

# THE *February 1, 2009* STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

## *In This Issue*

- ◆ *The More Sure Word* **194**
- ◆ *Seminary and Saints:*  
*A Reciprocal Sine Qua Non (2)* **196**
- ◆ *The Congregation's Support of Her Diaconate (4)* **199**
- ◆ *Covenant Life in the Home (3)* **201**
- ◆ *William Carey—Pioneer Missionary to India (2)* **203**
- ◆ *Rome and Politics (6)* **206**
- ◆ *The Origin and History of the*  
*Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia (3)* **210**
- ◆ *The Golden Key of Prayer* **212**
- ◆ *News From Our Churches* **214**

Volume 85 ◆ Number 9

# The More Sure Word

*"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."*

II Peter 1:19-21

**T**his epistle emphasizes that knowledge is essential to a believer. Specifically, Peter is inspired to equip with right knowledge the new Christians to whom he is writing, so they can withstand "false prophets" (2:1) and the "scoffers" (3:3) who will come. Earlier in this chapter he had shown that Christians are to aim for certainty concerning their election (10). In general, Peter is seeking to assure them that the

Christian faith is not a cunningly devised fable, but the "present truth" (12).

Peter knew it, in part, because he was an eyewitness of Jesus' majesty on the mount of transfiguration. There he saw with his own eyes "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (16-18), which is the only power to deliver from sin and Satan. And the new Christians can also know with certainty the power and coming of Jesus for themselves because they have something even better than Peter had. They (and we) have a "more sure word of prophecy" in the written Scriptures.

Our text instructs us in the authority and trustworthiness of God's written word. May our confidence in the Scriptures as our infallible guide increase. May we trust them the more.



Peter declares that the knowledge of the power and coming of Jesus is better ("more sure") when it comes from the "word of prophecy" (19) and the "prophecy of the scripture" (20). As amazing as the experience and as clear

as the proof of Jesus' power and coming was in the transfiguration, the prophetic word is even better. The prophetic word is written (that is what "scripture" means). So when he says that "holy men of God spake" (21), he is referring to the same subject, namely, to the Scriptures, the written word of God. When Peter wrote this, the reference was obvious to the Christians to whom he was writing. They knew he was referring to the Old Testament Bible. This is what Peter and these Christians had. They did not have the New Testament as we do. Also they did not have what the prophets spoke orally. That was gone. But they did have Old Testament prophecies. They had been written, inscripturated.

Our text emphasizes that every prophecy of the writings is inspired. When he writes with emphasis that "no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation," he is saying that all or every prophecy of the scripture is not of any private interpretation (this is the literal translation of the Greek in this passage), but is inspired.

Further, what was said of the

*Rev. VanOverloop is pastor of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Standale, Michigan.*

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

#### REPRINT POLICY

Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgment is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

#### EDITORIAL POLICY

Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for The Reader Asks department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be signed.

#### EDITORIAL OFFICE

Prof. Barrett L. Gritters  
4949 Ivanrest Ave. SW  
Grandville, MI 49418  
(e-mail: [gritters@prca.org](mailto:gritters@prca.org))

#### BUSINESS OFFICE

The Standard Bearer  
Mr. Timothy Pipe  
1894 Georgetown Center Dr.  
Jenison, MI 49428-7137  
PH: (616) 457-5970  
FAX: (616) 457-5980  
(e-mail: [tim@rfpa.org](mailto:tim@rfpa.org))

#### Postmaster:

Send address changes to  
The Standard Bearer  
1894 Georgetown Center Dr.  
Jenison, MI 49428-7137

#### CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

Mr. Ben Wigger  
6597 40th Ave.  
Hudsonville, MI 49426  
(e-mail: [benjwig@juno.com](mailto:benjwig@juno.com))

#### NEW ZEALAND OFFICE

The Standard Bearer  
c/o B. VanHerik  
66 Fraser St.  
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

#### UNITED KINGDOM OFFICE

c/o Mr. Sean Courtney  
78 Millfield, Grove Rd.  
Ballymena, Co. Antrim  
BT43 6PD Northern Ireland  
(e-mail: [cpraudiostore@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cpraudiostore@yahoo.co.uk))

#### SUBSCRIPTION PRICE

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

#### ADVERTISING POLICY

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

Website for RFPA: [www.rfpa.org](http://www.rfpa.org)

Website for PRC: [www.prc.org](http://www.prc.org)

Old Testament writings may also be said of the whole Bible, that is, also the New Testament writings. Later in this epistle Peter shows that the same authority is to be given to “the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior” as to “the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets” (3:2). And he speaks also of the writings of “our beloved brother Paul” as being authoritative (3:15, 16).



The prophetic word is reliable because it is inspired—Spirit-breathed. The prophetic word came by means of the Holy Spirit moving holy men to write, men whose writings are to be considered inspired and holy, and thus trustworthy. Peter uses two negative expressions and then one positive statement to describe inspiration.

First, he says that the prophetic word “came not in old time by the will of man” (21). Literally, Peter said that the writings did “not come by the will of man at any time—ever.” No part of the Bible was written because a man or a group of men thought it up and wrote it down. The Scriptures did not have their origin in the will of man at all. Therefore, we are to conclude that they have their origin in the will of God.

Second, Peter says that the Scriptures are *not* “of private interpretation” (20). This expression refers not to the readers, but to the writers. No writer of the Scriptures wrote privately (“of his own”). The Scriptures do not have their source or origin in the writers. The Bible is not the product of the mind of man, of human speculation or opinion. Genesis 1 (the creation) and Genesis 3 (man’s fall into sin) and Genesis 9-11 (the universal flood of Noah’s day) are not the private interpretation of Moses. The reason they are not of private interpretation is because the en-

tire Scriptures have their origin in God and are due to His will.

Because the Scriptures are not the product of a writer’s own interpretation, it must follow that the readers too are to be careful that they do not impose their own interpretation on the Scriptures, to fit their own preconceived ideas. We are not to read into the Bible an interpretation that is based on scientific discoveries. Rather, every reader must listen carefully to the Bible and let it give its own meaning. Let Scripture interpret Scripture!

Positively, Peter says that men wrote the Bible “as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (21). The Holy Spirit “moved” them, that is, guided, led, carried, or bore them along. A superior power took hold of and carried an inferior power and did so according to the wishes of the superior power. Those who were so carried were totally dependent on the superior power, just as a ship is carried by the superior power of a storm.

We must also realize that the men whom the Holy Spirit used to write were previously worked on by the Spirit. Prior to the Spirit’s using them to write the Scriptures, these men had been regenerated, and they were being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. They were “holy-of-God men.”

Further, the Holy Spirit worked in a special way to guide them so that they wrote His infallible Word, and not their own. As they were consciously writing, the Spirit was carrying them about, so that every word was what He would have them to write. This is inspiration. The Holy Spirit can therefore rightly be said to be the only Author of the Bible!



As a result, “we have a more sure word.” If the Bible were the word of man, then it would not be sure, reliable, and trustworthy.

But the prophetic word is reliable. It is not man’s sophisticated myth. Nor does it have both divine and human elements in it. Nor is the Bible the church’s response to God. Then it would be fallible.

And, amazingly, the prophetic writings are even more trustworthy than the voice Peter heard at Jesus’ transfiguration! In the holy writings we have the same voice of the same God that Peter heard. But the fact that it is written makes it more sure than that which Peter heard on the mount.

Therefore, “ye do well to take heed.” The only appropriate response to God’s inspiration of the Scriptures is that we pay good heed to them.


This means three things. First, we should read them and study them, and demand that they be preached faithfully to us. Second, we should believe them and trust them. And finally, we should walk in the light coming from them, that is, obey what they command.

Any time one does not take heed to them, he does wrong to the Scriptures and to himself.

When we take heed to the Word of God, then we will experience “the day star arise in [our] hearts.” This is the morning star—the star that announces the soon coming of the morning. As such, this star gives great hope because it is a light that shines into us and gives hope of the day. The implication is that we are in the darkness of sin and unbelief, and we cannot see a way out of our sin and corruption. To know the only thing that can help, that is, the power and coming of the Lord Jesus, we must give heed to the Scriptures. For they are a light that shines into our darkness. God’s truth dispels the darkness, removes the lie, correctly identifies the darkness and the only way out of the darkness. We are given to learn of Jesus as the only way out of sin

and death. The “day star” of the Scriptures gives the hope that the Lord will come for us. And when He comes, then we will no longer need the prophetic Word. Then we will have the light of the sun shining in us.

So take heed to the Scriptures. Realize that having them you have something even better than what Peter had on the mount of transfiguration. Use the Scriptures and see the light they give

in showing to you Jesus, the light of the world. Appreciate the wonderful gift God has given to you in the Scriptures. Thank Him properly by using them, reading them, meditating on them, loving them! 

Editorial

Prof. Russell Dykstra

## Seminary and Saints: A Reciprocal Sine Qua Non (concl.)

[Introduction: The stated goal of this convocation speech was to demonstrate the essential relationship between the believer and the seminary. The first part demonstrated the crucial importance of the seminary for believers. This second half will establish that the saints are equally essential to the seminary, and then will call all to faithfulness in their respective duties. RJD]

### The Saints Serve the Seminary

**H**ow are the saints the *sine qua non* of the seminary? The name saints is a descriptive biblical term for God’s people. Paul addressed the believers in Ephesians and in Romans with that title. Saints are holy ones. By nature they are dead in sin, totally corrupt. However, they have been made alive by the Spirit, who gives them life, sanctifies them, and renews them in the image of Christ. Because these have the anointing of the Spirit, they rightfully bear

the name Christian (anointed one).

As Christians, they have an office, namely, the office of believers. As is true of all offices, it gives to believers a certain authority, and a certain responsibility. As every teenaged catechumen knows, this is a threefold office, that of prophet, priest, and king. All believers hold the office of prophet, and have the right and ability to understand the Word of God and to speak it. As priests, they are holy, consecrated to God, and have the right to go directly to God through Jesus. As kings, they fight against sin, the world, and Satan, and they reign with Christ.

This office is related to the special offices of the church (minister, deacon, and elder) in this way: The office of believer functions through the special offices. Let us notice how this is true, starting with the minister.

The dependence of the minister upon the office of believer begins with the call to the office. The minister may not take the office on himself—he must be lawfully called (Rom. 10:15 “And how shall they preach except they be sent?”). The man’s call comes through the church, that is, the local congregation, and that

through the office of believer. (The first question that the Form for Ordination of Ministers demands of the minister is this: “I ask thee whether thou feelest in thy heart that thou art lawfully called of God’s church, and therefore of God Himself, to this holy ministry?”) God gives His church the command to preach the Word of the gospel. The church calls a man, ordains him, and commissions him to preach.

