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Walking Worthy of God

That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

I Thessalonians 2:12

Paul has just reminded the Thessalonian saints of his labors among them during his second missionary journey.

Evidently the unbelieving Jews of Thessalonica sought to undermine the cause of the gospel by attacking Paul's behavior. They claimed that Paul's moral character left a great deal to be desired. They charged that Paul was interested only in temporal gain and personal advancement.

Paul counters these charges by reminding the Thessalonians of his labors among them. He had behaved himself holily, justly, and unblameably among them. He had exhorted and encouraged them as a father does a son.

And now Paul expresses what he had exhorted and encouraged the Thessalonians to do. He had exhorted them to walk worthy of God, who called them unto His kingdom and glory.

We call attention to this passage as we begin a new year.



What awaits us in this New Year? We have plans for this year—plans for our children and their schooling, plans for our work, plans for vacation. Things will also happen for which we have not planned—both good and evil.

It is important that in all our activities we walk worthy of God, who has called us into His kingdom and glory. This was God's exhortation to the church of Thessalonica through Paul. This is also God's exhortation to us for the New Year.



God has called us unto His kingdom and glory.

Let's begin with God's glory. God is the God of all virtue and perfection. He is the light in whom is no darkness (I John 1:5). The virtues of God include His holiness, goodness, righteousness, wisdom, and power. God's glory is the revelation of these virtues. Whenever we see the virtues of God on display, we see His glory.

We behold the glory of God in His works.

This is true, for example, of His work of creation. Out of nothing God made the heavens and the earth. And He left His mark on the creation. The creation reflects very wonderfully His beauty, wisdom, majesty, and power. This is the glory of God. And so we read, in Psalm 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork."

We behold the glory of God especially in His work of salvation in Jesus Christ. In the work of salvation God reveals the excellence of His virtues to the

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highest degree. In the work of salvation God rescues a people from sin and death and hell. He transforms them into His own likeness so that they reflect His own perfections. He also brings them to the bliss of heaven, to live with Him eternally. This is a work that far surpasses His work of creation. In this work of salvation, all of God's excellent virtues are fully displayed. This is His greatest glory.

Closely connected to God's glorious work of salvation is His kingdom. This kingdom is called in Scripture the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ, and the kingdom of heaven. The foundation of this kingdom was laid with the atoning work of Christ on the cross. The kingdom was actually established at Jesus' exaltation into heaven. In this kingdom Christ rules as King under God. The elect of God, redeemed in the blood of Jesus Christ, are the citizens of this kingdom. In this kingdom the people of God enjoy their great salvation in Jesus Christ. Under the gracious rule of Christ, the elect of God find the forgiveness of their sins. They are empowered to overcome temptation. They are led in the paths of righteousness. They are adorned with the virtues of God. They also enjoy sweet communion with God and with one another. Great are the blessings of salvation for the redeemed in God's kingdom!

And so the work of God speaks of God's kingdom and glory. God's kingdom is a kingdom of glory—more glorious than any other kingdom. The glory of this kingdom is the glory of God's salvation, which the elect of God enjoy in that kingdom.

Into that kingdom and glory of God we have been called!

This call is the saving, efficacious call of God through the gospel. God calls all who hear the gospel to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to salvation.

That call often falls on deaf ears and hard hearts that do not heed the call. But when that call comes to the elect of God, it is made effective through the irresistible operation of the Holy Spirit, so that the elect of God believe and turn to Christ.

When the elect of God are so called to faith in Jesus Christ, they are by their very faith translated into the kingdom of God to enjoy the glorious salvation of the kingdom.

And so the word of God speaks of being called into God's kingdom and glory.

What a wonderful blessing!



We are to walk worthy of the God who has called us into His kingdom and glory.

Our walk is our manner of living. It includes our innermost thoughts, desires, and even our motives. It includes our speech and outward behavior. It also includes the various relationships we maintain in our life. It is all-comprehensive, including all the activities of life—our work, recreation, entertainment, learning....

We are to walk or live worthy of God.

The word "worthy" has the idea of something that is of equal weight, of like value. It speaks of that which is worth as much. Picture a scale or balance, where both sides are of equal weight.

To walk worthy of God, therefore, means to live a life that is of equal weight and value to the God who has called us into His kingdom and glory.

We walk worthy of God when we reflect in our life the work of God that has called us into His kingdom and glory. Consider a family in which parents have labored hard to raise their children in the fear of the Lord. The children walk worthy of their parents only when they reflect in their lives the work that their parents did to raise them. In like man-

ner, we walk worthy of God only when our life reflects the work of God to call us into His kingdom and glory.

We reflect the work of God to call us into His kingdom and glory when we live our lives as the citizens of the kingdom of God. To live any other life is to live a life unworthy of our God.

To live such a worthy life requires that we separate ourselves from the kingdom of Satan.

We ought to say a few things about the kingdom of Satan. Satan has his kingdom that stands opposed to the kingdom of God. It is a kingdom of darkness. This is because it is a kingdom ruled by the Prince of darkness, Satan. Included in Satan's kingdom is the world, the ungodly, who are ungodly because they are ruled and controlled by Satan himself. In this kingdom are found every evil and vice imaginable. This kingdom is not a glorious kingdom but a kingdom of shame.

We have been called out of that kingdom and into the glorious kingdom of God.

We do not walk worthy of God when we follow after the evils of the kingdom of darkness. Sadly, we are often inclined to such an unworthy walk. Easily we yield to the temptation to follow after the evils of this world in our entertainment, our dress, and our language. This is called worldliness. There is no excuse for this. There is, however, a reason. The reason is that the work of God's salvation is only begun in us. Yes, God has renewed us by the Holy Spirit. But there remains in us much evil that carries over from the fall. Yes, one day the work of God's salvation will be complete, so that we are freed from all of sin's power and influence. But for the present we must struggle against much sin that is within us. But let us not forget. When we live as the world around us, we do not live worthy of the God who called us

into His kingdom and glory. And then God is ashamed to be called our God!

We walk worthy of God only when we separate ourselves from the evils and vices of the kingdom of darkness to live the life of the kingdom of God into which we have been called. This life is the new life of salvation. It is the life in which we reflect in all we do the virtues of God to which we have been saved.

This must be our goal and intent for the new year.



This is accomplished only in the power of the word.

In the verse we are considering for this meditation, the apostle Paul expresses what the


content of his preaching was in Thessalonica. "As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory" (vv. 11, 12). Notice, Paul had exhorted, comforted, and charged the Thessalonians. He did this with the word of God. And that word of God was that they should walk worthy of God, who had called them into His kingdom and glory.

To this must be added the truth that the very word of God that charges us to walk worthy of God is also the means God uses to empower us to live such a worthy life.

And so if we will walk worthy

of God this year, we must come under the power of God's word. We must frequent the house of God to hear the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom. We must study that word in our own homes. We must admonish, encourage, and comfort one another with the word in the communion of the saints. We must instruct our children in the word in our homes and provide for instruction in that same word in the catechism room.

This is the power of God to lead us to walk worthy of Him.

Let us devote ourselves to the word of God, so that in its power we may this year, and so long as we live on the earth, walk worthy of God, who has called us into His kingdom and glory. 

Editorial

Prof. Russell Dykstra

The Obvious Answer

As A.D. 2009 dawns, it is imperative for believers everywhere to keep firmly in mind what the A.D. means. *Anno Domini*. The year of the Lord, the year of the risen and exalted Lord Jesus Christ.

The world about us is currently in great turmoil—a swirling mass of trouble, conflict, and distress. Battered economies strip men of jobs, savings, and homes, with no end to the financial difficulties in sight. Bitter religious conflicts continue to break out into violent attacks. Terrorists strike, inflicting death and destruction. Unending civil wars and tribal conflicts lead to genocide and atrocities, heart-rending atrocities of man against man. Death and starvation stalk

the poor in lands with brutal, self-serving rulers. Crime continues unabated. These and so many more problems confront the world in 2009.

