, and ready to receive suggestions from their fellow officebearers. An officebearer must never suppose that he has arrived, that he is beyond criticism, and that he certainly has no need for improvement. The officebearers are all men, mere


men, even sinful men. They have weaknesses and faults that they must recognize when they are pointed out. Of the officebearers in their relation to each other the proverb is certainly true that as “[i]ron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend” (Prov. 27:17).

But this good purpose will not be realized if *censura morum* degenerates into a fault-finding session. That must never happen. And the chairman and the council as a whole must never allow that to happen. For that reason, Article 81 specifies that this mutual censure among the officebearers is to be “Christian censure” and that it is to be conducted “in a friendly spirit.” The officebearers must love one another and

out of that love have the other’s best interests in view. It is often emphasized that the officebearers must love the members of the congregation. True enough. But they must also love each other. Out of that love, encouragement ought to be given, but also all admonitions and criticisms.

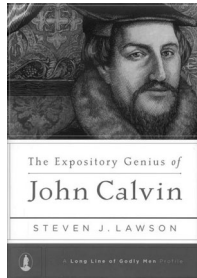
The purpose of *censura morum*, however, does not end with the officebearers. The higher purpose is the benefit of the church. The officebearers serve the congregation. Their labors must at all times promote the peace and unity of the church. They labor on behalf of the truth in the congregation, both the confession of the truth and the godly life that adorns the truth. *Censura morum* aims at the edification of the

church. That purpose demands the very best of the officebearers. With a view to that purpose *censura morum* is conducted at least four times a year in every congregation.

But even the benefit of the church is not the ultimate purpose of *censura morum*. Ultimately the purpose of *censura morum* is the glory of God. The officebearers represent God. The officebearers do the work of the Lord in the congregation. The members must see God in their officebearers, and the officebearers must point the people to God. Diligence and faithfulness in the work of their offices brings glory to God. This is the purpose, in the end the only purpose, of the Reformed practice of *censura morum*. 

Bring the books...

Rev. William Langerak



The Expository Genius of John Calvin, by Steven J. Lawson. Reformation Trust Publishing, 2007. ISBN 1567690858. 142 pp. Hardcover. Available at monergism-books.com (\$11.25), christianbook.com (\$12.99), or publisher at Ligonier.org (\$12.00). Reviewed by Rev. Douglas J. Kuiper.

Steven Lawson, pastor of Christ Fellowship Baptist Church in Mobile, AL, begins a series of short books under the series “A Long Line of Godly Men Profile.” Upcoming books in this series will focus on Martin Luther, George Whitefield, Charles Spurgeon, and others.

Lawson argues that the situa-

tion in the evangelical church now is just as it was in Calvin’s day—apparently flourishing (think of the mega-churches, and filled-stadiums at Christian men’s revivals), but in fact a whitewashed tomb (where is the emphasis on gospel preaching?). The crying need of the church 500 years ago was for a Calvin who expounded the Scriptures faithfully; likewise, the crying need of the church today is for more men like Calvin. So the goal of this book is to inspire preachers to be like Calvin.

In the first chapter of this book, Lawson gives a biographical survey of Calvin’s life. In the next seven chapters he sets forth 32 characteristics of Calvin’s preaching.

In chapter 2, he explains how Calvin approached the pulpit. Calvin preached in the conviction that the Scriptures are God’s inspired Word and are the only and final authority for the church; that when the Scriptures are preached, God is present with His church; and that the

preaching of the gospel is to be central in the worship service. In order to give his congregation a comprehensive understanding of Scripture, Calvin made it his practice to preach through the Bible in sequence.

Because God’s glory was Calvin’s great goal and passion, he prepared himself spiritually and intellectually for preaching. Chapter 3 sets forth three ways in which he did so—by coming to a clear understanding of Scripture; by devoting his heart and life to God; and by a relentless will to work, even with physical ailments.

Chapter 4 notes that Calvin began his sermons with a brief introduction that led him quickly and directly to his text. In his introduction, Calvin briefly explained the context and set forth the text’s main theme. He came into the pulpit well prepared, but without a manuscript or notes.

Substance, not style, charac-

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

terized his exposition (chapter 5). He chose a specific text, examining it in light of its historical context, and explaining its words precisely. He interpreted the text literally (meaning he avoided allegory, a common method of interpretation in his day). As Scripture interprets Scripture, Calvin would refer to other passages in his sermon—but sparingly, so as not to shift the emphasis away from the particular text. He set forth the meaning of the text persuasively, and made reasonable deductions from it.