That is not all. Believers are *responsible* for the preaching. They are required to see to it that the Word is preached. They are responsible also for its content—on the one hand, that it contain no errors; and on the other, that it does contain good and sufficient food for the soul. Accordingly, in their office, believers pray for the pastor, encourage him, and support him financially so that he can carry out the duties of the office. Wise believers take care also not to burden the minister with work that does not belong to his office.

At the same time that they support and oversee the office of minister, believers must submit to the preaching. This indicates the reciprocal nature of their relationship. Although the congregation calls the minister, gives him the

---

*This article is the text of the address of Prof. Dykstra at the Seminary Convocation held at Trinity PRC on September 3, 2008.*

*Previous article in this series: January 15, 2009, p. 172.*



commission to preach, pays his salary, and prays for and encourages him, the congregation must hear and submit to the preached Word. For the minister is the ambassador of Christ. His word carries the authority of Christ.

In a sense, the congregation preaches to itself.

The same reciprocal relation is seen in connection with the elders and deacons. Elders are called by the congregation, and thus by God Himself. The congregation approves the nomination; the confessing male members select the elders and deacons. The members must demand of the elders faithfulness. Faithfully the elders must watch over the congregation—ruling and guarding the saints.

Yet the work of elders is the work of the congregation, as, for example, in the exercise of Christian discipline. Elders involve the congregation in this work, directing the members to pray for and admonish the unrepentant in the congregation. And these same members must submit to the elders as ambassadors of Christ, their King!

Likewise deacons' nominations are approved by the congregation. The deacons are selected and installed into office. And the congregation must give the deacons the means to care for the poor, and demand that the deacons do the work. Yet, the members must submit to the deacons' authority!

Obviously, these special offices depend upon the office of believer.

The same is true of the seminary.

Seminary professors are ministers who have come out of the homes of the church—usually born and raised in the churches. The church calls these professors ("...lawfully called of God's church, and therefore of God Himself to this office"—Form for the Installation of Professors of

Theology). "God's church" consists of the believers. The church calls the professor through the synod.

More significantly, the men currently preparing for ministry in the churches have come from the families of the church. That is not always the case, obviously. God can draw a man out of unbelief, bring him into the sphere of the church, and convict him of the call to the ministry. Especially this happens on the mission field. But the more ordinary way is that sons of believing parents occupy the desks in the seminary classrooms. Thus it was with Timothy, whom Paul took from the home of believing Lois and Eunice.

Do you see the significance? The saints produce the future ministers. Thus the spiritual character of the saints will determine much about the future generation of ministers. If the church is spiritually weak, this is disastrous for the seminary. If the saints do not live as saints, but are carnal, earthly minded; if their treasures are on this earth; if they are immersed in the entertainment of the world; if their garments are polluted with the filth of the world—this spells disaster. It should be obvious that the young men who enter the seminary will be much affected by their upbringing in this environment. They will arise out of a generation that does not know the Lord, neither the mighty works that He has done, as was true of the generation after Joshua (Jud. 2:10).

For, although God's grace is sovereign, and God can preserve young men from corruption, and although out of a spiritually weak generation God can raise up spiritually minded men—exactly the kind of men who should be in seminary—God is also just. In His judgment upon impenitence and spiritual indifference, He gives to a church the spiritual leaders that

they deserve. One cannot send a carnally minded Saul into seminary and expect that a Solomon will emerge. One cannot send weak men to seminary and expect that spiritual giants will materialize for the ministry.

Oh, but if the church is spiritually strong! If the saints love the truth and walk in it; if they are interested in doctrine and love to talk about the Reformed faith; if, as saints, they live antithetically over against the world, keep their garments unspotted from the world, and have their treasures in heaven; if they also raise their children in the fear of the Lord—the advantage for the seminary is obvious.

Then the young men who seek admittance to the seminary have been raised on Scripture. They know the Bible stories; they have sung the Psalms and memorized Scripture. Such men have been nurtured on Reformed doctrine. They sat under solid preaching from infancy. They received sound catechetical instruction. Most were privileged to receive nine or more years of covenantal instruction in Protestant Reformed schools. Their parents demanded of them that they live the antithesis.

That is an obvious way that the saints, the believers, affect the seminary in this reciprocal relationship. The *saints* produce a godly seed, from which come, by God's grace, solid ministers.

But there is more. Another duty of the saints is to hold the special offices accountable. They must demand of the officebearers, in this case the professors, that they do the work God calls them to do. The saints expect solid Reformed instruction in their seminary. They demand thorough training in all areas, so that every man who graduates has a grasp of and commitment to the Reformed faith, knows the Bible, knows Reformed theology, and gives every evidence that he

loves the truth. Every graduate must be able to preach well, to teach catechism effectively, and to give good pastoral instruction and counsel. And those who have discernible moral flaws must not be allowed to graduate.

Saints must keep the seminary faithful in this regard. That does not mean that the saints watch the seminary with suspicion, expecting that the professors will go astray. That is not healthy, nor is it right. The saints do not watch the elders in their congregation with suspicion, for the saints have put their approbation upon them. Likewise with the seminary, the churches, through synod, appointed the professors, because they knew that these men were thoroughly committed to the Reformed faith, the precious doctrines and practices maintained in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

However, unfaithfulness in office may not be tolerated.

What is the guard against this? The Theological School Committee is especially appointed by synod to oversee the seminary, including the instruction. But in addition, the saints themselves are the guardians. They have the right to visit the classes and to audit full courses. And, very important, the saints hear the preaching from the seminary. Professors are not ivory-tower theologians hidden away in the seminary building, so that no one has any idea what they teach. They preach in the churches, so that the saints hear their preaching and can judge whether or not it is Reformed, and Protestant Reformed. Besides, the saints hear the students speaking a word of edification, and can judge what they are being taught—orthodoxy or heterodoxy.

The final safeguard against error is an official ecclesiastical examination. At the conclusion of his seminary training, the student is examined publicly

before synod. This exam must be passed, before the *churches* declare a man a candidate for the ministry.

Without the watch on the seminary by the saints, the seminary will not continue indefinitely to produce godly, Reformed ministers. Relinquishing the watch and the work merely to the doctors of theology and the ordained ministers would mean the eventual demise of the seminary.

Hence, a reciprocal *Sine Qua Non*. On the one hand, the saints make the seminary possible. They call and ordain the ministers and appoint them to teach prospective ministers. The saints raise their children in the fear of the Lord, and send their sons to the seminary. The same believers hold the special offices accountable. Without these activities, there will soon be no seminary—at least, no faithful seminary.

On the other hand, the seminary serves the saints. By means of writing, speaking, and teaching, the professors defend the truth against the lie, develop the doctrines more fully and clearly, as well as warn and instruct the churches. In addition, the seminary sends out candidates for the ministry. They are equipped to preach, to defend the truth, to expound the Scriptures, and to proclaim the Reformed faith boldly. In short, they warn and instruct the people of God. Without the seminary and this training of the ministers, preaching will cease. Without preaching, the saints cannot long survive.

### **The Clear Calling for Both**

Seminary and saints must simply do what God calls them to do.

I take the opportunity to convey to the saints, that we at the seminary are profoundly grateful for the strong support that the churches give to the seminary. We exhort you to continue encouraging both professor and


student alike, so that they do not become weary. Your attendance at convocation is exactly that. In addition, we urge you to pray for the seminary throughout the year. Be watching, and in prayer. Prayer is effectual. Evidence of that is found in recent history. When a few years ago the Protestant Reformed Churches had a number of vacancies and few students, the churches began to pray the Lord of the harvest for students. He answered with the much enlarged student body. The Lord also gave us several foreign students—a great privilege and blessing to the seminary.

Professors and students, you know what your calling is. It is a high calling and a great privilege. Your duty, professors, is to teach, pass along the rich tradition of the Reformed faith. Your solemn duty, students, is to learn, and through the training be prepared to preach the gospel. This is exciting work!

We conclude with thanksgiving. And thanksgiving excludes boasting. It is not of any of us that God has kept the seminary faithful—not only in properly training preachers, but also faithfulness to the truth. It is all of God. Every year that the seminary remains faithful is God's work, His gift to the churches.

We thank God for the privilege we have. As saints, we rejoice to have a seminary of our own that, under God's blessing, sends forth faithful preachers. As seminary professors and students we delight to teach and to learn the Reformed faith.

We live in evil days. How long will a seminary that uncompromisingly maintains the distinctively Reformed faith be allowed to continue? Only the Lord knows. It could come to an end much more quickly than we think.

But the Lord has given us yet a little time. So let us, as saints and seminary, labor zealously for the cause of Jesus Christ. 

## The Congregation's Support of Her Diaconate (4)

# The Implication for Our Daily Life

**T**hat the congregation supports her diaconate by giving, and that such giving is an act of worship, we have noted in the previous two articles in this series.

We should not conclude, however, that we fulfill our calling to support the diaconate only occasionally (once a week or less), and in the space of a moment, by putting money in the collection plate. Rather, the support of the deacons has implications for all of our life. Specifically, the Scriptures indicate two implications, which we now consider: the implication regarding work, and the implication regarding stewardship of our money and possessions.

### The Implication Regarding Work

Both Scripture and our Reformed confessions indicate a relationship between work and the care of the poor.

Ephesians 4:28 is explicit in this regard: "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

In its explanation of the eighth commandment, our Heidelberg Catechism underscores that the people of God work with a view to caring for the poor.

*Rev. Kuiper is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin.*

*Previous article in this series: December 1, 2008, p. 107.*

Q. 111. But what doth God require in this commandment?

A. That I promote the advantage of my neighbor in every instance I can or may; and deal with him as I desire to be dealt with by others: further also that I faithfully labor, so that I may be able to relieve the needy.

In several of our minor confessions (by which term I refer to the forms in the back of our Psalter, which the Synod of Dordt officially approved for use in Reformed churches) the same point is made. Ephesians 4:28 is quoted in that section of the Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons in which the congregation is given a charge regarding her officebearers. There the congregation is exhorted to labor, in order to be able to provide the deacons with the means to do their work. And in the Form for the Confirmation of Marriage Before the Church, the bridegroom is instructed:

And since it is God's command "that the man shall eat his bread in the sweat of his face," therefore you are to labor diligently and faithfully, in the calling wherein God hath set you, that you may maintain your household honestly, and likewise have something to give to the poor.



The relationship between work and the support of the diaconate can be stated in several ways.