The problems are vexing. Individual groups and governments struggle in their own countries, but seem to make little headway. Increasingly the world recognizes that the problems are not national, but international. When governments and organizations around the globe are wrestling with similar or even identical problems, and not overcoming the difficulties, what is the solution? The obvious answer of natural man is this: one world government. All nations must work together, with one purpose, one voice, and one power. With-

out that unified effort, the solutions to the world's problems will remain elusive.

The year 2009 will see the world take another step towards the one world kingdom of man. The tower of Babel revisited. The healing of the great wound inflicted on the Beast.

Is it not obvious how global are the problems man faces? When the sharp drop in stock prices in the United States leads to immediate instability and tumbling stock prices in Japan, Great Britain, and elsewhere, it is obviously one world market. When a major surge in building and industry in China leads to shortages of cement in the US and sharp increases in world market prices of oil and cement,

it is obviously one world market. When much corn committed to the production of ethanol fuel in the US contributes to spikes in food prices in many countries and riots among the poor in these lands, it is obvious that the world is one. Is it not also obvious that the solution to the problems of shortages and destabilized economies is one world government?

Terrorism is a global problem. The world saw the twin towers in New York City crashing to the ground in September of 2001, and discovered that all the participants were members of al Qaeda, and all from the foreign land of Saudi Arabia. This hydra-like organization reappeared in Iraq, with members trained in neighboring countries. Recently it struck again, this time in India, with members (it is reported) trained in Pakistan. What can be done to stamp out terrorism, which so easily crosses borders to inflict destruction and death? One world government.

The world faces serious issues regarding human population. In some areas of the world, notably China, the population threatens to explode, placing huge demands on resources, beyond what China can produce. In other places, notably Europe, countries face serious depopulation and the possibility of having no workers for essential jobs. Would not one world government be better able to distribute the population of the world and avoid war and the dreadful social consequences?

In various countries, especially in Africa, wars and revolutions drag on. Genocide and horrible atrocities are recorded by news media, and the nations stand helplessly by, wringing their hands, issuing one toothless ultimatum after another. One world government could put an end to such senseless killing.

Some peoples and lands are afflicted by inhuman despots, determined to suck the wealth of

the country and indeed the very life of the people from them, only to enrich themselves. The world knows of these evil rulers. But it cannot stop them. One world government could.

Illegal drugs ravage the youth of rich countries. Governments battle the importation of the drugs, but are stymied by the fact that dirt poor farmers in foreign lands will continue to grow these cash-crops in order to feed their families. Could not one world government deal with these problems that cross national boundaries?

There are places in the world where people are starving to death. The world produces enough food and could feed them, but the rulers of the region refuse to allow the food to reach the dying. One world government would eliminate this needless suffering.

Likewise, one world government could prevent criminals from slipping over national borders to escape arrest and punishment. It could put an end to international trafficking in slaves, including children. And could it not unite the efforts of the nations in technology and medicine to conquer so many more diseases?

And last, but hardly least, the world is convulsed by violence caused by religious differences. Conflicts between Protestants and Catholics, Hindus and Christians, Muslims and everyone else, results in much bloodshed across the globe. What is the solution? One world-wide church, backed up by the one world government. This will be the solution of man.

This "prediction" that the nations will soon see the need for one world government is not based on some conspiracy theory. Such theories abound, namely, that some powerful men are secretly plotting the takeover of the world.

Rather, we know this one world government will appear

because the Bible so instructs us. Man, in opposition to God, seeks worldwide federation, imagining that his kingdom can prevail. This was man's solution at Babel. God, after allowing there a glimpse of what men will always seek to attain, fatally divided that kingdom with the confusion of tongues. All through history, Satan has been striving to overcome God's dividing of the human race. Satan is working now. He will have his one last moment of "success" in the kingdom of the Antichrist.

This one world power will arise, the Beast out of the nations (the sea, in Rev. 13:1 and 17:15). The nations will voluntarily give their authority to the Beast (Rev. 17:12—These [kingdoms] have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.) They will do so because they are convinced that the Antichrist is the savior who can solve all the world's problems.

This answer (one world government) is obvious to wicked men because they reject the only other alternative, the way of true peace—repentance and submission to Jesus Christ. God is not in their plans. Christ is their enemy. Their only hope of "salvation" is a kingdom united against God, a kingdom of man. And the man they want for their king is not the Son of Man, the Man of Sorrows, but the man of sin (II Thess. 2:3).

But this is a kingdom of frail men, not of the sovereign God. The number of this kingdom is 666, not the perfect 7 of God's everlasting kingdom and covenant. It is doomed. Christ is coming, and He "shall consume" the Antichrist "with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" (II Thess. 2:8). The answer of the ungodly to all these global problems is no solution.

What is the answer of the believer?

The believer always starts

and ends with God. In the face of all the troubles, his confidence is that God is God. God is sovereign. God is in control, also over all these vexing problems. He reminds us: "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Is. 46:9-10).

All these troubles, all these problems vexing the world, are from God Himself. "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things" (Is. 45:7). As he testified through the prophet Amos, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?" (3:6).

When the ungodly rage against Him and His Christ, God shall laugh them to scorn (Ps. 2). The Son whom God has set upon the throne testified to His church, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). The book of Revelation reveals the activity of this omnipotent Christ, directing all and executing God's counsel perfectly. Man will erect his king-

dom, as God has planned, but the Christ will destroy that kingdom and set up the eternal, heavenly kingdom.

The response of the believer in 2009 is guided by this certain knowledge. His response is not world flight. It is not time to flee to the mountains, though Jesus warned that that day is coming (Matt. 24: 16-21). As believers, our response will not be either to engage in culture wars, though our Lord does call us to live antithetically (II Cor. 6:14-18). We will not be involved in political battles to take America for Christ, though He commands us to wage a spiritual battle (II Cor. 10:3ff.; II Tim. 2:3ff.; Eph. 6:10ff.). Nor ought believers to strive for any earthly kingdom, since our Lord clearly taught us that His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36), though believers must pray and work for the causes of God's kingdom—the church, missions, the Christian schools, etc.

Resting confidently on the solid foundation that God is in control of all of 2009, we are called simply to be faithful in whatever calling God has given. Faithful parents, faithful husbands and wives, faithful children and students, faithful workers, and

faithful officebearers we must be. Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing (Matt. 24:46). Faithful must the church be to preach the gospel to all the world—especially that (Matt. 28:19-20).

Confident we must be. The victory is ours already by faith, for Christ has accomplished it in the cross and resurrection. He will return to destroy the kingdom of men and take His chosen people unto Himself.

It is of utmost importance that we have our treasures in heaven, and not on the earth. If our treasures are on the earth, we will likewise be taken up—filled with anxiety—with all the troubles of the globe. The bad economy, terrorists, evil rulers, laws of supply and demand—all these can rob us of our earthly treasures. But our treasures, being heavenly and spiritual, are totally unaffected by all the turmoil and distresses that 2009 contain.

In the year of our Lord 2009, let us be constant in prayer, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ (I Pet. 1:13). For our Lord is in full control. And He is coming.



Letters

Rome and "Authority"

Rev. Richard Smit's article ("The Supreme Authority of the Holy Scriptures") in the October 15th issue is another of so many truth-filled articles in the *Standard Bearer*. The whole issue on Roman Catholicism is outstanding. Thank you for it.

I appreciated Rev. Smit's drawing our attention to Rome's claim that, because the church approved the books of the Bible,

"therefore the authority of Scripture rests upon the witness of the church." This is an argument I have heard many times from Roman Catholics. What they never consider is the fact that much of the New Testament epistles are written to correct the errors already in the churches! Therefore the authority of the Scriptures is above the church, just as a father is above the child whom he corrects. Further, the witness of

Scripture (I Thess. 2:13) is that those who received these letters acknowledged that they were in fact "the word of God"!

As Isaiah 40:8, Matthew 24:35, and I Peter 1:25 remind us, it is the Word of God that shall stand forever, not the Roman Catholic Church. Again, God bless you all in the PRC.

Al Salmon
Moorestown, NJ

The Only Comfort

Lord's Day 1

Q. 1. What is thy only comfort in life and death?

A. That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ; who, with His precious blood, hath fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, and therefore, by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto Him.