In his delivery (chapter 6) Calvin used familiar words and vivid illustrations, asked provocative questions, often restated the text simply, only rarely used quotations, followed an outline but did not tell the people its main points, and moved seamlessly from one point to another. All this enabled him to hold the congregation's attention well, but, more especially, his intensity as a preacher helped him do so.

Calvin applied the text to the congregation (chapter 7) by exhortations and rebukes, as well as by requiring the congregants to examine themselves in light of it. He was polemical when necessary, pointing out the errors of others, Rome especially. Among those in the congregation to whom he applied the text was Calvin himself.

Calvin's conclusion to the sermon (chapter 8) was as deliberate as his introduction. In it he briefly restated the main theme of the sermon and made a final point of application. In his prayer following his sermon, Calvin left the congregation with God.

Preachers and seminary students alike will certainly want to read this book, and learn from Calvin's exposition and his preaching techniques. But the book is recommended to a larger audience as well, because it demonstrates what makes a good preacher. Not only does

the church *need* such preachers, but the people of the church must also know what *makes* a good preacher, so that they recognize good preaching when they hear it. He is not a good preacher who entertains; rather, he is a good preacher who expounds the Scriptures to the edification of the congregation. Not every good preacher will be as highly gifted as Calvin was; but he will be diligent in preparing himself to preach. For such preachers, the church must pray; for such, she must be thankful; when she has such, she must attend faithfully to such preaching.

The book is also recommended to a larger audience because it is written in a simple style, easy for all to understand. ■



Redeemed by Judgment: Sermons on Isaiah (Vol. 1), by Homer C. Hoeksema. Reformed Free Publishing Association (RFPA), 2008. ISBN 9780916206987. Hardcover. \$32.00. Available from the publisher at rfpa.org or christian-book.com. Reviewed by Rev. William Langerak.

Few sermons should be published. Not even great sermons should readily find their way into book form. It is not an issue of quality. Even poor sermons have been used by the Lord to sustain His church in this dry and thirsty land. The problem is that they are...sermons. And, like a sermon that is read when it is delivered, there simply is something about putting it into print afterwards that seems to transform that lively, life-giving feast into mere leftovers. There are, of course, exceptions. I believe this book is one of them.

Redeemed With Judgment consists of 49 sermons on the first 39 chapters of Isaiah—the title comes from the thematic 3rd sermon on

chapter 1:27. It is the first volume of some 125 sermons that Homer C. Hoeksema preached on Isaiah over a period of thirty years, mostly in Protestant Reformed churches, while Professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament history in the denominational seminary, a position he was appointed to in 1959. It would be wrong to say these sermons are his legacy. However, due to their quality, popularity, incredible number of people and churches who heard them, and regularity with which he preached them, Hoeksema and his sermons on Isaiah were inseparably identified. Publishing them was not his choice. Rather, HCH (as familiarly known to distinguish him from his father and denominational patriarch, Herman or HH), had wanted to write a commentary on Isaiah, but his death in 1989 prevented it.

Putting these sermons into print has been a long process—tape recordings had to be procured literally from one end of the United States to the other, transcribed, and then meticulously edited. Much of this work was done capably by his son, Mark Hoeksema, who also provided the preface, introduction, and helpful editorial comments. I cannot speak to what has been lost in the transformation of these sermons from spoken to written word, since I was just a boy when they were preached. I do remember that when HCH came to fill in at our church, which was frequent during one extended period between ministers, we could always expect to hear a rousing Isaiah sermon by this man with a gnarly voice, wavy white hair, and hand that shook as he wiped his brow (I was also fairly convinced it was how Isaiah looked, albeit with sandals and a robe). But, regardless of the extent to which any liveliness of preaching may have been dulled by publication, this book of sermons has considerable value.