First, work is the means whereby one makes a living, so that he does not need the help of

the deacons, or at least does not need as much help.

Work is the ordinary means by which God supplies our needs, and provides us the means with which to pay our own bills. So we read in I Thessalonians 4:11-12: "And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing."

This also is the reason why in Ephesians 4:28, work is contrasted with stealing. Not by stealing, but by work, God supplies us with the necessities of life. He who refuses to work, though he is able bodied and has the opportunity to work, and who instead comes to the deacons for his support, steals from the church. To such God's Word says, "Stop stealing, and get to work!"

Second, one of the purposes of God in giving income-producing work to healthy adults in His church is that His poor be cared for. This too is clearly the teaching of Ephesians 4:28. The last clause of the verse specifically indicates the purpose for work: "that he may have to give to him that needeth."

By our diligent labor, God often provides us with *more* than enough to provide for the necessities of life. What are we to do with that which is over and above what we actually need? We will quickly think of ways in which we might spend it on luxuries. Not that luxuries are wrong in themselves. But before spending



this money on himself, when his own needs are already met, the child of God must *share* with others. He must give to the poor.

For the fact is, the church always has the poor with her (Matt. 26:11, John 12:8). She always has some who are unable to work because of old age or severe physical infirmities. At times she has some who are able to work, but cannot find a job to support them. Such are the proper recipients of benevolence. With a view to sharing with such, we must work.

This is really the argument that the apostle Paul makes to the saints in Corinth as he encourages them to give for the saints in Jerusalem. We read in II Corinthians 8:13-15:

For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality: As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.

The argument is that the very reason why God gave an abundance to the Corinthians is that they might supply the need of the saints in Jerusalem.

This is the doctrine of the communion of saints applied to material goods! This is the way in which the church of Christ today shows herself to be like the early New Testament church, in which "all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need" (Acts 2:44-45). God does not require us to sell all our possessions in order to have all things common; but He does require us to give of that which we have earned for those in need. This is God's purpose for giving us more

than is necessary to sustain our own earthly life.

The poor in the church have reason to thank God that He raises up able bodied men, and supplies them with jobs, so that the poor can be cared for!

Taking this point to heart, we state this as the third aspect of the relationship between work and the support of the diaconate: my love for the poor becomes a *motivation* for me to work. The child of God labors in obedience to God's command that he work ("Six days shalt thou labor," Ex. 20:9, Deut. 5:13). Love for God, and obedience to God, must motivate him. But so must love for the neighbor. I am to awake in the morning resolved to love God and my neighbor, in gratitude for all that God has done for me in Christ. Among the ways in which I am to show this love is that of going to work, so that God will provide me with the means to care for the poor.

### **The Implication Regarding Stewardship**

Not only must the child of God work with a view to supporting his church's diaconate and caring for the poor, but for the same reason he must also be a good steward of that which God gives him.

Work in itself does not guarantee that one will have the means to support the deacons. It is possible that one makes a decent income by honest work, but squanders that income, so that he still does not have the means to give for the relief of the poor. Or it is possible that one still has the means to give for the poor, but makes a deliberate choice not to do so, because he wants to use that money for himself.

The child of God may not do these things. As the support of the diaconate is the church's *obligation*, and as every member of the church is required to do what he can to carry out this calling

(which point we made in the first article of this series), one whose work provides him with the means to care for the poor, but who squanders that income so that he cannot give to the poor, or who refuses to give for the poor because he desires to advance himself, stands in God's sight as guilty.

With love for God and our brethren in our hearts, let us be good stewards of that which God gives, so that we are able to give for the poor!



Scripture gives us warrant to say that we must be good stewards of our possessions with a view to helping the poor.

First, some passages of Scripture clearly teach that by being a good steward of what God has given him, the child of God will avoid personal poverty. Proverbs 10:4 reads: "He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich." And Proverbs 21:17: "He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich." So the avoiding of poverty in my life is not only a reason for me to work, but also a reason for me to be a good steward of my income.

Second, by being a good steward, I will not only avoid poverty personally, but will have the means to give to the poor. For as a good steward I will save some of my resources, and not spend all my income or use up all my possessions. Proverbs 21:20 says, "There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up." Now a wise man might store up that which he saves for various good reasons; but one of them would be that he has the means to care for the needy. At any moment, one could come to us requesting us to help him in his need. He who has stored up will be able to do so (and must,



I John 3:17!). We have noticed in the past that the apostle Paul directed the Corinthians to “lay in store” for the poor saints in Jerusalem, so that when Paul would come to Corinth, this collection might be ready for him to take to Jerusalem (I Cor. 16:2). So being a good steward requires that I save some of my income so that when the collection for benevolence is taken, I have the means to give.

Third, Scripture indicates that the care of the poor must be a higher priority in our life than the enjoyment of luxuries. Jesus told the rich young ruler to sell

all that he had and give to the poor (Matt. 19:21). Jesus gave this command specifically to test the faith of this rich young man. By giving this command, Jesus did not mean to teach that every child of God must sell all his possessions and give all to the poor. What this command does show, however, is that we must not consider the obtaining and enjoying of luxuries to be more important than the care of the poor.




How necessary, then, that we examine our lives to see whether or not we have the right view of

our possessions; whether or not we use our possessions properly; whether or not our financial priorities stand the test of Scripture.

And how necessary that we examine our hearts to see whether we love God and our neighbor, as we are commanded!

For this love of God manifests itself in loving the neighbor. This love for the neighbor includes our love for the poor. And our love for the poor leads us both to work and to be good stewards of our possessions.

God gives us this love! 

*When Thou Sittest in Thine House*

*Rev. Arie denHartog*

## *Covenant Life in the Home (3)*

# *Love for God in Our Covenant Home (2)*

**L**ove for God is the most holy and sublime and perfect love. The soul of man cannot reach any higher than knowing and loving God. Love for God means that we delight in Him as God, that we have fear of Him and reverence for His perfect holiness and righteousness and all of His glorious attributes. It means that we worship before Him in deepest reverence and fear. We must keep God’s commandments because we love Him. There is no keeping of God’s commandments without love for God.

Love for God means that we love the truth of God revealed

in His Word. God has given the truth concerning Himself to us distinctly in His Word. He has also distinguished it from the lie and all falsehood. His truth stands opposed to all that is of the lie, which is enmity against God. God’s revelation to us tells us who and what God is in Himself and what He has done to save His people. Loving God means that the deepest principle of our life is the desire to serve and obey God, to do His will in our life, and to seek His glory above all.

Love for God implies that we have a personal knowledge of and fellowship with God. The truth of God’s covenant is precious to us. We believe that, according to all of Scripture, the truth of the covenant is in essence fellowship, communion, and friendship with God. The bond of the covenant between us and our God is and

must be the living bond of fervent love. We can never, even for a moment, continue in our love for God except we are conscious of and dependent on God’s love for us, and daily experience the blessed spiritual reality of this love in our own hearts.

Walking in the love for God with our wife or our husband and teaching our children about this love is our highest calling in our covenant home. There should be nothing more important in our life than seeking the glory of God and keeping His commandments. If we truly love God we are ready to deny ourselves, to have ourselves put to shame in this ungodly world, to suffer the greatest imaginable persecution, and to count even the dearest thing in our life secondary compared to love for God.

This we must also teach our children by both our words of

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

*Previous article in this series: January 15, 2009, p. 182.*

daily instruction and by the example of our life. In the close communion and fellowship of our covenant homes, this great motive for doing all things, namely love for God, must be evident. The way that father and mother perform their daily calling in the covenant home must very clearly reveal their own love for God. If we as parents walk in that love for God, our covenant children will know it, they will feel it. Even though that love, as long as we are still in the body of sin, will always be ever so imperfect, the principle of love for God will be and must be evident.

What an awesome responsibility is ours to raise the covenant children He has given us. We must teach them to love God above all. Love for God may never be a matter of mere words, it may not be a matter only of insistence on and maintaining sound doctrine, as tremendously important as this is in itself. Love for God in our lives must be a warm and personal spiritual reality. If we truly love God, our children will know it, if they have the grace of God in their own hearts.

We must show this love for God when we sit in our home and when we walk by the way. We must show this love for God when we rise up and when we lie down, that is, day to day in our whole life.

True love for God is not mere feeling or words. It will be shown in that we delight in keeping the Lord's commandments. It is a joy for us to do His will. This is and must be something very real and practical with us. We must show our children that there is nothing more important in our lives than His Word and His commandments. Because we love God, we have the highest regard for the manner in which we live from day to day and the manner in which

we conduct our daily occupation. It must all be done in sincerity and truth and righteousness and for the glory of God.

This we must show to our children. They must see this in us; they must experience daily the reality of this. If we truly love God, we will be ready to make all kinds of sacrifices for Him, and we will

in the fear of God refuse in any way to compromise His Word and His commandments in our lives. We will keep God's com-

mandments, not out of cold formality or legalistic necessity as the Pharisees of Jesus' day did, but out of spiritual and ardent love for God and thankfulness for His great salvation.

If we love God we will love His house, because there we have fellowship with God and worship Him and sing His glorious praises. It is claimed by some that one can love God without loving the church. This is, however, nonsense. True, we do not love the church as a mere formal and outward institution. Surely we do not love the apostate church and the false doctrine it promotes and the evil against God it tolerates even in its own midst. If we love God, we love the true church and we teach our children to love His church. We know that the true church is the house of God, the place where God dwells with His chosen people and where He shows His glory and great salvation among them. We must teach our children by our word and example to love the true church of God. We care for the truth that this church preaches, confesses, and maintains. We show our children love for God when we lead them up to the house of God each Lord's Day with joy and

eagerness, with ardent desire for fellowship with God, and with desire to worship our God in fear and joyful praise and thanksgiving.

Love for God in our covenant home will be shown in many ways. It will be evident in the daily conversations in our homes. These conversations will repeatedly be about God's greatness and glory, His wonderful salvation, and His goodness and mercy in our lives. Our children will hear this constantly from their covenant fathers and mothers. This will indicate that love for God is a living spiritual reality in our covenant homes.

Love for God is and must be evident in our hatred for sin. You cannot love God and be careless about sin, our own sins and the sins of our children. If we love God we will daily grieve over our own sinfulness. Our children will see and hear us going daily in profound sorrow and shame to the cross of Christ for forgiveness. Our prayers will reveal this. They will not be a short and formal, repetitious and thoughtless "forgive us all our sins for Jesus' sake. Amen." Rather, love for God will be revealed in a daily and specific mention of our sins by name and according to their awful character, and with deep sorrow over our continual and daily weaknesses. It will be revealed in ardent desire and longing for forgiveness, reconciliation, righteousness, and peace with God. Our prayers will reveal our daily wrestling with sin, our daily shame over sin and deep humility before God, and our godly sorrow over and repentance from sin.