Q. 2. How many things are necessary for thee to know, that thou, enjoying this comfort, mayest live and die happily?

A. Three: the first, how great my sins and miseries are; the second, how I may be delivered from all my sins and miseries; the third, how I shall express my gratitude to God for such deliverance.

Dear Christian reader, “What is your only comfort?”

This is a crucial question.

The Heidelberg Catechism is a lengthy summary and explanation of all the truths taught in Scripture, but before it begins to unfold so many truths, it asks this all-important summary question. Before we begin examining these truths piece by piece, we must know that we are looking for one central treasure and truth, and that is “my comfort.” It is just as when a miner attacks a pile of rock, he is looking for one gem or one nugget, and he carefully sifts through the rocks, turning them over and examining them, to find that treasure. So, the catechism examines each truth carefully to bring to us our only comfort.

What Is Comfort?

A comfort is a good thing that takes care of a bad situation. The comfort does not always remove the bad situation, but it makes us able to live through the evil, and it gives confidence that the evil will turn to our advantage. Comfort gives an inner peace. It gives strength and hope through and beyond the evil. It is the overwhelming awareness of a good thing that defeats the pain of evil.

There is a universal need for comfort. “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble” (Job 14:1). “For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night” (Eccl. 2:23).

A hospital, a nursing home, a funeral, a cemetery, a war-torn country, refugees without clothes or shoes, the homeless without food or shelter, a broken relationship, bankruptcy, theft, murder—all these show man’s need for comfort. Daily life, with its physical troubles of sickness

and disease, with its internal anguishes of fear, anxiety, hurt, and depression, proves our need for comfort.

This is a need for the present but also for the future. What about tomorrow and its troubles? And then there is one thing we cannot forget, inevitable for every man, death! We need comfort for the soul as well as the body, for death as well as life.

But so few seem to possess it. Some find comfort when things in life are going well, when life is good and they have all that they want, good health and few problems. Others find solace in their ability to brush aside the bad, to have a strong will, to see a silver lining in every cloud. They say, “Things could be worse” and “There are better days ahead.” Still others find their comfort in escaping the realities of life, with a vacation, medication, partying, drink, the love and warmth of human relationships, or an escape into the fantasy world of the movies. Or there are the creature comforts that put a smile on our

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face, the pleasures and luxuries of the modern world, the advances of science and medicine that give doctors the answer to so many afflictions.

But what is your comfort? Will these things do? From where do you draw your strength? What enables you to go on?

The Only Comfort

There is but one comfort because there is but one cause for man's misery.

We need comfort because we are all descendants of Adam and Eve. As their descendants we inherit (even if we are ignorant of it) three things: a sin-cursed world, an evil nature, and a liability to the wrath of God.

In the beginning God created a perfect world, but when Adam and Eve sinned against God, profound changes occurred. God drove them from the Garden of Eden. God cursed the ground for their sakes. God sent death, and with it sickness and disease. Adam and Eve became sinful in character. Sin began to exercise its power over them. Sin multiplied in their offspring so that there was crime, lawlessness, murder, and grief. The world became a dangerous place to live. Life for man is filled with trouble and sorrow, and the only explanation is sin.

And then there is the wrath of a just God. All of man's misery is the expression and experience of God's wrath. His curse rests on mankind and creation. God hates sin, and because He is just, He must punish it. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. 1:18). "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath" (Ps. 90:8-9). As every man and woman lives and dies in this world, he/she knows

that there is a day of reckoning in which all will stand before God and be judged. The troubles of life create fears that are ultimately fears of death and facing God. A fierce hurricane or earthquake shakes the earth, and men tremble at the thought of meeting God.

What is your comfort? Is there a remedy, a solution for man's great need? Something that will give comfort for death as well as life, for soul as well as body? Something to overcome the great obstacle of sin? You see, this is a crucial question.

The Christian has an answer. The Bible gives an answer. God provides the answer in the saving work of His Son, Jesus Christ. He comes and deals, not just with the symptoms of our misery—He doesn't just take away human pain—but with the cause of our misery and the curse of God.

I Belong to Jesus

The catechism is very rich and warm. The need for comfort is universal, but the solution is given as a personal confession. Jesus is the solution for me. "I belong to *my* faithful Savior Jesus Christ, who with His precious blood hath fully satisfied for all *my* sins, and delivered *me* from all the power of the devil, and so preserves *me*..."

Jesus comes and pays the price for the sin of His own. He removes the curse of God from their daily life. He frees them from the bondage and power of sin. He liberates them from the power of Satan. He brings them into God's favor and fellowship. Jesus Christ is our only comfort. Christianity alone can bring comfort to man.

But this is personal, "I belong to Him."

What does that mean?

It means I am His property. When He came and gave His precious blood, it was to purchase

me. He owns me and takes full responsibility for me before God. He will keep me and lead me into His everlasting kingdom.

It means I am united to Him by faith. His death was for my sins. He removed God's wrath from me. Hell no longer looms in front of me. I need not fear God and the judgment day. In faith, I trust His death as the sufficient and satisfactory payment for my sins. God looks on me with the love that He has for His Son.

It means that He rules me by His grace and Holy Spirit. "Sin shall not have dominion over you" (Rom. 6:14). Because I am His, sin is no longer my master. Satan is defeated. And though sin is still present, it does not rule anymore, it is a rebel spirit that remains present, but its day is coming.

It means that He preserves me. All things are now controlled by Christ at God's right hand. All the events of my life are used by Him for my spiritual and eternal profit. None of the problems or pains of this present life can crush me or sever the blessed union that Christ has established. Nothing can separate me from the love of Christ.

It means I can cast all my cares upon Him, knowing that He cares for me (1 Pet. 5:7). I have only to look at what He has done for me, and I can be confident that He will continue to use His power, in heaven and earth, for me.

What a comfort! The misery of man is great, but the work Christ has and continues to do is still greater.

Living and Dying Happy

This comfort is not just for those days of fear. It is not a bomb shelter to which I retreat only when I need it. Rather, it is my daily medicine and delight.

Often we read Lord's Day One at the bedside or at a funeral and it revives the faith rooted

deep in our souls. That is entirely appropriate. Often a dying saint who is beyond responding to anything said or anyone present will respond to these familiar words.

But we should not reserve these beautiful confessions only for these occasions. Instead, we can and must live every day as a comforted and strengthened people. This comfort is the power by which we live today, and this comfort will give strength to the dying only when it is used as a daily medicine.

What is your joy and your comfort today? This comfort gives happiness and purpose to the life of the believer every day. This is an all-sufficient comfort, adequate not only for death, but for every obstacle every day. No matter whether it is a fair-weather day or a stormy day, no matter what evil enters my life or how manifold my creature comforts, the knowledge that I and my life are always in the hands of Jesus and that all things serve my good is my daily comfort and joy.

I Am Not My Own

True faith relinquishes all to Christ. To know this comfort I cannot rely on myself or any human wisdom or strength to

see me through. We often think otherwise. We have ideas and plans to get us through life. We face trouble, and in our pride we think that we can do it by our own strength. "We are strong, we are capable, we are ready, we can do it," we think.


How impossible! Paul says in I Corinthians 6:19, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" You are not your own. What a dreadful thing to think that you are. If I were my own, then I would be personally responsible for an enormous debt of sin that I could never wipe out but only increase daily. Envision your day and your destiny as in your hands. There is no joy and no hope and no comfort for such.

An Ever Growing Knowledge

In order to live and die happily in the comfort of belonging to Jesus, we must know three things: "Guilt, Grace and Gratitude" or "Sin, Salvation, and Service." "First, how great my sins and misery are; the second, how I may be delivered from all my sins and misery; the third, how I shall express my gratitude to God for such deliverance."

The second question does not

ask, How do you get this comfort? but, How do you enjoy it? Getting something is not always so hard, but enjoying it and using it appropriately can be.

The knowledge we have is a higher knowledge, taught by the Holy Spirit. The three parts are not three stations on the road to happiness. No one masters the first and moves on to the second and third. As knowledge of sin increases, so does our faith in Christ the Savior, and so does our growth in holy living. But none of these is ever perfected. We will never know the depths of our sin; we will never be able adequately to express the glories of Christ; and we will always have only a small beginning of the new obedience. There is always need for growth. Yes, there can be a superficial knowledge of these, but it produces only a superficial faith. The true believer has a deep, and ever deepening, knowledge of his sin; a warm, and ever closer, knowledge of his Savior; and a profound, increasing sense of gratitude. The result is an ever increasing awareness of a good thing, belonging to Jesus, that defeats all the evils that threaten. And I live in comfort and peace. 