First, each sermon is a model of Reformed expository preaching (particularly on both prophetic and historical passages) that current or future Reformed ministers, and elders as overseers, could study profitably. They are the fruit of decades of dedicated toil by a gifted, thoroughly Reformed theologian and avid student of Old Testament history at the height of his exegetical and theological powers. Throughout, HCH uses the time-tested method of *thematic* homiletics, whereby the main theme of each text is determined, then developed by arranging the material under two or three related thoughts. The sermons are masterpieces of sound exegesis, especially considering the many difficult texts that are tackled. Concisely and systematically, he breaks down the various components of each text, treats all the main thoughts, defines important or difficult words and concepts, shows the various textual connections and relationships, explains the meaning in light of the historical and theological context, and applies it spiritually to the covenant people today in understandable language and vivid illustrations as required.


Secondly, this volume would be a profitable commentary to supplement the study of Isaiah, or even a devotional for office-bearers and lay-people alike to read daily, one sermon at a time. Even though each sermon concentrates upon the main verse(s) of any particular passage, the other verses are usually brought

in and explained contextually. The result is a rather complete exposition of each chapter, which if lacking any usefulness of a detailed commentary on every phrase, has the benefit of making perfectly plain the main thought in each chapter to the people of God, without clutter and jargon.

It is a distinctly Reformed commentary that will build up the believer in sound doctrine. Such commentaries on Isaiah are rare. Rarer still are those that faithfully examine the prophecy from an amillennial and covenantal perspective, which Hoeksema does. Where applicable, which is often in this eschatologically important prophecy, he weighs in against pre- and post-millennial error, and instead points out the rich, blessed fulfillment of the prophecies in the establishment of Christ's spiritual kingdom in the New Testament church and new creation. As regards the covenant, he remonstrates against the conditional contract view, and demonstrates its failure to explain adequately the historical reality without being Arminian. Valuable is Hoeksema's consistent application, instead, of the covenant as an everlasting, unconditional bond of friendship God graciously establishes with His chosen in Jesus Christ. Also prominent throughout is his development of the organic idea of the covenant, i.e., the distinction between physical and spiritual Israel, or as Paul put it in Romans 9:6-8, between those of *Israel* (*children of the flesh*) and *Israel*

(*children of the promise*), elected by God in eternity, and with whom He establishes and maintains His covenant by separating and redeeming them with judgment.

If anyone imagines that because they are thoroughly doctrinal these sermons are dry and abstract, he would be mistaken. Though now simply words on paper that lack the dynamism of the living voice, they always speak to the heart, and at times are moving. For one, the doctrines themselves are precious. In his expositions, the absolute sovereignty, righteousness, justice, and holiness of God are exalted, His gracious salvation praised, His everlasting covenant extolled, while man is brought low to repentance and sorrow of heart.

The sermons are also intensely practical. Any suggestion should be dispelled that since he preached election, irresistible grace, justification without works, and an unconditional covenant, therefore Hoeksema was an antinomian who refused to preach the demands of the law. The admonitions are brought, they are contemporary, sharp, and pointed. He had a gift, not only for faithfully interpreting the historical context and doctrinal instruction, but also for applying it to the life and culture of today's church in a way that even little boys could understand and thus become men. Thus, the believing reader, as Israel of old, is brought in each sermon before God Himself and before the cross of Jesus Christ, and is built up spiritually in the faith. 

Report of Classis East

January 14, 2009
Grandville
Protestant Reformed Church

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, January 14, 2009 at the Grandville PRC. All

the churches were represented by two delegates. Guests at the classis were the church history students of Covenant Christian High School. Rev. J. Laning served as chairman for this meeting.

Two appeals and a protest

to Synod 2009 were received at this meeting. Both appeals were considered not to be legally before classis. One because the material received by classis had no response from the appellant's consistory because this consistory

did not receive the material from the appellant in time to compose a response. The second appeal did not meet the criterion of Article 30 of the Church Order. The protest was forwarded to Synod 2009 without comment.

The classis received the report of the church visitors. Their report indicates that there is peace and harmony in the churches, for which classis gave thanks.

As is usual at the January session of classis, many ballots are cast. Elected as delegates to Synod 2009 are the following: *MINISTERS: Primi:* C. Haak, D. Kleyn, K. Koole, J. Slopsema, R. VanOverloop; *Secundi:* A. denHartog, G. Eriks, R. Kleyn,


W. Langerak, A. Spriensma. *ELDERS: Primi:* Don Doezeema, Calvin Kalsbeek, Gerald Kuiper, Sid Miedema, David Ondersma; *Secundi:* Jon Bol, Robert Faber, John Kalsbeek, David Moelker, Larry VanOverloop. Rev. J. Laning was elected to a three-year term as *primus* delegate *ad examina*; Rev. A. Lanning was elected to serve a three-year *secundus* term. Rev. W. Langerak was elected to serve a three-year term on the Classical Committee. Revs. J. Slopsema and K. Koole were elected as church visitors, with Revs. Haak and VanOverloop as alternates.