Our daily prayers must reflect the daily consciousness that we have regarding our sins. We have sinned first of all against the God whom we love, who first loved us and saved us in the awesome way of sacrificing His own dear Son for us and for the atonement of

*If we as parents walk in that love for God, our covenant children will know it, they will feel it.*

our sins. We show our children that we love God when we have such an attitude with regard to our own sins. When our children sin, and they will often do that, walking in the same sins that they observe in their parents, then we will lead them, we will go with them, to the cross of Jesus Christ to seek His forgiving mercy and to be restored again to His favor and fellowship.

Love for God means enmity for the wicked and ungodly world in all its ungodly lusts and pride and covetousness and greed and rebellion. He that is the friend of the world is an enemy of God.

This we must teach also by our word and example to our children. We must before them and with them condemn this ungodly world and separate ourselves spiritually from this corrupt and perverted world and its wicked philosophy of life. Very few, increasingly few, even of professing Christians, show in their daily lives the necessity and reality of condemning this ungodly world and fleeing from its ungodly lusts. We must do this for God's sake and through the fervent love of God in our hearts.

No one besides God Himself knows who and what we really

are. Our children, who live with us every day in our covenant homes, will know a lot about who we really are. There can be no hiding from them whether we truly love God. While it is possible for a time to be hypocrites before the world, it is impossible for us to be hypocrites before and with our children in our covenant homes. Our covenant children must see and know by daily experience that we as fathers and mothers truly love God, though yet with much weakness and imperfection.

Do they? 

*Biographies of Missionaries*

*Rev. Jason Kortering*

## William Carey— Pioneer Missionary to India (2)

### His Labors in India

**T**he struggles that William Carey faced in England in trying to convince others that God had a work for him in India prepared him for the far more difficult work God had for him to do there. During their five-month voyage, Carey began his study of the Bengali language, with the help of Thomas, his colleague, who had labored in India before and motivated him to return with him. The captain of the ship was kind to Carey and his family and even allowed him to conduct public worship services on the Lord's Day. Carey's mind was sharpened through his regular debate with an old French-

man, Barnard by name, who was a Deist and who challenged Carey's beliefs at every turn. Carey had time to read the Bible devotionally, and to prepare his soul for future trials. Even Dorothy, his wife, settled down somewhat when the ship passed the cape of South Africa.

Carey had hoped that they would stop there, so that he would have time to enjoy fellowship with the Dutch Christians and to send notice back to England of their progress, but this was not to be. After encountering a horrific storm that persuaded him that all would be lost at sea, Carey learned anew the mercies of the Lord, and he bravely pressed on with renewed courage.

Let me give you a few snapshots of the difficulties he faced upon his arrival in India on November 19, 1793.

Politics made necessary their

illegal entry into the country. The East India Company opposed any mission work in India because they saw it as a threat to their profit margin. Because of this, the Careys boarded the ship illegally, with the help of the captain, who sympathized with their goal. Upon arrival, the captain of each ship had to submit an affidavit stating he carried no contraband or unlicensed passengers on his ship. To enable him to do this, the captain helped the missionary families disembark the ship and board a small fishing boat prior to their entering Calcutta.

Thomas was acquainted with this territory, so it did not take long before they were swallowed up in the jungle. Thomas had kept his family in Calcutta in affluence, so upon his return he settled down with them. He even used, for his own comforts, most of the resources that the churches

---

*Rev. Kortering is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.*

*Previous article in this series: January 1, 2009, p. 156.*

had provided. Carey's seclusion, however, forced him to struggle in the malaria-infested regions and in poverty of the worst sort for a few months. His soul was tried almost to the point of despair. He learned to wait upon Jehovah.

Then God moved Mr. Short, of the East India Company, to offer Carey a job in an indigo factory in Malda. And Thomas repented of his mistreatment of the Careys, and the two were reconciled. For almost eight years Carey turned his manual work to an advantage for his missionary calling.

In 1795 Carey established a small Baptist church in Malda. The membership numbered only four—his own family—though many local Bengali people attended and the gospel became known to others. Yet, during this time, Carey could not claim one convert. He used the factory as an opportunity to learn the local language and began his important work of translating the Bible.

The hardships of the first eight years took a toll on his family. Sickness bore down on them. Carey suffered malaria with violent vomiting and dysentery. Their son, little five-year-old Peter, died of the fever. Dorothy had constant bouts with depression and mental hysteria, and sank into the horrible abyss of mental breakdown, from which she never recovered. Even the subsequent birth of a son, Jonathan, did not lift her spirits. When the child was three months old, Carey wrote home, "My poor wife must be considered as insane, and is the occasion of great sorrow."

To add even more misery to this man of God, his home church accused him of forsaking his missionary calling and seeking after filthy lucre when he took up the work at the indigo factory. But during all these eight years he was putting down roots for a foreign mission work, an indigenous church.

The real opportunity to form a permanent work in this unfor- giving land came in 1800, when the door of opportunity opened in Serampore. There he would labor for the next 34 years, until his death.

New missionaries had arrived from England, and in order to avoid further conflict with the East India Company, the mission relocated in the Danish territory of Serampore, near Calcutta. The providence of God brought together the Serampore trio, William Carey, Joshua Marshman, and William Ward. Carey describes his co-laborers thus: "Brother Ward is the very man we wanted.... He enters into the work with his whole soul. I have much pleasure in him.... Brother Marshman is a prodigy of diligence and prudence, as is also his wife..." (quoted from Drewery's, *William Carey*).

In view of the shared presence of dangers, disease, and death, the three organized life within the community after the pattern of the early Christian church. Each family had its own apartment but labored together in the common eating hall, the chapel, the building that housed the printing operation and the boarding school. Funds earned were placed in a common treasury.

A disciplined life-style prevailed: they arose at 6 A.M. for personal devotions; they had breakfast at 8 A.M.; and twice-daily devotions were conducted in the chapel. The main meal was served at 3 P.M. Late afternoons and evenings were for preaching expeditions, prayer meetings, and instruction for inquirers.

The families helped each other. With Dorothy Carey incapacitated, Hannah Marshman not only helped with the boarding school, but also filled in as mother to the Carey children.

The three men drew up a covenant in 1804 whereby they committed each other to this work:

1. To set an infinite value on men's souls.

2. To acquaint ourselves with the snares which hold the minds of the people.

3. To abstain from whatever deepens India's prejudice against the gospel.

4. To watch for every chance of doing the people good.

5. To preach "Christ crucified" as the grand means of conversions.

6. To esteem and treat Indians always as our equals.

7. To guard and build up "the hosts that may be gathered."

8. To cultivate the spiritual gifts of the Indians, ever pressing upon them their missionary obligation, since only Indians can win India for Christ.

9. To labor unceasingly in biblical translation.

10. To be instant in the nurture of personal religion.

11. To give ourselves without reserve to the Cause, not counting even the clothes we wear our own.

God blessed the work of these men in the Serampore compound. We will enumerate those blessings briefly.

First, we mention the translation of the Bible and its publication as the lifelong achievement of Carey and his associates. Carey was a capable linguist and possessed the gifts necessary for this crucial work. It began on the way to India as Thomas taught him Bengali. At every event in his life, he interacted with the people to hear them speak and learn from their use of the language. Every morning Carey began his day by reading a chapter of the Bible in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Dutch, French, English, and the local dialects of India as he learned them. He took it seriously, as he wrote to his friend Felix enroute to Burma in 1807:

With respect to the Burman lan-



guage, let this occupy your most precious time and your most anxious solicitude. Do not be content with acquiring the language superficially, but make it your own, root and branch. To become fluent in it, you must attentively listen, with prying curiosity, into the forms of speech, the construction and accents of the natives" (Cox, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society*).

Through his efforts at translation work he was able to make the Bible available in the common language of the people, 40 languages and dialects, with special emphasis on Bengali for both Old and New Testament. Most translations went through many editions. He describes his involvement as:

I never suffer a single word, or a single mode of construction to pass without examining it, and seeing through it: I read every proof-sheet twice or thrice myself, and correct every letter with my own hand. Bro. Marshman and I compose with the Greek or Hebrew, and Bro Ward reads every sheet. Three of the translations, viz. Bengalee, Hindoosthance, and Sangskrit, I translate with my own hand.... I constantly avail myself of the help of the most learned natives, and should think it criminal not to do so, but I do not commit my judgment to any one" (quoted from a letter by Carey to Andrew Fuller).

William Ward had accompanied him from England to serve as the printer for such projects. Money for these projects came from both England and America. With the written Word of God, evangelization increased. Timothy George gives us this account in his book *Faithful Witness*:

The translation of the Bible into the language of the people was a powerful tool of evangelization. Marshman referred to the first 2000 copies of the Bengali New Testament as 2000 missionaries. One of the copies of this first edi-

tion made its way to the distant city of Dacca. When the missionaries finally established a work there some 17 years later, they discovered several villages of Hindu peasants who had abandoned the worship of idols. They were waiting for a teacher who would explain to them the faith they had learned from the frayed pages of a little book preserved in a wooden box in one of their villages. The book was Carey's Bengali New Testament.

Second, we must explain how education became a key role in the mission enterprise. One of the guiding principles of their work was to include education as the means to help people read and to train local men to function as missionaries to their own people. This came about in the establishing of schools all during Carey's missionary labors. Already at Mudnabatty in 1798, 21 children were involved in reading parts of the Scriptures, singing of hymns, learning to write. From this beginning came schools for local children, boarding schools for missionary children, and girls' schools. A manual for teachers was published in 1816. This adapted the methodology of the British reformer Joseph Lancaster to the schools of India. By 1817 the Baptist missionaries had opened 103 schools with an average attendance of 6,703 pupils.

Because of this valuable experience, Carey was appointed a tutor at Fort William College in Calcutta. This school catered to the cultural elite, such as civil servants, who needed a person proficient in Bengali. The Serampore Three were not sure if Carey ought to commit to this work. Eventually they consented, and Carey worked his way into this level of education.

By God's providence this experience contributed to the mission work. All the money he earned was placed in the mission treasury. This language instruc-

tion helped him be more proficient for his Bible translation. Carey used this contact with the school to reach out to others in Calcutta, which led to a mission station in Calcutta.

His involvement in the school contributed also to the British government recognizing his labors in Serampore, when they drove out the Danes. Carey and his mission work were no longer a threat to them but became accepted.