Questions for Discussion

1. What is comfort?
2. What things show man's need for comfort?
3. Why is comfort one of our deepest needs?
4. What are some things people substitute for true comfort?
5. When do we need comfort? Is it only in the bad times?
6. Why does the Christian alone have comfort?
7. Many people today abhor the idea of belonging to someone. Do you think it good to belong to someone else? To whom? Why is this good?
8. What are the three main sections of the Heidelberg Catechism? Why is it important to go over them again and again?

Not Anabaptist But Reformed (10)*

by Rev. H. Danhof and Rev. H. Hoeksema

Chapter 5. Van Baalen's Method of Scriptural Interpretation (1)

The chapter in which Rev. Van Baalen thinks he can prove that our view is against Holy Scripture is concluded with the profoundly grave statement, "Once again, acknowledge that you have erred." The author is therefore quite convinced that his line of argument is conclusive and his proof is binding. After Van Baalen has written this, there is only one way that still remains open to us, and that is the way of remorse, repentance, and reform from our erring way.

Now we have already said that we very much appreciate this grave concern of the brother for us. In this call to return you can feel the heart burning with brotherly love toward us, and that is moving. But it must also be said that Van Baalen has gotten a bit carried away by this brotherly love, calling for repentance too quickly. That, of course, is also possible. One can be so driven by love out of concern for someone that at the slightest sign of danger he cries out, Repent! And also it happens once in a while that one receives a sharp and serious application in a less than

sharp sermon. And this latter is indeed the case in the chapter of Rev. Van Baalen's pamphlet bearing the title "Against the Holy Scripture." We want to demonstrate the weakness of the "sermon" here.

Let us first give an overview of the contents.

Rev. Van Baalen quotes twelve texts in all, apart from the reference to the book of Jonah. Exegesis (interpretation of Scripture) the brother does not give anywhere at all. He does not go into a single concept. The concept of "grace," which is certainly the main issue, is not discussed by the brother. But also, the brother simply never goes into the related concepts of goodness, mercy, kindness, etc. He does not either give any explanation of a text, unless we must accept as the brother's explanation what he sometimes says about a text. Much less does he even somewhat work out any of the fundamental ideas of Scripture that stand in close connection with our subject. Concerning the image of God, sin, the development of sin, election and reprobation, and so forth, the brother makes no mention. As we have said, he simply quotes twelve texts. At times he says something about it, at times nothing at all, and at times he merely refers to a text without even quoting it.

The brother quotes the following texts without saying anything about them: Psalm 33:5; Psalm 65:11; Luke 6:35; I Kings 21:27, 28,

29; Acts 14:16, 17; Genesis 31:4-7; Psalm 105:14-15.

The brother refers to the following texts without quoting them: Ezra 1:2-3; John 1:4; Romans 2:4-5.

He does say something about the following, but without giving anything that can claim the title of scriptural interpretation: Matthew 5:45; Romans 1:24, 26, 28.

Now our first remark is that this method all by itself is condemned from the Reformed standpoint as totally reprehensible. It is indeed an easy way of getting something from Scripture and seeming to prove it before the simple folk. The writer who uses such a manner of giving proof from Scripture naturally needs to devote very little study to his subject. And the method has this intention: that it should reach its goal very easily, so that with a single text it moves anyone out of the way. But this does not take away the fact that, to anyone who piously considers it, it is very weak, and in fact it does not supply any proof. A Baptist uses the same method to demonstrate that infant baptism is condemned, and an Arminian that God wills all men to be saved, and that therefore there can be no mention of personal election in Scripture. The fact is that the Scripture forms an organic whole, and that therefore you cannot treat all the parts as standing loosely next to each other.

It is also very peculiar that the method that Van Baalen fol-

* Not Anabaptist but Reformed was a pamphlet written by Danhof and Hoeksema in 1923 as a "Provisional Response to Rev. Jan Karel Van Baalen Concerning the Denial of Common Grace." Translated here from the Dutch by seminarian Daniel Holstege.

Previous article in this series: August 2008, p. 450.

lows in his pamphlet is that of the old scholastics and of the Methodists and Pietists from the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. In his *Encyclopedia* (II.518-519) Dr. A. Kuyper writes the following:

The manner in which the Scholastics ordinarily brought up proof from Holy Scripture consisted almost in the citation of this or that specific statement appearing in this or that verse of Holy Scripture. Now the Reformers are not known to be completely free of this method; indeed they make much use of this method; but not one of the Reformers uses this method exclusively. They compare Scripture with Scripture. They look for an *analogia fidei*. They are constantly trying to penetrate deeper into the organic life of the Scriptures. And whoever has even hastily paged through Voetius' writing (*Quosque se extendat autoritae Scripturae*) at once perceives the much more correct standpoint to which our theologians of that time had set themselves. But insofar as the teller of this legend (previously named) was similar, as actually in the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, this unscientific method found more and more entry especially under the influence of Pietism and Methodism. Few thoughtful people among the simple believers promoted so odd a notion of Holy Scripture. Such people then deem that scriptural proof has first been supplied when one quotes a specific verse from Holy Scripture which literally and fully expresses what is asserted. It is a strict requirement which, on the other hand, releases you from all further inquiry, and as long as you just cite the Scripture, no one will ask whether your citation is taken from the Old or New Testament, whether it was said by Job's friends or by Job himself, or whether it appears as an absolute or with application to a specific case. The Bible is then your codex, the concordance your index, and with the help of

that index you can cite from the codex whenever it sounds right.

The absolute reprehensibility of this method hardly requires any explanation.

The quotation above applies precisely to the chapter of Van Baalen's pamphlet bearing the title "Against Holy Scripture." This quoting of a few texts, many of which do not have anything to do with our subject, is unworthy of the brother. In the first place, over against the passages which the brother quotes, there are indeed also other passages to be mentioned that refute Rev. Van Baalen's notion clearly enough. His notion is that God actually wants to show grace, goodness, and mercy also to the reprobate in this life. He sends grace to them, is graciously inclined toward them, and lavishes goodness upon them in this life. Now at this moment we will not yet ask how the brother reconciles this notion, which would then be an explanation of the text, "He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil" (Luke 6:35), or of the text from Matthew, "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust," with any Reformed thinking. But we would like to ask him how he would reconcile this with Psalm 92:5-7, which says, "O LORD, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep. A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this. When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever."

Note well that this last clause expresses God's purpose. It is He who accomplishes this purpose. He carries it out Himself. He makes the wicked spring forth; He makes the workers of iniquity flourish. And indeed that means to say that He makes them great

in earthly gifts, in rain and sunshine, in money and goods, in honor and influence. And God does that with the purpose of destroying them forever. Scripture says that here. For Scripture is not talking here about the thoughts or ways of a man, but most certainly about the thoughts of God. It is concerned with the depth of the riches of the knowledge and the ways of God, which are past finding out.

Do not now say that this belongs to the hidden things of God, for Holy Scripture reveals this to us here and wants us to know it. God's Word wants us to understand that the Lord enriches the wicked with earthly blessings in order that He might destroy them for ever. And how would you like to reconcile this with your explanation that God lavishes goodness upon the reprobate; that He also truly intends to bless them and is favorably inclined toward them?


You have the same thought also in Psalm 73. Certainly the concern there is over what you would call universal grace (*algemeene genade*). But the poet complains about the fact that he has very little of it. The ungodly have everything. And that too is a thoroughly scriptural idea, is it not? That so-called universal grace is not very common either. This is what Scripture teaches. And so it was with Asaph. The ungodly had rest, peace, and prosperity in the world. Their eyes stood out with fatness. There was no end to their wealth and prosperity. But with Asaph it was just the other way around. His chastening was renewed every morning. This now grieves the poet. He murmurs against it. He does not understand it. It seems as if there is no knowledge in the Most High. But soon he goes into the sanctuary of God. And then he sees that same contrast in an entirely different light.