Classical appointments were given to Byron Center PRC for

the evening services beginning on February 22, 2009.

In financial matters, classis approved a \$60,000 temporary subsidy for Grace PRC for 2009. Kalamazoo's subsidy of \$35,000 and Wingham's subsidy of \$36,000 (Canadian) for 2010 were also approved. Grace's request was sent to the Finance Committee of Synod for immediate action; the other subsidy requests will be treated at Synod 2009. The expenses of this session amounted to \$884.80.

The next meeting of classis will be held on May 13, 2009 at the Faith PRC.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon J. Huiskens,
Stated Clerk 

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

School Activities

On January 6, the School Boards of Adams, Eastside, and Heritage Christian Schools in and around Grand Rapids, MI each held a special society meeting for the sole purpose of approving their respective recommendations to move their 9th grade students to Covenant Christian High School at the earliest time possible.

This recommendation came after each school board reviewed the information provided to them by the Ninth Grade Forum Committee, a committee formed from these three feeder schools and Covenant Christian High to look at the question of placement of 9th grade in high school. This committee met for the first time in the fall of 2006 and spent hundreds of hours over an 18-month period looking at pros and cons of

the issue of where to place the 9th grade. Was it better to have these students remain for an additional year at the feeder schools, or have them join the student body at Covenant? In October 2008, the Forum Committee released their report to the members of the school societies with the recommendation to move the 9th grade to Covenant. Opportunity was given through a public informational meeting at Covenant in November for questions and concerns to be addressed. Participating feeder schools then brought the Forum's recommendation to their respective school societies for a vote. The result was an approval of the recommendation by all three school societies. Covenant Christian High School's society will now have opportunity to vote on the recommendation within a few weeks of the feeder school's vote and approval.

The School Board of Trinity Christian High School in Hull, IA sponsored a lecture for the evening of January 12 at the Hull PRC. Rev. Nathan Langerak, pas-

tor of the South Holland, IL PRC, spoke on the topic of "Abounding in the Work of the Lord." Trinity's choir provided a special number, and refreshments were served after the meeting.

Talk about good timing! Right in the middle of west Michigan's coldest temperatures of the winter, and anticipated snowfall of around five inches, the Hope Foundation of Hope PR Christian School in Walker, MI, sponsored their first travelogue of the 2009 season on Saturday, January 17, at the Grandville Middle School Auditorium. The featured film? "Hawaii—the Pacific Paradise."

Congregation Activities

The third Tuesday of each month, for a half hour in the evening, members of the Lynden, WA PRC join their voices together for a time to sing psalms and hymns for the members of the Christian Health Care Center in Lynden. Those singing could be assured that those who live at the Center would not soon forget Lynden's short visit and singing

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

in their midst. But then, neither would Lynden! The volunteer coordinator at the Center sent a short note of thanks for Lynden's tradition of caring, with these words, "The gift of music that you bring on Tuesday evenings is such a blessing! How wonderful to hear hymns at bedtime."

The Council of Hope PRC in Walker, MI reported that they continue to administer cyclone relief funds to the saints of the Protestant Reformed Churches of Myanmar. The destroyed homes have been rebuilt, but because of a lack of jobs, the members of Rev. Titus' congregation continue to need support for food, medication, and clothing. At the present rate of distribution, Hope's funds will be depleted in February 2009. Hope's council is presently making plans to send a delegation to Myanmar in March, 2009, the Lord willing.

The web site of Grace PRC in Standale, MI recently received a major overhaul. It is easy to use and will be a wonderful tool for the gospel ministry. It has a sermon library that can be downloaded, and it now has live audio streaming during worship services. Check it out at www.graceprc.org.

For the past 68 years, the First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI has been the driving force behind our denominational radio program, the Reformed Witness Hour. First celebrated that work with a special program after their Sunday evening worship service January 18. This program offered the members of First an opportunity to become better acquainted with the Reformed Witness Hour Committee, a committee of their church. It also offered a history of the broadcast, and the efforts it takes to keep this radio program on the air. As part of that celebration, Rev. Carl Haak, the radio voice of the RWH, was invited to preach at First that evening and to take part in the celebration as well.