Eventually his experience at William College contributed to his founding of the Serampore College in 1818. This school became the means for training local Indian youth to do mission work in their own land.

Third, Carey learned how to hold to biblical principles in the area of Christian social life without direct conflict with the government. This is important for missions. He learned this already in England, where his sensitive soul could not accept the horrible trade of human life in slavery. Though he saw this as abhorrent and unacceptable as a Christian, he did not openly confront the government. He resorted to preaching the gospel to his congregations and allowing the Holy Spirit to work in the hearts of the people.

This was critical to his labor in India. He was confronted with the horrible practice of infant sacrifice (deformed or unwanted infants, especially girls, were hung in the trees to be devoured by white ants, or in other places thrown in the river to be eaten by alligators). He confronted abortion; euthanasia by abandoning the dying on the edge of the Ganges; *sati*, which is the burning of the surviving widow on the pyre of her expired husband; and the caste system, by which the "undesirables" were made outcasts from society and left to survive and die on the streets. Carefully he addressed these issues, not by

public confrontation of government officials, but by instruction in the schools and by preaching in the churches. Eventually this had an impact upon the Christians within the heathen society.

Finally, Carey learned to deal with personal and family issues while serving God in missions under very adverse circumstances. It is unfair to judge Carey's behavior by today's standards. This is done especially with regard to Carey's persistence in going to India over the objections of his wife. As we noted, she became insane and was unable to function as a missionary's wife. We can appreciate that Carey had so much at stake that not going to India would have destroyed him. It became one or the other. There is no indication Carey did not love his wife or care for her properly. All indications are that Dorothy suffered deep mental illness.

Nor should he be criticized for marrying Charlotte Rumohr within a few months of the death of Dorothy. He recognized in her what Dorothy could not give him, a wife, a mother, an assistant in his translation work. Hence he enjoyed thirteen years of marriage with Charlotte. Upon her death,

he took yet one more wife, Grace Hughes, seventeen years younger than he, who met his needs in his old age. It would be severely judgmental on our part if we would fail to balance the commitment to work in such adverse circumstances with the obvious need he had for a helper meet for him.


To me, the ultimate reward for his family struggles came when two of his sons, Jabez and William, continued in the work that Carey began. Even out of a home so sorely tried, God raised up successors from Carey's own flesh.

Carey had to deal with controversy over his doctrinal positions as liberalism began to gain more and more influence. His missionary methods also were called into question by the "younger generation." After the death of his beloved friend, Andrew Fuller, some of these differences even led to a parting of the ways when the Baptist Missionary Society began a competing work in Calcutta. This grieved Carey as he saw this new work departing from the historic gospel of the Reformed faith. He pressed on with greater determination. Carey's conviction prevailed in the Serampore mission that "Jesus Christ is the only medium through which man

can approach God." Pluralism was rejected by Carey. This sets a good standard for present day missions.

"Carey spent the last month of his life writing, preaching, receiving visitors, and walking through his lovely garden. ...Just at the crack of dawn, 5:30 A.M., on June 9, 1834, Carey died in his 73<sup>rd</sup> year." A young missionary from Scotland, John Leechman, witnessed his burial and wrote,

And now what shall we do?  
God has taken up our Elijah to heaven. He has taken our master from our head today. But we must not be discouraged. The God of missions lives forever. His Cause must go on. The gates of death, the removal of the most eminent, will not impede its progress, nor prevent its success. Come: we have something also to do than mourn and be dispirited. With our departed leader all is well. He has finished his course gloriously. But the work now descends on us. Oh, for a double portion of the divine Spirit" (quoted from *Faithful Witness*, by Timothy George).

May God raise up, among us, men like William Carey, the Father of Modern Missions. 

## Special Article

Rev. Angus Stewart

# Rome and Politics (6): Rome's False Ecumenism with Protestants

Rev. Stewart is pastor of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland.

Previous article in this series: January 15, 2009, p. 179.

**V**atican II's *Decree on Ecumenism* (1964) is the Roman Catholic Church's blueprint for restoring all professing Christians—especially the Eastern Orthodox, Anglicans, and Protestants—to the papal fold. This will also serve Rome's geo-

political goals: one world, one religion, one pope.

## Early Protestant Ecumenism and the Edinburgh Missionary Conference

The ecumenical movement in the late nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries involved Protestants with various backgrounds (Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Baptist, Anglican, Methodist, Reformed, Lutheran, etc.) who were typically either Arminian or modernist (or both). Creedal subscription was lax. Few cared much for their church's historic teaching, whether true or false. Besides, the common wisdom—then, as it is also now!—was that doctrine divides whereas service unites.

The service that especially united them and led to further false ecumenism was missions. According to many scholars, the Edinburgh Missionary Conference, or the World Missionary Conference, held in the Assembly Hall of the United Free Church of Scotland (14-23 June, 1910), was especially important in this regard.<sup>1</sup>

The spirit of the Edinburgh

Missionary Conference is captured by this catchy slogan: "The Evangelization of the World in this Generation," itself the title of the conference chairman's best-known book (published in 1900). But this spirit was hardly the Holy Spirit. A century after the World Missionary Conference, the world has not been evangelized, but man-centered Arminianism is very much to the fore, and apostasy and false ecumenism continue apace.

The Edinburgh Missionary Conference decided to establish a Continuation Committee, through which the International Missionary Council (IMC) was established in 1921. The IMC furthered ecumenism and was closely related to the World Council of Churches (WCC; founded in 1948) until it became the Division of (later Commission on) World Mission and Evangelism (1961) of the WCC.

One man sums up this unification of the missionary movement and the ecumenical movement: John R. Mott, an American Methodist layman and leader of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), and the World Student Christian Federation.<sup>2</sup> Mott chaired the World Missionary Conference and was intimately involved in the formation of the World Council of Churches in 1948, which elected him as its first honorary president.<sup>3</sup>

No Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox missionary organiza-

tions were invited to the Edinburgh Missionary Conference, but there was an Anglo-Catholic and even a women-missionary presence. Moreover, "aspirations repeatedly surfaced" at its meetings "for the inclusion of Roman Catholic and [Eastern] Orthodox" in ecumenical endeavours.<sup>4</sup>

The World Council of Churches and other ecumenists will celebrate the centenary of the 1910 World Missionary Conference at "Edinburgh 2010." Meetings will be held throughout the world, with the main venue being, as in 1910, the Assembly Hall, Edinburgh (2-6 June, 2010). John Mott would be delighted that the participants in 2010 will be drawn from the whole range of Christian traditions, including Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Pentecostal, and even Seventh Day Adventist. The organizers assure us that "Edinburgh 2010" will "show a better gender and age balance" than the conference of 1910. Political correctness (not biblical correctness) is very important for false ecumenists.

### Roman Catholic Principles of Ecumenism

Many liberal Protestants foolishly hope that in their ecumenical relations with Rome, both sides will make concessions and meet somewhere in the middle. After all, this was and is a major part of ecumenical relations between doctrinally indifferent Protestants. Surely in their dialogue with the Roman Church, there will also be give and take.

There is also the issue of momentum. Why stop with ecumenical relations merely between Protestants? If one can compromise with other Protes-

<sup>1</sup> The meeting place was ideal, since the United Free Church was basically non-confessional, for at its formation (1900) it incorporated into its constitution the Declaratory Acts (1879 and 1892 respectively) of the two denominations that formed it: the United Presbyterian Church and the Free Church. Thus the United Free Church constitution, proceeding on the basis of a universal love of God (common grace), a desire of God to save everybody (free offer), and the existence of the image of God in all men, overthrew the doctrines of grace (sovereign predestination, particular atonement, total depravity, and irresistible grace) as taught in the *Westminster Standards*, and allowed for liberty of opinion "on such points in the Standards not entering into the substance of the faith," specifically mentioning six-day creation. As N. R. Needham puts it, the United Free Church's "liberal Evangelicalism" blended "a moderate higher criticism, an acceptance of the findings of contemporary science, and a commitment to evangelism and missions" ("United Free Church," in Nigel M. de S. Cameron [org. ed.], *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* [USA: IVP, 1993], p. 838).

<sup>2</sup> The seed for the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (established in 1888) was planted in 1886 at a conference in Mount Hermon, Massachusetts, with D. L. Moody as the principal speaker.

<sup>3</sup> Mott was highly esteemed around the world and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (1946). Jesus said, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you" (Luke 6:26).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. D. F. Wright, "World Missionary Conference," in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, p. 894.



tants for the sake of missionary labors or greater numbers and political power, why not sacrifice the truth for greater communion with Rome? If Protestants can reject God's sovereign grace for Amyraldianism and Arminianism; and can accept evolutionism, higher criticism, and political correctness; and can play down their denominational distinctives for ecumenism with other liberal Protestants, why should they not compromise with the Roman Church?<sup>1</sup> And may not Rome, grateful for their approach, be open to finding some mutually acceptable middle ground?

Such naïve Protestants should carefully read Vatican II's *Decree on Ecumenism* (1964).<sup>2</sup> Its section on Rome's principles of ecumenism is clear (pp. 343-350). Jesus' prayer for His church's oneness (John 17:21) (p. 343) is perverted into unity under Peter (i.e., "Peter's successor," the pope), upon whom Christ builds His church and to whom He gave the keys of the kingdom and "entrusted all His sheep" (p. 344). All who are "separated from full communion with the Catholic Church" (p. 345) must return to the pope and the hierarchy of the "bishops" (p. 344) with their false sacraments—especially baptismal regeneration (p. 345) and Rome's blasphemous "Eucharist" (p. 343).<sup>3</sup>

### **"Common Ground" is Roman Ground!**

In its section on the churches of the Reformation (pp. 361-365),

*Unitatis Redintegratio* seeks to establish common ground and build bridges—to use the ecumenical (and political) buzz words. With a striking use of "spin," its opening sentence declares that the Reformation churches "are bound to the Catholic Church by a special affinity and close relationship in view of the long span of earlier centuries when the Christian people lived in ecclesiastical communion [with Rome]" (p. 361; italics mine). Yet the Reformation was a breaking of bonds with a false church in order to serve Jesus Christ!