Then he sees two things. Concerning himself he sees that God tightly holds his right hand and guides him by His counsel in order afterward to receive him in His glory. And concerning those ungodly men, he sees that God does exactly the opposite. Peace and prosperity are never blessings for the ungodly, and are not intended by God as such either. They are not proof that God looks down upon them in kindness and wants to bless them in His favor. On the contrary, "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought

into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors" (Ps. 73:18, 19).

Now, you must understand that these slippery places in this context are that same earthly wealth and prosperity. God has *set* them therein. He casts them down into destruction exactly through that. Therefore, this is the same thought as in Psalm 92.

One more time: how do you reconcile this scriptural notion, which appears again and again, with your idea that God is actually good to the reprobate? Do not immediately say, brother, that here again we have rationalism,

which wants to reconcile everything and bring it toward a unity of thought, because that does not apply here. It is not rationalism to compare Scripture with Scripture and to look for the *analogia Scripturae* (analogy of Scripture). Scripture does not have all kinds of absurdities and contradictions, but most certainly it has one root idea. Scripture certainly does not say in one place that God lavishes goodness upon the same men whom it tells us in another place God casts into destruction through those gifts. It is a question of scriptural interpretation here, brother. 

William Carey— Pioneer Missionary to India (1)

Carey Leaves England for India

William Carey is known as the "Father of Modern Missions." There are especially two reasons for this. First, he was one of the first pastors to heed the call to leave the comforts of a church home and to labor in a foreign land. He became a catalyst for foreign missions. Second, in his own work in foreign missions he developed a method of labor that others could emulate. Considering that this was pioneer work, work that was without a role model, it is quite remarkable that Carey could adapt to his adverse circumstances and set forth a methodology that benefited the church for years to come. In this article we

will focus on the circumstances in his life that afforded him the opportunity to be among the first to leave his homeland to serve the Lord as a foreign missionary.

Carey was born on August 17, 1761 in Paulerspury, Northamptonshire, the midlands of England. His father, Edmund, was a weaver who worked on a loom in the family room of his house. This was part of the cottage industry of the day, which would soon be replaced by the industrial revolution. The family was very poor, and since his father was appointed head of the Charity School, Carey learned basic reading there. He advanced his knowledge of the created world by tramping through the woods and taking specimens to his room. He read every book that was shared with him, including, later, *Captain Cook's Voyages*. He listened intently to the travel es-

capades of his Uncle Peter, who had served in the British army and now returned home from his world travels. His horizons were broadened through such exposure.

At 14 years of age Carey apprenticed as a cobbler, and this trade provided his necessary income until 28 years of age. At 19 years of age, Carey married his master's sister-in-law Dorothy. Before long, he found himself responsible for the financial support not only of his own family, a wife and three children, but also of his master's widow and children.

During these years of shoe-making, Carey developed an interest in religious works. John Ware, an associate with him in the trade, witnessed much to Carey and put him in touch with good books. The Church of England had for some time been

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dominated by formal religion and precious little serious faith. That gave rise to the "Dissenters," a group of preachers and pastors who met apart from the church for spiritual refreshment. This was the time of William Law, who was used by God to quicken spiritual interest; John Wesley, who was fervent in his preaching; and George Whitefield, who later traveled to America and began the Great Awakening, which in turn influenced Jonathan Edwards. The embers of spiritual renewal began to glow. Carey experienced a true sense of conversion and sought out the Dissenters for fellowship.

For a long time the Church of England did not take kindly to the activity of the Dissenters. Some time before, John Bunyan spent 12 years in the Bedford jail. Already in 1688, with the Act of Toleration, the Dissenters had been granted freedom of worship, but the real enforcement of it was always tenuous. In 1719 Parliament passed a bill forbidding anyone to teach if he had ever attended a "Dissenting" meeting, with three months in jail as penalty for violation. So in the days of Carey, there was always fear and persecution associated with worship apart from the Church of England.

In 1764 six Particular Baptist Churches formed an Association. By 1782 they had expanded into the region where Carey lived, and he attended one of their meetings in Olney. Andrew Fuller was his favorite preacher. Carey could accept John Bunyan's position on baptism, which did not make membership conditioned on one's stand on sprinkling or immersion. He settled in his own mind on believer's baptism and submitted to his own baptism in October 1783.

As Carey continued his own study, he was led to believe that God had called him to pastor a church. He took up this respon-

sibility in 1785 at Moulton in a Particular Baptist Church, which he served for four years. During this time he grew much in his understanding of the Scriptures. He even learned the original languages. His personal development included a better understanding of missions. He had a burden for lost sinners and articulated mission principles based on a theology for missions. He included many of these concepts in his preaching.

In April 1789 Carey, at 28 years of age, had opportunity to take up a trial-period in the ministry from a larger city church in Leicester. He was formally ordained in 1791. This was a Particular Baptist Church following the London Confession of 1644. He now had opportunity to serve as a leader in mission work. During this time he preached a moving sermon on Isaiah 54:2, 3: "Enlarge Thy Tents." Out of that sermon came the famous statement, "Expect great things; attempt great things."

Andrew Fuller's book "The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation" was printed and distributed at that time. This book set forth the need to call sinners to repentance and faith. Carey added his voice: "Then it is the duty of the church to bring the gospel call to them." The result was the formation of the Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen.

You may ask, Why did Carey focus on such a society instead of working with the *church* with a view to mission work? In subsequent years, especially among the Reformed churches, a better understanding was reached regarding the role of the church in missions. Among the Particular Baptist Churches, an independent form of church government was practiced. They formed associations, but looked askance at the idea of a federal church, a denomination with strong ties between

local congregations. Besides this, the Particular Baptist Churches had among them hyper-Calvinists who firmly believed that it was *not* the duty of the church to send ministers to foreign lands for the purpose of saving the souls of the heathen. Besides this bad theology, they understood the "Great Commission" of Matthew 28 to relate only to the apostles, by whose work in missions to the world the mandate has already been fulfilled.

Such were the obstacles that had to be overcome by the "Father of Modern Missions."

Carey did so in two ways.

First, he himself learned from those who had gone before him in doing mission work. Carey is known as the Father of *modern* missions, not the father of all missions. He studied avidly whatever books he could find in the libraries that were at hand. Carey had precious little formal education, but he is a refreshing example of a self-educated man. He developed with amazing skill and clarity the biblical theology of missions. He focused on all the important passages from Genesis through Revelation that related to bringing the gospel, not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles. He researched the history of missions to learn from the apostles, from the church fathers of the early Christian church, from the role of the Reformers in missions, and finally from the influence of the Pietists in Germany, especially of the Moravians, who set forth the five fundamental principles of missions that Carey took with him to India.

First, church and school go together. The ability to read God's Word is basic to Christian nurture and growth. Second, the Scriptures must be made available in the common language of the people. Ziegenbalg translated all the New Testament and much of the Old into the Tamil language before his death

in 1719. Third, communicating the gospel requires an accurate knowledge of the customs and religion of the people. Fourth, the missionary must confront the lost with the claims of Christ and pray for the definite and personal conversion of every person encountered. And fifth, an indigenous church with its own indigenous ministry must come into being as soon as possible. (*Faithful Witness*, by Timothy George.)

Two missionaries had a tremendous effect upon Carey. They were, interestingly, John Eliot and David Brainerd, who served as pioneering missionaries among the American Indians. Eliot had accompanied John Winthrop, governor of New England, in 1631. What impressed Carey about Eliot was his piety, his prayer life, and his zeal to preach the gospel. They shared in common a firm hatred of the slavery of Africans. Eliot modeled for Carey his role as preacher, translator, agricultural reformer, organizer of churches, and caregiver for the poor. David Brainerd was Yale-educated and converted in the Great Awakening through the preaching of George Whitefield. He labored under the auspices of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge. It was the account of Brainerd's life's work, written by Jonathan Edwards, that moved Carey so much. He carried it with him to India and made reference to it repeatedly in his journals. The writings of Brainerd inspired in Carey a real burden for the lost.