At their December congrega-

tional meeting, the members of Hope PRC in Walker, MI approved Phase I of their parsonage renovation project. This project will begin after the estimated amount needed for that part of the renovations is collected.

Mission Activities


The members of the Covenant of Grace PR Fellowship in Spokane, WA were forced to hold Sunday worship services at the Quality Inn in Spokane after a sewer line break in their building. No word as to the cause, but seeing the recent reports of snow, rain, and cold around Spokane, we could almost assume it was weather related. Since then repairs have been made.

The DMC arranged for Rev. Jason Kortering to minister to the PR Fellowship in Tucson, AZ for the first months of this year. However, Rev. Kortering is pres-

ently suffering from a strained throat, and his doctor has counseled him not to preach for a month. It is uncertain at this point when and if he will be able to go to Tucson.

Rev. Ron Van Overloop and Mr. Tom Schimmel left January 15 for a visit to the Philippine Mission Field. Rev. Van Overloop will stay for 18 days (three Sundays), and teach and preach the Word. Mr. Schimmel will accompany him and return a week earlier, on the 23rd, the Lord willing.

Minister Activities

Rev. Richard Smit, pastor of Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada, has accepted the call extended to him from the Doon, IA PRC to become our denomination's foreign missionary to the Berean PRC in Manila, the Philippines. 

Announcements

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of the Southwest PRC express their sincere sympathy to their pastor, Rev. denHartog, and his family in the death of Rev. denHartog's brother,

MR. JACK DEN HARTOG.

May they in their sorrow find comfort in the words of our Savior that ring through the ages, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25).

Jon Langerak, Vice-president
Don Doezeema, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the Hudsonville PRC expresses its sincere Christian sympathy to member Mr. Pete Miedema in the sudden passing of Pete's brother,

JIM MIEDEMA,

on January 12, 2009. May the brother and his family find comfort from John 6:40: "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."

Erv Kortering, Secretary

TEACHER NEEDED

Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, MI is accepting applications from members of the Protestant Reformed Churches for a Spanish teacher for the 2009-2010 school year. A secondary teaching certificate in Spanish is preferred. Those interested can contact Mr. Rick Noorman at 616-453-5048 or rnoorman@altelco.net, or Mr. Jeff Terpstra at 616-735-0775 or jeffterpstra@gmail.com

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Hull PRC express their sympathy to the Duane Netter family in the passing into glory of their wife and mother,

BEV NETTEN.

"The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I trust" (Psalm 18:2).

Pastor S. Key, President
Gerald Brummel, Clerk of records

TEACHERS NEEDED

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

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Women's Wednesday Morning Bible Fellowship and the Mr. and Mrs. Bible Society of Southwest PRC express their Christian sympathy to their Bible study leader, Pastor Arie den Hartog, and to his wife and family, in the death of Pastor den Hartog's brother, **MR. JACK DEN HARTOG**, of our Lynden Protestant Reformed Church. May the den Hartog family find comfort and encouragement in the promises of Scripture. "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psalm 73:24).

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Hull PRC express their sympathy to Peter and Christiana Westra in the passing into glory of their infant twins:

**CALEB DANIEL and
JOSHUA DAVID.**

"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

Pastor S. Key, President
Gerald Brummel, Clerk of records

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies' Society of Hudsonville PRC expresses Christian sympathy to Mary Lynn Postmus and Grace Kamps in the passing of their mother and sister-in-law,

TILLIE BODBYL.

May we too be comforted by the words in Revelation 14:13, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from hence forth, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."

Martyn McGeown, President
Donna Boven, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Hull PRC express their sympathy to Minard and Cora VanDenTop in the passing into glory of their daughter,

BEV NETTEN,

and son,

HENRY VAN DEN TOP.

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10).

Pastor S. Key, President
Gerald Brummel, Clerk of records

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Hull PRC express their sympathy to elder Pete Brummel family, elder Gerald Brummel family, Florence Vink family, and John Brummel in the passing into glory of their mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother,

EUNICE BRUMMEL.

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside still waters" (Psalm 23:1, 2).

Pastor S. Key, President
Loren Gritters, Clerk

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
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.