Reformed truths are likewise stood on their head. Protestants who confess Christ as "the sole Mediator" are thereby led to Rome! "Inspired by longing for union with Christ, they feel compelled to search for unity [i.e., with the pope] ever more ardently" (p. 362). The Protestant "love, veneration, and near cult [sic!] of the sacred Scriptures" (p. 362) can be used by Rome in ecumenical dialogue, for "the sacred utterances are precious instruments...for attaining...unity" with the Vatican (p. 363). The fact that Rome has added to, and horribly adulterated, the two sacraments Christ has given us does not deter the *Decree on Ecumenism* from urging them as a starting point for "dialogue...concerning the true meaning of the Lord's Supper, the other sacraments, and the Church's worship and ministry" (p. 364). Even elements of the "ancient common liturgy" in Protestant worship (p. 364) may be urged as reasons to return to the idolatry from which God graciously delivered us.

Why should this be? *Unitatis Redintegratio* answers, "the Catholic Church has been endowed with *all* divinely revealed truth and with *all* the means of grace" (p. 348; italics mine), and the Holy Spirit uses the "separated churches" as "means of salvation" because they "derive their

efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church" (p. 346). According to Vatican II,

the written word of God; the life of grace; faith, hope, and charity, along with other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit and visible elements...which come from Christ and lead back to Him, *belong by right to the one Church of Christ* [i.e., Rome] (pp. 345-346; italics mine).

Rome's arrogance is unbounded. Those "who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are brought into a certain, though imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church" (p. 345). All the grace received by Protestants comes through the Roman Church, and our baptisms (if Rome reckons them "proper") unite us to the papacy.<sup>4</sup> What a pronouncement! Better be anathematized by Rome than a recipient of its "blessings"!

Robert Zins sums it up,

Rome has unilaterally declared itself to be the judge of whether one's religion does or does not have the necessary elements to qualify as a Christian religion. This absorption by decree does two things. First, it attempts to legitimize Rome since Rome is making the proclamation as though it were the official judge in the matter! Secondly, it minimizes the opposition to insignificance should anyone disagree.<sup>5</sup>

### **Millions Slain**

Like its fiery persecutions, though in a different yet no less deadly way, Rome's false ecumenism

<sup>1</sup> Contrast Proverbs 23:23: "Buy the truth, and sell it not."

<sup>2</sup> This decree (Latin: *Unitatis Redintegratio*, "Restoration of Unity") is found in Walter M. Abbot (gen. ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II* (USA: The America Press, 1966). Henceforward, pages in parentheses refer to this book.

<sup>3</sup> By "Church," Roman Catholic authors mean the Roman Catholic Church; by "Catholic," they mean Roman Catholic.

<sup>4</sup> This easily leads to a re-interpretation of the famous dictum, "Outside of the Church of Rome, there is no salvation," for Protestants are in the Church of Rome, though they may not know it.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Zins, *Romanism: The Relentless Roman Catholic Assault on the Gospel of Jesus Christ!* (USA: White Horse Publications, 1994), p. 199.



menism is slaying millions.

Based in Geneva, Switzerland, the World Council of Churches (WCC), an international ecumenical grouping of about 350 churches, denominations, and church fellowships, encompasses over 560 million people in more than 120 countries.<sup>1</sup> Its ranks include Eastern Orthodoxy, the Anglican Communion, and many Protestant denominations, but not the Roman Catholic Church. Yet Rome has worked closely with the WCC for more than three decades and sends observers to all major WCC conferences and assemblies. The Vatican also nominates twelve full members to the WCC's Faith and Order Commission.<sup>2</sup>

The headquarters of another liberal, ecumenical body are also located in Geneva: the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), consisting of 75 million people in 107 countries. Over 45% of the 214 denominations in the WARC also belong to its neighbor, the WCC. Both the WCC and the WARC work with the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The World Council of Churches' building, the Ecumenical Centre, is also home to several other ecumenical organizations, including the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Student Christian Federation, the Conference of European Churches (CEC), Action by Churches Together (ACT), and the Ecumenical Church Loan Fund (ECLOF). Youth With A Mission (YWAM) has its headquarters in Geneva, though not in the WCC's Ecumenical Centre.

<sup>2</sup> If Rome were to become a member of the WCC, it would only be the most powerful church in a very large ecumenical body. Thus Rome sees it as serving its ecclesiastical and political interests not to join the WCC but to remain as the WCC's most important dialogue partner.

<sup>3</sup> The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity is a very busy body, engaging in international theological dialogue not only with

St. Pierre's Cathedral in Geneva has been used frequently for their false ecumenical services, as if to spit in John Calvin's face. Calvin's Geneva is now the seat of apostate Reformed churches as they fraternize with the See of Rome!<sup>4</sup>

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), consisting of 140 member church bodies in 78 countries and representing 66.7 million of the world's 70.2 million Lutherans, is headquartered in Geneva, like the WCC and the WARC.<sup>5</sup> In 1999, the LWF and

the Eastern Orthodox Churches, the Anglican Communion, the World Council of Churches, and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, but also with the Lutheran World Federation, the World Methodist Council, the Baptist World Alliance, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), various Pentecostal groups, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Commenting on Jeremiah 32:39, Calvin declared, "But as it is necessary for us to separate from the Papists if we wish to follow God, it is better a hundred times to separate from them than to be united together, and thus to form an ungodly and wicked union against God. Agreement or union is, indeed, singularly a good thing, because there is nothing better or more desirable than peace. But we must ever bear in mind, that in order that men may happily unite together, obedience to God's Word must be the beginning. The bond, then, of lawful concord among us is this—that we obey God from first to last; for accursed is every union where there is no regard to God and to his Word."

<sup>5</sup> It is striking that Calvin's Geneva, the center of the Reformation, which proclaimed the spiritual kingdom of God, has become not only the center of apostate Protestantism but also a center for the carnal, political kingdom of man apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. There the Geneva Conventions were formulated (1864, 1906, 1929, 1949), requiring decent treatment of non-combatants and prisoners of war. Geneva was the seat of the League of Nations (1919-1946) and is the European headquarters of the United Nations (UN), as well as five of the UN's sixteen specialized

the Roman Catholic Church issued the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. Luther must have turned in his grave at this denial of justification by faith alone! To use his terminology, in denying the truth of justification, these Lutherans declared themselves fallen churches and fellowshipped with a fallen church, the Roman whore.

In 2006, the members of the World Methodist Council, comprising 76 member denominations in 132 countries and representing about 75 million people, met in Seoul, South Korea, and voted unanimously to adopt the Roman Catholic and Lutheran Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification.<sup>6</sup>

But it is not just the World Council of Churches and global ecumenical bodies of the Re-

agencies: the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labor Organization (ILO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), plus three other UN agencies: the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). Many other inter-governmental organizations, such as the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), are also based in Geneva. The world headquarters of non-governmental organizations based in Geneva include the Red Cross/Red Crescent; the Boy Scouts; various bodies dealing with airports, roads, cancer, heart disease, AIDs, etc.; as well as the International Baccalaureate program and the World Wide Web Virtual Library.

<sup>6</sup> All around the world, Methodists were among the first to play the harlot with Rome. The reasons are obvious: their lack of a creed (to help moor them to any doctrinal formula) and their free-willism (for Rome is Semi-Pelagian), as well as John Wesley's high churchism.

formed, Lutherans, and Methodists, etc., who are fraternizing with Rome. Many Protestant denominations and parachurch organizations are also engaged in this spiritual fornication. If Rome were to be successful in bringing all the Protestants (with

the Eastern Orthodox and the Anglicans) back into the papal fold, this would further Rome's geopolitical goals, for it would place one-third of mankind under the sway of the Vatican.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the on-line "World Fact

Book" of the CIA (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/xx.html#People>).

## Special Article

Dr. David Torlach

# The Origin and History of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia (3)

**T**wo ministers in the Baptist churches in Tasmania, Revs. Rodman and Lyons, had been openly rejected by the assemblies of the Baptist Union in Tasmania. A Union, by the way, is similar to a Classis. This Union had said, in part, that it "calls upon the associated churches of the Baptist Union of Tasmania to resist the presentation of unconditional election, limited atonement, and kindred doctrines." These ministers were forced to leave their churches and to take up their positions amongst the fellowships.

In the meantime, others had been busy spreading the new truths into the college of the Worldwide Evangelization Society. This had caused a huge stir, and eventually many left that

college, including the president of the college.

These believers were convinced that they needed to be organized into congregations of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that they needed to be members of an instituted church. To that end, they called a conference in July of 1960. The purpose of the conference initially was going to be their organization into a Baptist church. But then the Lord opened their eyes to the Reformed truth concerning the doctrine of baptism also. And, at that conference, they adopted the Westminster Standards as their creed. It was particularly in examining the matter of paedobaptism that the group started to come to an understanding of the covenant.

Having adopted a creed, the group then sought to become united to another denomination. This was when they sought contact with various Presbyterian churches and various Reformed churches. They encountered difficulties with the Reformed churches, particularly as they were somewhat Kuyperian, including the doctrine of presump-

tive regeneration of children. And with a number of Presbyterian churches they also found difficulties.

It seemed for a little while that union with the PCEA was perhaps going to be possible, but there were problems there also. The PCEA thought it was going to be like putting new wine in old bottles because of the zeal and enthusiasm of these folk in Tasmania. So they petitioned the PCEA, who then granted their request, to organize them into a separate denomination. This occurred on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September, 1961.

The groups from Winneleah, Penguin, and Launceston (names of three of the towns in Tasmania) came together in Launceston to witness the ordination of three ministers by an authorized presbytery of the PCEA. The following evening these three ministers met in presbytery. They were inducted into their charges, and previously called elders were then ordained as well.

Thus the "Reformed Evangelical Church" came into existence. This was the name of that denomination originally. How-

---

*Dr. Torlach is a member of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia and a student in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.*

*\* Address at the RFPA annual meeting, held September 25, 2008.*

*Previous article in this series: January 15, 2009, p. 187.*

ever, general society in Australia understood “Reformed” to mean reforming delinquent children. Therefore, within a short time, they changed their name to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia.

There was growth. In October of that same year another fellowship group in Taranna became a congregation, and in January of the following year a fellowship group in Hobart applied to become a congregation of the EPC also. So there were five congregations formed within six months. There was contact with another group of believers in Rockhampton in Queensland (the top right state in Australia). The group there had commenced in 1960. After some visits and preaching of the doctrines of grace, this group desired to become a congregation of the EPC also. This occurred in February of 1963. There was a fellowship group in Brisbane also (in Queensland) for about ten years, from about 1962, before they became a congregation also in 1972. Finally, a congregation in Sydney (NSW), who had split away from the PCEA, became a congregation in 1991.

But it has not all been easy and smooth sailing for the denomination. As is the case with all true churches, there is always the Evil One who gets in and causes schisms, trials, difficulties. That has been the case for the EPC also. The Lord, in His providence, has inflicted a number of controversies upon us.