Second, Carey bravely set forth his own convictions about the need to do missionary work among the heathen by publishing his work entitled, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*. This work is usually referred to simply as "*The Inquiry*."

We can appreciate the fact

that this publication had an impact similar to the nailing of Luther's 95 Theses. Carey was fully aware that it would be like a lightening-rod that would attract high-voltage opposition. It is quite an amazing work, because it is the fruit of years of careful and methodical development of his argument. It begins with Scripture to argue that the Great Commission was not completed by the apostles, because the "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world" is Christ's comfort for the church, which obeys His command all the way till the end of the world. It is a rare combination of the biblical theology of missions, the history of missions, the need for missions, and suggestions based on the Bible as to how this commission of Jesus ought to be carried out among heathen people in a foreign culture. He concluded with an exposition of Scripture that demonstrated that it is the duty of every Christian to care about the salvation of his neighbor.

The publishing of this book had a twofold effect. First, his opponents became more vocal, and their hostility towards missions polarized the church. And, second, it moved many to consider the church's duty to obey Christ's command to be busy in mission work.

Carey was a Calvinist. He affirmed without reservation what Andrew Fuller called "the discriminating doctrines of grace." These are the well-known Five Points of Calvinism, or the doctrines of grace. Within the Particular Baptist Church, however, there were some who saw these doctrines as a hindrance to mission work. A controversy revolved around this question, "Is it the duty of poor unconverted sinners who hear the gospel preached and published, to believe in Jesus Christ?" Those who answered it in the negative saw no need for promiscuous preach-

ing of the gospel. This divided the church over the need for mission outreach. Carey and others concluded that natural inability did not negate the duty of the church to address the gospel to them.

Andrew Fuller was convinced of this.

There was no contradiction between the universal obligation of all who hear the gospel to believe in Christ and the sovereign decision of God to save those whom He has chosen. The failure to believe stemmed not from any physical or "natural inability," but rather from a "moral inability" which was the result of a perverted human will. Jonathan Edwards's distinction between natural and moral ability was the key which unlocked the mystery of divine sovereignty and human responsibility for Fuller. (*The Church Awakes*, by Timothy George.)

Many of the leaders of the church had come a long way from the day when Carey first proposed the need for mission work and one of his listeners said to him, "Young man, sit down. When God pleases to convert the heathen he will do it without your aid or mine." That had stunned young Carey. After many years of study and maturity, he was now ready; and the Mission Society was ready to be formally organized and to send out a missionary. Those who had a heart for missions responded with joy and thanksgiving for Carey, who was able to express their heartfelt desire and to propose a way of obedience in doing missions. The Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Heathen began to collect money for this venture.

Within one year, things were in place for Carey to leave for India.


John Thomas, who had already served in Bengal, India, approached the society to offer

his availability as missionary to India. He needed a companion. Carey offered his services. His companions in ministry were both shocked and excited.

Farewell services were held in various churches. But one thing was disappointing: Dorothy, Carey's wife, refused to accompany him. Expecting her fourth

child, she saw the burden too great. Carey could not turn back. He decided to take with him their firstborn, and he proposed that Dorothy come to India a year later. Under the providence of God, however, Carey's departure was delayed. Shipping was interrupted by a war between France and

Britain. During that time Carey, with the help of John Thomas, convinced Dorothy, who had now delivered her child, to join them. In due time they left England together, never to return.

It took five months of treacherous sailing for them to get the first glimpse of Calcutta, their field of labor. 

Strength of Youth

Rev. Martin VanderWal

You and Your Bible

Take a look at the Bible you have. Is it nearby? If asked to look up a passage, how easily could you find it? If someone asked you about a book of the Bible, say, Philippians, would you be able to explain what that book is about? If someone asked you to find a passage of the Bible that teaches about a certain subject, for example "disease," could you?

What is your level of interest in the Bible? If someone would ask you if you read your Bible, how would you answer? Have you read your Bible today? Did you read it yesterday? Do you desire to read it? Do you look forward to a time of devotions? Is Bible reading part of your spiritual life? Is it part of the spiritual meat and drink you desire and need to live in fellowship with your God? Would you be able to say that your Bible is a close companion? Or is it more of a stranger?

These questions become especially important to you as young

people. There are three reasons for this importance. The first reason is that you are becoming more and more mature. In that maturity you are building a system of thinking. You are not only learning what to think, but also how to think. You are also developing habits and patterns of thought that, once established, will be very hard to change or break. How important it is at this stage of your life to make sure that Scripture has its proper place of government in your mind.

The second reason is that in this time of your life you are developing habits and patterns of organization in your life. Making time now for Bible reading and study is easier than ever, and it establishes a good pattern to continue through your adulthood. Taking up this important work is also a proper exercise of responsibility for your own spiritual well-being. Earlier in your life your parents saw to your spiritual welfare, constantly leading you in devotions. If by now you have not taken up this work on your own, it is high time to begin. Bible reading and study equip you to be a faithful member of the church, to be a proper, godly husband or wife, father or

mother, and, for you young men, to be a good deacon or elder or minister someday, Lord willing.

The third reason concerns authority. The devil knows that you as young people are especially open to different kinds of authority. He would impress you with the authority of university professors, of your college textbooks, of news and information (and entertainment) media. With their authority they challenge not only the teachings of Scripture, but also its very authority. Most of the church world has minimized that authority of Scripture too, as you well know. The Bible has some authority, they say, for religious matters. But to read the Bible is mainly a way to feel good about God.

What is going to be *your* authority? Where are *you* going to turn for answers? You know that the only authority for your beliefs is Scripture. You know that Scripture must be the only guide for your thinking. But you also know that to say what Scripture *ought to be* to you can be a world apart from what Scripture truly *is* to you. What you need to do is bring these two exactly together. Scripture is your authority. How do you think and live by that

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authority? By regular, frequent, close exposure to this authority. By daily time you devote to this guide, willingly putting yourself under its light and truth. And by developing a closer relationship with this companion, thus becoming more and more familiar and intimate with its contents.

Bible reading is a matter of dedication and commitment. The world in which you live vies for your attention and tugs at your heart in a multitude of ways: your social circles cry out for attention; education, job, and cyberspace take up time; entertainment beckons. On the other hand, you need to direct your attention to the Word, take it in hand, open it up, and read its pages. You need to give careful, meditative consideration to its words.

Required therefore is a discipline of time and place. Find a regular time when you can devote your attention to the Scriptures. You will need first to force the matter of time. You will have to throw out some activities in order to gain more time. Certainly you can throw out *something* to make room for God's Word! Then you will need to be jealous about that time. Allow no interruptions and no distractions during that time. You can also select a time according to spiritual considerations. What time of the day do you feel most in need of the Word? What time of the day do you find most profitable to dedicate to spiritual things? When is your mind the sharpest to devote to a proper understanding of Scripture?

Place is also important. You need a place where you can devote your attention to the Word of God. Is your room in your home a good place to open up the Word of God and read it? Maybe your room is a place where you feel uncomfortable opening and reading the Bible. Then maybe you need to work on your room! You can also ask yourself where you are the most comfortable and

the least distracted. A library is quiet and has few distractions. Or perhaps that proper place is outside. Make it part of your routine to be in that place at that certain time each day to read your Bible.

You might find help in reading your Bible through writing. First, keep track of what you have read from Scripture. Get into the habit of writing in a notebook the date and the passage or passages you have read. Also write down your thoughts on the passage or any questions that you might have. Consult a commentary, if not to answer any particular question you have, then only to increase your understanding of a passage. Make a note of what you understand better from the commentary. Refer back to your notes a day or two afterward. You might have new observations or questions that will increase your knowledge and understanding of the passage.

Not only is it important to *know* your Bible well, it is necessary to receive *profit* from the Word. In this matter of profit, the struggle is greater than you might think. The struggle happens because of a tendency to be hypocritical, to have two compartments in your life. The one compartment is church things and the fellowship of the church. In that compartment the Bible has full sway. There you study and there you find profit. Of course! But there is another compartment in which you have your friends, perhaps from the church, but also perhaps from the world. In this compartment the lines between the church and the world can be terribly blurred. In this compartment is much entertainment, social life (e.g., dating), leisure, and recreation. In this compartment the Bible's authority is not exercised, for it encroaches on so-called freedoms.

You might therefore complain that you do not find much profit

for your everyday life from reading and studying God's Word. But the problem is that you do not want its profit because you know it will compress your worldly compartment and take away its freedoms. Surely at one point or another you came under conviction from the Word, but you found a dozen reasons to justify your contrary thinking or action anyway. In those cases, the Bible provided plenty of potential profit, but you rejected it.

Scripture *is* profitable! Scripture testifies of its own profit, I Timothy 3:16. This passage is fundamental. It declares the important doctrine of the divine inspiration of Scripture. But as soon as it testifies of that truth, it goes on to speak of Scripture's profit. To believe in inspiration is also to believe in Scripture's profit. The Holy Spirit Himself has seen to it that Scripture is profitable.


You are called to believe and practice that testimony of profit given by the Spirit. Practice that profitability in prayer as you go to the Word. Confess before the Lord your ignorance and your need for the knowledge and wisdom that He gives only through the Word. Ask Him to humble you before the Word, that you might receive its teachings, and that its teachings might shape and mold your mind and drive out your old ignorance and folly. Then ask Him to teach you through His Word. Ask that the Holy Spirit guide you into the truth, John 16:13. Ask Him to open the Scriptures to you, Luke 24:32. Then turn to Scripture to know the Lord's gracious answer to your prayer.

You will find profit in your reading of Scripture. You will grow in your knowledge of God through your growth in the knowledge of His Word. You will grow richer in the knowledge of God's gifts and blessings to you. You will find much direction for

your heart and soul, mind and strength. You will find strength to live according to the antithesis.

Having that growth and

strength you will never forsake their source: your Bible. To the Word you will return. Your reading and study will become more profitable. Your desire for the

Scripture will grow. Your mind and heart will more and more conform to its truth and way. You have a blessed companion and guide: your Bible! 

Special Article

Dr. David Torlach

The Origin and History of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia (1)*

First of all, I'd like to thank the RFPA for asking me to speak tonight. It is an honor and a privilege to do so. It is good to be able to give you a little more information about the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, or the EPC, as I'll be referring to it tonight.

It seemed to me a little strange to be asked to speak about the EPC to a publishing association meeting. There does not seem to be much connection. But perhaps I can draw out something of a connection as I tell you about the EPC tonight.

I'd like to give a little bit of an introduction, not just to the EPC but also to Australia and to Christianity and Presbyterianism in Australia as well.

I'll give you a little bit of a geography and history lesson tonight as well. Australia is a large island continent. It is, in fact, about the same size as the main part of the United States. If you exclude Alaska, it

is almost exactly the same size. But, despite that, the population is much smaller. Australia has a population of only about 20,000,000 people compared to about 300,000,000 in the United States.

Australia is located across the Pacific Ocean—a very long way across the Pacific Ocean. And of course, it is in the southern hemisphere. It takes about thirteen hours to fly from the west coast of the United States to the east coast of Australia. Interestingly, the first person to fly across the Pacific Ocean from the west coast of the United States to Brisbane was an Australian, Charles Kingsford-Smith, who did it in 1928. And then it took 83 hours of flying time!

The name "Australia" derives from the Latin *australis*, which means southern, and hence the name. In fact, already in the literature of Roman times, Australia is mentioned as the "great unknown land of the south." And if you read through medieval literature, you will find reference to this land as well. But not much more than that is documented. The first documented evidence of the discovery of Australia is that of a Dutch explorer in 1606. Subsequently, through the 1600s,

the Dutch mapped out much of the western and northern coasts, calling the land "New Holland." But it was pretty inhospitable in that area, and therefore there was no interest in settling it. It wasn't until 1770 that the east coast of Australia was charted by Captain James Cook, who named it "New South Wales," since he came from Great Britain. He claimed the land for Great Britain.

Right about that time England's prisons were overflowing. The authorities had nowhere to put all of these people, so they came up with the brilliant idea of sending them to the other side of the world and dumping them in New South Wales. The first time that happened was on January 26, 1788, which was the first settlement of Australia. At that time there were over a thousand people who came to Australia. There was just one chaplain for all those people! He started services there but, particularly with opposition from the officials there, he had only from twenty to a hundred people attending his services on any particular Sabbath day.

This dumping ground for criminals was really the only use of Australia for quite some time, with purely free settlements not

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.*

established in Australia until 1836. In 1848 those who were governing Australia finally managed to stop the transportation of convicts. But that was not until some 100,000 convicts had been brought to Australia. So you can imagine that the European population in Australia was, in fact, predominately criminals.

It is estimated that the Aboriginal population at the time of the first settlement was about 300,000. But with new diseases introduced and, at times, outright persecution of them, the population rapidly declined. The religion of the Aborigines was pagan. It was pantheistic, and it was a religion of constant fear. As far back as 1724, Jonathan Edwards remarked that this was an area where "the devil had reigned quietly from the beginning of the world."

But there was political progress. Australia gained state governments in the late 1800s and became a federation in 1901. This doesn't mean that it became totally independent of Great Britain. There has been a slow progression of independence from Great Britain, but Australia remains part of the Commonwealth (of which Canada, for example, is also a member).

So what about Christianity in Australia? Christianity came to Australia with the European settlement. Initially it was really just the nominal Catholicism and Anglicanism found amongst the Irish and English convicts. But with the start of free settlements, many Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregationalist, and Baptist faiths were also introduced. By the time of the federation of Australia in 1901, it was said that 40% of the population was Anglican, 23% Roman Catholic, 34% other Christian, and only about 1% non-Christian religion. In fact, at the first census in 1911, 96% of the population identified themselves as "Christian." This

would have included much nominal Christianity.

Most of the first churches were established simply when there was a sufficient number of like-minded free settlers to form a congregation. There was no large mission endeavor that occurred in Australia at any time, and indeed there was nothing akin to the Dutch settlement in America, where whole congregations and their ministers migrated together.

Australia opened up its immigration policies in the early to mid-1900s. As a result of this, there was a flood of many types of peoples from many parts of the world, including the Jews, the Eastern Orthodox religions, and, subsequently, the different Asian religions of Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. So there was a very great mix.

And there still is a very great mix of all sorts of different religions in Australia. The constitution of Australia, written in 1901, states that "the Commonwealth of Australia shall not make any law establishing any religion or for imposing any religious observance or for prohibiting the free exercise of any religion, and no religious test shall be required as a qualification for any office of public trust in the Commonwealth." This completely rules out any kind of connection between church and state, but it also paves the way for the religion of humanism, which allows toleration for everything but, in the end, Christianity.

The first Presbyterian in Australia was the assistant surgeon on the very first fleet that arrived in 1788. The first Presbyterian services were held in the mid-1790s, and the first Presbyterian church building was erected in 1809. In 1823, a Presbyterian minister came to the then-called New South Wales and campaigned for the immigration of Protestant Christians. As he looked around on the population,

he saw that the society as a whole was doomed, because of the large percentage of convicts (or those who were descending from them) that made up the population and had no interest in religion whatsoever. He therefore wrote to and visited England and Scotland and called for families to come to Australia to settle there and establish Christian communities.

The Scottish Presbyterians who answered that call were often those who had suffered great hardships at home, both economically and also with the church situation there. So quite a number of Scottish settlers shifted to Australia, and Scottish communities sprang up with a thriving Presbyterianism in some places in Australia. There are still remnants of some of those communities in northern New South Wales, in Sydney, and around the Canberra area even today.

The disruption in Scotland in 1843 had flow-over effects in Australia. There was in Scotland at that time just the one "state" church, the Church of Scotland. I call it a "state" church, but it was really independent, though with ties to the state. The reason I call it the "state" church is that the state was trying to put its influence more and more onto the church. The church resisted this for some time, but there were also ministers who went along with the ideas of the state. The crunch came when the state wanted to force ministers into certain congregations of the Scottish churches. At that point, many of the ministers took exception to this in the General Assembly, and 470 ministers left the main Presbyterian Church of Scotland and formed another Presbyterian denomination. Hence it is called the disruption.