The first came about not long after the inception of the EPC in 1961. In 1963 we had a couple of student ministers who were studying in the seminary of the PCEA. This seminary was being partly supported by the EPC. But a false teaching arose there: the teaching of common grace and the well-meant offer. This teaching was discussed at presbytery and was rejected—but not with-

out disagreement. Disagreement continued in the church to such an extent that there was one minister and a congregation that left the denomination and went back to the PCEA.

In addition, our students were withdrawn from the college and our support of that college ceased, which made it difficult for the PCEA to continue to maintain that college. This did not help our relationship with the PCEA.

After our students were withdrawn from the college, the training of our ministers became somewhat broken. It was difficult to get good training. A variety of colleges were utilized, together with different correspondence courses.

In 1996 another major controversy broke out concerning the teaching of one of our ministers with regard to the natures of Christ. He was teaching that, because Christ had two natures, it was possible for Him, in His human nature, to love all men, even though in His divine nature He did not. This came, once again, to the presbytery, where that teaching was rejected. But the problem was that there was a lot of political intrigue that went on, a lot of problems with clashing of personalities, as there often is in difficulties in the church. This caused a very major falling-out within the denomination. It resulted in the loss of two congregations and a significant number of members from the other congregations.

In 1990, a minister who was supplying one of our pulpits with a view to becoming a minister in our denomination, made some very strong accusations against one of our ministers. This concerned the doctrine of the covenant in particular, the view that we are to have with respect to the children of believers. He said that we had departed from the Presbyterian and Reformed faith and that we ought to view

children as unbelievers until they come to faith in their more adult years. This minister at that time was merely stood down, and the matter came before presbytery. But his standing down caused a good deal of disruption because of what he had previously done in “getting in” with various people in a couple of different congregations. The result was that a large number of people left from two of the congregations of the EPC.

Finally, in 2002, following a case of discipline in a congregation where a serious sin occurred, there was a great deal of disunity within that congregation. Having been asked to intervene, Presbytery attempted to bring harmony and unity there. There was a lack of cohesion between the congregation and the denomination in general. The minister and most of the congregation left the denomination as well.

All of this has meant that the EPC has remained fairly small. Even today we number only four small congregations and one small domestic mission work. The total membership of all of our denomination is, in fact, smaller than one of the PRC’s larger congregations. Currently we have about 320 members. There are three active ministers. We have one minister who is unwell at the present time, and we have two who are retired. We also support a Christian school in Herrick, Tasmania.

Our standards are, obviously, the Scriptures, and our subordinate standards the Westminster Standards, which include the Confession, catechisms, directories, as well as other standards adopted by the Church of Scotland. As such, as a matter of interest, one of our subordinate standards is in fact the Heidelberg Catechism (the Church of Scotland adopted that also as one of its creeds).

We meet for worship twice



on the Sabbath. And there are similarities between our worship services and the services of the PRC, with the preaching of the Word being central. We also have mid-week Bible studies held in members' homes, as well as young people's studies and activities. There are other sorts of meetings as well, when men and women get together for fellowship as well as Bible study. The young people of the denomination get together for a kind of convention, which we call a camp, every two years. This has also been attended by some of the PRC youth on occasions. Each of the congregations has a bookshop associated with it. The members form a committee and then they oversee the running of the bookshop. From this, members may obtain good Reformed literature.


What about contact with the PRC? Initially, the EPC heard of the PRC through Rev. Malcolm McHugh, who was a Presbyterian minister in Nova Scotia, Canada. I'm not sure how the contact there came up, but he put the EPC on to the *Standard Bearer*. There also had been some informal contact through a relation of the Kleyn family who had visited the United States and the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Correspondence was commenced with the *Standard Bearer*, and then Pastor Rodman, from our churches, visited Grand Rapids in August 1974. Subsequently Prof. Homer Hoeksema and Rev. Cornelius Hanks made a visit to New Zealand, Australia, and Singapore in 1975. At that time, they made recommendations that the PRC investigate the possibilities of closer relationships and ties between our denominations. Since then both of our denominations have been working on that, which has culminated, only 33 years later, in the establishing of a corresponding relationship between our denominations. Who can possibly accuse church courts of working slowly?!

I know that contact with the PRC has been of great benefit to the EPC, not the least of which has been the training of three students in the seminary here, myself being the fourth. We also have had the benefit of Protestant Reformed ministers visiting and preaching for us and even leading our studies in some of the youth camps. We also have benefited from their advice on occasion and have benefited from a number of Protestant Reformed folk coming out and spending time with us in fellowship.

The EPC has contact with a number of other churches also. There are some Presbyterian churches here in the United States, in San Diego and Dallas. There are also churches in Singapore, particularly the Pilgrim Covenant Church of Rev. J.J. Lim, besides other churches at home in Australia.

I hope that, perhaps, this presentation has given you a bit of a handle on the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. The Lord (we must confess and praise Him for it) has led us in wondrous paths. He has brought us out of the darkness of Arminianism and into the glorious truth of His Word as it is found in the Reformed faith. We are now entering into the fourth generation of members of our church, as the first generation is passing into glory. We are very grateful for what the Lord has wrought for us and in us. And we pray that He will give us His grace, that we may be able to pass it on to our children—pass on that same truth and remain faithful in the days of apostasy. And, accordingly, we ask for your prayers for our denomination as we remember you all in our prayers as we strive to be a help to one another.

Thank you. 

*Sounding Out the Word*

*Rev. Carl Haak*

## *The Golden Key of Prayer*

### **Reformed Witness Hour**

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

**G**od has given to us a precious and wonderful gift. It is called prayer.

As children of God, also as young people, there is nothing

more important than to develop a regular life of prayer. The most important thing in your life is not your studies, work, business, rushing here and there. But the most important thing is to live truly a life of prayer. Without prayer, we would soon be off the path of obedience and life, and running madly down the dead-end trails of this world. How

heavy our burdens become, how dim our eye of faith grows. How we are left only with ourselves—if we forsake prayer. Prayer is communion with God. It is thus no luxury for us but something that is essential to our life. Prayer is not simply for super-pious people, or for old people. Prayer is spiritual bread and water. "Men ought always to pray,

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



and not to faint," said the Lord Himself (Luke 18:1).

One of the verses of Scripture that I would choose in order to show to you the rich and comforting truths of prayer is Jeremiah 33:3. We read: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."

In this verse Jeremiah is being counseled by God Himself. For forty years the prophet Jeremiah had warned that Judah and Jerusalem would be destroyed for their sins, and now the armies of Babylon are at the very walls of the city.

It would be very difficult to conceive of a situation more painful than the situation that confronted Jeremiah. Forty years he has faithfully preached the Word of God, only to see God's Word rejected and all signs of godliness among the people of God gone and replaced by nothing but coldness, darkness, and corruptions.

Further, Jeremiah, when he is counseled by God to pray, is in prison. It was exactly in that dark time that God comes to His servant with words of encouragement.

The first word of encouragement that God brought to Jeremiah is found in Jeremiah 32. It was the word of encouragement that was brought to him through his uncle's son. This cousin told him that he must purchase a field and make sure that the transaction was properly recorded. For, although all that he could see right now was the coming judgments of God and the certainty that God's people were going to be destroyed and led away captive, nevertheless, God was going to bring His people back.

Prayer, then, is given to the hopeless spiritual prisoner. Prayer is given as the instrument

to confirm in your heart God's promises even in the darkest of times. To you who are shut up in the heaviness of prison, the heaviness of your own heart, and your eyes fail to see how God's promises can be fulfilled, God says to you, "Call upon me."

If the Scriptures make anything clear, it is this: we are called to pray. Old or young,

male or female, child or parent: God says, Call upon Me. It would be a very good exercise for you to take out your Bible and study how many times these words are given: Psalm 50:15; Psalm 62:8;

Isaiah 55:6; Matthew 7:7; Mark 14 in the words of the Lord unto the disciples; I Thessalonians 5; Hebrews 4; James 4. God has filled the Bible with so many commands to pray that the child of God need never wonder whether or not he must pray.

We say, We have prayed; now what? And God responds: Pray on. Whether you feel the heaven is as brass above you, whether your spirits fail—even then the Scriptures say to us in James 5: Call upon the elders that they may pray for you.

So long as we are in the flesh, we need the command to pray or else God would not give it. We are, after all, subject to worldliness, to cares of this present life. We get caught up in this life, in its worries and cares. We do not forget to eat. We do not forget to go to bed. We do not forget to consult our feelings. Certainly we remember to spend long hours toiling over our business. And we remember to find time for our pleasures. But we often forget to wrestle with God in prayer. Hours we can set aside for self and for the world. Moments for God? That we forget.

So often we give the world our best, and the leftover time for prayer. Therefore God says, Call upon Me! Sometimes our hearts are heavy under a load of sin and sadness and we say, "Why should I pray?" Or we say, "I can't. I can't pray."

Oh, thank God then for this Word, this Word that cuts through all of our fog and says, "If you feel corrupted yet in your sins; if you feel you have no strength; even if you have to crawl and creep: go, go to the throne of grace. Call upon God!" Though words may fail you, though you must stammer, though you can hardly find the words to express that which is in your soul, no matter what, pray!

That is why, I believe, one of the most realistic and beautiful pictures of prayer in the Bible is the picture of Jacob when he wrestled with God all night and would not let God go. That is prayer: wrestling with God—expenditure of intense spiritual energies.

There stands, so long as we breathe, this command, suitable to every case and every circumstance into which you as a child of God may be cast. God says, Call upon Me.

Are you troubled? Call upon God.

Are you disturbed by men? Call upon God.

Are you at your wits' end and you see now no way out? Call upon God.

Are you lonely? Call upon God.

Do your friends fail you? Pray.

Are your children a burden to you and your soul? Bring that to God in prayer.

Are you, perhaps, angry with God? Are you struggling with the will of God, and your flesh becomes angry with what He is revealing to you or performing in your life? Pray.

Do you feel that God is far from you today? Pray.

*Prayer is communion with God. It is thus no luxury for us but something that is essential to our life.*

Call upon me, says the Word.  
Cast thy burden upon the Lord,  
arise and go to your Father.

And God promises: "I will answer thee."

As the command to pray is very plain, so the promise of God is also plain: I will answer thee. That promise rests upon the character of God.

I will answer thee.

When He calls us

to seek His face,

and when we, out

of this present life,

by His grace, fly

to Him in all of

our fears and toils,

will He not have

mercy? Will He not hear us?

Will He not rush to our side? He

that spared not His own Son but

delivered Him up for us all (Rom.

8:32)—what is the conclusion of

that? "How shall he not also with

Christ freely give us all things."

Would He refuse to listen and to

answer? Surely God will answer

the prayers of His people.

Our own experience con-

firms this as children of God.

God answers us not because of

the worthiness of our prayers,

but because we have one, Jesus

Christ, who ever liveth to make

intercession for us at the right

hand of God. We may be sure of

this: God hears our prayers and

God will answer. That means

that He will answer what is the

deepest need of our hearts. That

God hears our prayers does not

mean that he always gives us

literally what we are asking for.

He answers us for sure. But He

may not take away the thorn in

the flesh that we have asked Him

to remove. He may not give us

what we think we have to have.

He will not allow our puny wisdom to dictate to His perfect wisdom. We would not want that. We want the wisdom of God to direct our path.

So we pray: "Father, hear

me." We unburden our souls.

We bring to Him our needs. But

we say, "Lord, Thou knowest.

And Thou knowest

the end from the

beginning. Thou

knowest what is

best for me. Father,

Thy will be done.

Give me the assur-

ance of Thy grace,

that Thou art with

me." That is our

prayer.

Come boldly, we read in He-

brews 4, that we might receive

what? Hebrews 4 says this:

"Come boldly that we might re-

ceive mercy and grace to help us

in time of need."

To Jeremiah God said: "I

will answer Thee and I will show

Thee great and mighty things,

which thou knowest not." That is

something more, is it not? Prayer

is not only communion with God,

but prayer is also enlightenment

for our souls. Without prayer we

see only the earthly. God says, "I

will show thee great and fortified

things, which are hidden from

thee." What does that mean? Is

God saying, "I am going to give

you some extra revelation, some-

thing that you will not find in the

Bible. No. It means this: Prayer

is the means of God to strengthen

our faith in the promises of God's

Word. Prayer is the means of

God to strengthen us in the prom-

ises of God's covenant and of His

salvation. Remember Jeremiah.

But still there was nothing

to confirm that promise as far as

Jeremiah's own eye could see.

All that his own eye could see

was the army of the Babylonians.

His ears heard the war-drums

and the smash of the boulders

thrown from the catapults against

the walls of the city and the crash

of the rams against the city gates.

And he was in a prison, and ev-

eryone wanted to forget about

him. Then the Word of the Lord

came to him: "Call upon Me,

Jeremiah, and I will answer thee

and show thee great and fortified

things hidden from earthly sight.

I will show you the greatness

of the love of God. I will show

you the indestructibility of His

Word. I will show to the eye of

faith that everything is serving

My purpose."

Prayer lifts you up to Calvary.

Prayer lifts you up on high, above

the swirling tumult of the pres-

ent, to see the purposes of God

in Christ and to know that these

purposes shall forever stand.

Prayer brings you to know the

love of God in Jesus Christ so that

by faith you might say, "I am per-

suaded that nothing can separate

me from the love of God in Christ

Jesus." That is the blessing of

prayer.

Is there anything so precious

as that? That is why God must

lead us now, often in the way of

trial—to humble us, to teach us

to pray, to bring us to that point

where we cannot see.

Prayer in a prison was a gold-

en key to unlock those things.


Souls arise in liberty. May God

Himself speak to *you* now today

these words: "Call upon Me and

I will answer thee and show thee

great and mighty things which

thou knowest not." 

*So often  
we give the world  
our best,  
and the leftover time  
for prayer.*

## News From Our Churches

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

## Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Seminary Activities

**I**n January interested individuals living near our Seminary in Grandville, MI were able to

attend a Seminary Interim class taught by Prof. R. Dykstra on the schism of 1953. This class covered the schism as well as

the church political issues and particularly the doctrinal issue of God's covenant of grace. This class was scheduled to meet the mornings of January 5-9 and 12-14.

On Friday, January 2, the students of our PR Seminary scrimmaged with the boy's varsity basketball team of Covenant Christian High School in Walker, MI. The game was played at Covenant, and there was no admission charge.

The close of 2008 brought the internship of Seminarian Cory Griess to a close. Mr. Griess, along with his wife, Lael, spent the last six months of 2008 serving the Hull, IA PRC through our seminary internship program. For those of us following the Griess family and the birth of their twin sons, we know that everything did not go the way they planned, but we take comfort in the knowledge that all went according to God's plan. We pray for God's blessing on the Griess family as Cory completes his last semester in our seminary.

#### **Sister-Church Activities**

**P**rof. B. Gritters and Mr. Peter VanDer Schaaf, representing our denomination's Contact Committee, made the committee's annual trip to the Covenant PRC in Ballymena, Northern Ireland January 2 through 12. The church visitors were kept busy that week with visits to various families for dinner, church visitation with the Council of Covenant, and a congregational dinner. In addition, Prof. Gritters preached twice each Lord's Day and gave a lecture in Limerick on "Music's Indispensable Place in the Reformation."

Prof. H. Hanko and his wife returned home from Singapore in late December after five weeks of labor with the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church.

#### **Mission Activities**

**T**he Consistory of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI recently notified their congregation that they were pleased to report that the administration of the Lord's Supper in their mission in Pittsburgh had been approved by the governing bodies. The judgment of Missionary Rev. W. Bruinsma was that the membership as a whole had reached the level of spiritual maturity and unity that would warrant this action. Southwest's consistory concurred and so advised the Domestic Mission Committee. Because Synod 2005 opened the way for the Lord's Supper on the mission field by its interpretation of the application of Church Order Article 39 and its appended decision (cf. Acts 2005, Articles 30 and 31, B, 2, 3, and 4), the DMC also readily gave its approval. We rejoice with Southwest and the Pittsburgh Mission at this evidence of the blessing of God on the work being done there.

#### **Congregation Activities**

**T**he Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI was reminded back in December to pray for Joel and Ellen Bruinooge and Dave and Nancy Ondersma, representatives of their India Mission Committee, as they made plans for their trip to India to meet with Paul Raj, his family, and the children of the Grace Orphanage in Vellore, India, which Georgetown supports. The purpose of the trip was to offer encouragement to them and seek information on how best to serve the Reformed ministry there. Plans called for the two couples to drive from Grand Rapids to Detroit on December 18, then fly to Frankfurt, Germany, and on to Chennai, on the east coast of India, where a car and driver would meet them for the three-hour drive west to Vellore. They planned to return the evening of December 31.

The grade 4-7 catechism classes of Georgetown PRC went caroling after their evening worship service on December 28. Afterwards the students enjoyed lunch and activities at their church.

#### **Young People's Activities**

**T**he Young People's Society of the Lynden, WA PRC spent time back in December on the study of the topic, "The Christian and the Environment." The young people were also reminded to be ready to defend their views on the basis of Scripture.

#### **School Activities**

**E**ach Christmas the students at Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, MI contribute to a Christmas collection. This Christmas, the collection went to the Wingham PR School Society in Wingham, Ontario, Canada.

Donation boxes were placed in each school room at Hope Christian School in Redlands, CA this past December. Students there were encouraged to contribute to their annual Christmas donation. This year's gift went to the new Genesis PR School in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada.

The annual PRCS Christmas Program was held December 18 at the Cornerstone PRC in Dyer, Indiana. The theme was, "The Light of the World Is Jesus."

#### **Minister Activities**

**R**ev. G. Eriks declined the call he had been considering to serve as pastor of the Byron Center, MI PRC.

On January 1 the Doon, IA PRC extended a call to Rev. R. Smit to serve as foreign missionary to the Berean PRC in Manila, the Philippines.

On Sunday, January 4, the Calvary PRC in Hull, IA extended a call to Rev. G. Eriks to serve as their first pastor.



## Announcements

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council of Cornerstone PRC expresses sympathy to Mr. Keith Vooys, Olivia, Hillary, Lawrence, and the extended family in the death of his wife, their mother, and loved one,

#### MARY VOOYS.

May Revelation 21:4 give them and all of us a message of comfort and victory with these words: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Rev. Nathan Brummel, President  
Tom Venhuizen, Secretary

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Southeast PRC express their Christian sympathy to Adrianna Ophoff and her family in the death of Adrianna's brother,

#### MR. HENRY POST.

May they find their comfort in God's word in Romans 14:8: "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

Rev. William Langerak, President  
Ron Kooienga, Assistant Clerk

### NOTICE!!

All students enrolled in the Protestant Reformed Seminary who will be in need of financial assistance for the coming school year are asked to contact the Student Aid Committee secretary, Mr. Stefan Engelsma (Phone: 616-662-9363). This contact should be made before the next scheduled meeting, February 16, 2009, D.V.

Student Aid Committee  
Stefan Engelsma, Secretary

**Check out the  
RFPA web page at  
[www.rfpa.org](http://www.rfpa.org)**

### NOTICE!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene at the Edgerton Protestant Reformed Church in Edgerton, MN, on Wednesday, March 4, 2009, at 8:30 A.M. Delegates or visitors who will need lodging or transportation should notify Edgerton's clerk, Mr. Jim Ver Hey ([jverhey@falconpallet.com](mailto:jverhey@falconpallet.com) or 507-442-4934) for arrangements. An officebearers' conference will precede the meeting on Tuesday, March 3, beginning at 9:00 A.M., and its theme will be "Catechizing Our Youth."

Rev. Richard J. Smit,  
Stated Clerk

### CLASSIS WEST OFFICEBEARERS' CONFERENCE

EDGERTON, MN

TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2009

### "CATECHIZING OUR YOUTH"

**9:00 A.M.**

Keynote Address  
**A Historical Emphasis  
On Catechetical Instruction**  
Rev. Steven Key  
Pastor, Hull PRC

**10:30 A.M.**

**Antithetical Catechetical  
Instruction in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**  
Rev. Nathan Langerak  
Pastor, South Holland PRC

**12:00 P.M.**

**Lunch**

**1:00 P.M.**

**The Involvement of the Elders  
in Catechism**  
Mr. James Regnerus  
Elder, Doon PRC

**2:45 P.M.**

**Practical Applications  
of Catechism**  
Rev. David Overway  
Pastor, Doon PRC

All past and present officebearers, as well as all other interested people, are invited to attend. After the noon meal, a free-will offering will be taken to defray expenses.

### *Reformed Witness Hour*

February 2009

Date	Topic	Text
February 1	"Consider the Ant and Be Wise"	Proverbs 6:6-11
February 8	"Labor Not to Be Rich"	Proverbs 23:4, 5
February 15	"The Treasurers of the Snow"	Job 38:22, 23
February 22	"Grace For Today"	Matthew 6:34