The effects of this flowed over to Australia because of ties that go back to the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. And as a result of that, there were a num-

ber of very small denominations that broke away from the main Presbyterian church in Australia. One of those churches was the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, or the PCEA. That has relevance to our own history.

The general Presbyterian Churches continued, and in 1901, when the Australian states came together in federation, the Presbyterian Churches came together as well. But there was a great disparity in their beliefs. Even though they held to the Westminster Standards as their subordinate standards, when they came together they instituted what they called the Declaratory Act. The Declaratory Act is a statement that those who wish to be ministers or officebearers can sign, expressing that they hold to the Westminster Standards, but that they "declare their conscience" with respect to certain portions of the Standards. As long as they

do not go against the fundamental Christian doctrines, that is, the doctrines that are specifically defined in the creeds, then that would be quite OK and they would be able to be ministers and elders. This, of course, soon opened the door to gross apostasy and was the cause of the Presbyterian Church going downhill at a very rapid rate. Presbyterianism, true Presbyterianism, continued only in very small denominations, one of which was the EPCA.

The state of Christianity in the early to mid-1900s in Australia was that Christianity of any sort was in sad decline. Roman Catholicism was on the rise. It had been, as you remember, 21%. It was 25% by the mid-1900s. And today almost 30% of the population are Roman Catholic. Membership in the mainstream Protestant churches has dropped markedly. And the number of people who professed to have no

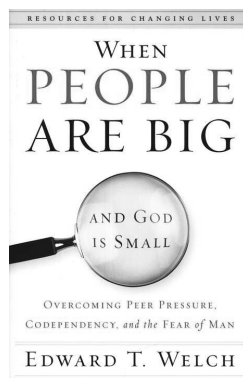
religion whatsoever was increasing. A census revealed that about 10% of the population professed to be atheists.

In addition, the ravages of heresy were having a devastating effect on the doctrine of reputedly conservative churches. Higher criticism was leading to the preaching of doubt upon many passages of Scripture, particularly creation and miracles. Arminianism had taken hold in many of the Protestant churches, and there was little else to hear but the message of man's free will and man's own ability to make himself better. If there was any gospel preached at all, it was the gospel of "making a decision for Christ." There were also those who saw the deadness of the churches, and they traveled around doing gospel crusades, with emotion-charged messages encouraging a moral life.

... to be continued. 

Bring the books...

Rev. William Langerak



When People are Big and God is Small: Overcoming Peer Pressure, Codependency, and the Fear of Man, by Edward T. Welch. P&R Publishing, 1997. ISBN 978-0-87552-600-3. 240 pages. Soft-

cover. \$14.99. Available at Reformed Book Outlet, or online at christianbook.com and the publisher at prpbooks.com. Reviewed by Barb Dykstra.

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

Whom do you fear? Whom do you strive to please? God's Word instructs us to fear him alone. Proverbs 19:23 teaches us: "The fear of the LORD tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied." To fear God is to live to serve Him alone, to hold Him in reverence and awe. It is when our greatest joy is to please Him and our greatest sorrow is to displease Him. But we are so often more concerned about what men think of us than we are about fearing God.

Edward Welch wrote *When People are Big and God is Small* to confront readers with the many ways we often fear man more than God. The fear of man is when one is controlled by whomever or whatever he believes can give him what he thinks he needs.

It is summarized thus: "We replace God with people. Instead of a biblically guided fear of the Lord, we fear others."

Welch's book is divided into two sections: "How and Why We Fear Others," in which he identifies the ways and the reasons why we fear others, and "Overcoming the Fear of Others," in which he explains how growing in the fear of the Lord will be the answer to fearing man less.

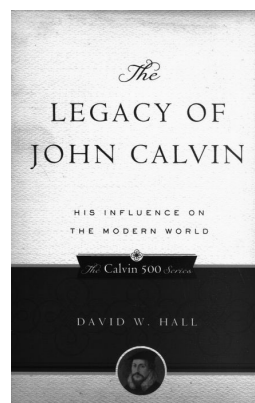
Don't think fearing man is a problem in your life? Take a look at just a few questions Welch asks: "Do you find that it is hard to say no even when wisdom indicates that you should? You are a 'people-pleaser,' another euphemism for the fear of man. Are you jealous of other people? You are controlled by them and their

possessions. Do other people make you angry or depressed? If so, they are probably the controlling center of your life. Have you noticed times when you cover up with lies, justifications, blaming, avoiding, or changing the subject? If so, you want to look better before people." And yet more subtle ways we fear man: "Do you avoid people? Even though you might not say that you need people you are still controlled by them." Feel good about yourself when you compare your success in life with others? Your life is still defined by other people rather than God. The author explains how, when these things are true in our lives, we have made people our idols. "As in all idolatry, the idol we choose to worship soon owns us.... It tells us how to think, what to feel, and how to act. It tells us what to wear, it tells us to laugh at the dirty joke.... We never expect that using people to meet our desires leaves us enslaved to them."

Welch leads the reader through Scripture, pointing out saints who struggled with the fear of man (Abraham and Peter) and those whose fear of God was strong (Daniel). Fear of man is something we do 'naturally' since the fall of Adam and Eve. Our culture's cure is increased self-love, 'self esteem.' Welch points out that this is actually the disease. He also points out in depth the errors of Christian psychologists who say: "There is a God-given need to be loved that is born into every human infant. It is a legitimate need that must be met from cradle to grave." And in identifying our *true* needs (not what we *think* we need), Welch also examines prayers recorded in Scripture (Matt. 6:9-13, John 17:15, 17) to find the inspired calls of the needy heart.

There are a few things in the book that the Reformed reader will object to (inviting the reader to fear God, and *not* stressing the

need of preaching to grow in the fear of the Lord), but the book is valuable in leading the reader to examine the question of who it is whom he fears. "The fear of man bringeth a snare, but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe" (Prov. 29:25). To fear God more we must know Him more and delight in Him more. In order to do that, we must be reading God's Word daily. "When a heart is being filled with the greatness of God, there is less room for the question: 'What are people going to think of me?' By God's grace, we can grow in knowing his holiness, and this knowledge will both expel the people-idols from our lives and leave us less prone to being consumed with ourselves." ■



The Legacy of John Calvin: His Influence on the Modern World, by David W. Hall. P&R Publishing, 2008. ISBN 978-1-59638-085-1. 112 pp. Paperback. \$12.99. Available online at christianbook.com

and the publisher at prpbooks.com. Reviewed by Rev. Douglas J. Kuiper.

Commemorating the 500th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin (July 10, 1509), Presbyterian and Reformed is publishing several books in its "The Calvin 500 Series." David W. Hall, pastor of Midway Presbyterian Church in Powder Springs, Georgia, is both the general editor of the series and the author of this book.

The book's argument is that the world as we know it would not be the same had God not raised up John Calvin. The argu-

ment is not simply that the *church* would not be the same; the book notes the great influence Calvin also had on *society*.

Following a two-page chronology of Calvin's life, Hall notes ten ways in which modern culture is different because of John Calvin. As one would expect, these ten ways do include ways in which Calvin worked for reform in the church. Regarding the *church's official work*, he instituted measures by which the poor would be cared for. Regarding *church government*, he worked so that the church would be free of hierarchy and state control and could govern herself. He worked to translate *church music* into the common language of the day, resulting in the Genevan Psalter.

In addition, Hall notes Calvin's influence on the *Christian life* as one of dedication to God, regulated by God's law. His influence was felt in the area of *education*, largely because of and through the Genevan Academy. Calvin's influence on *civil government* is still felt in our own country, in which people elect their government, and in which the legislative body consists of two houses, both of which must approve a measure before it becomes law. Calvin taught that every man should view his *work* as a calling from God, and busy himself in it to God's glory. Calvin's view of *economics* was God-centered. "Wherever Calvinism spread, so did a love for free markets and capitalism" (29). And Calvin was a user and promoter of the latest technology in getting the word out—the *publishing press*. This helped his influence spread greatly in his own day.

In an epilogue to this first section, Hall summarizes how the American colonies and Western democracy and civilization adopted many of Calvin's ideas.

The second section of the book is a 40-page biography. This account of Calvin's life dem-

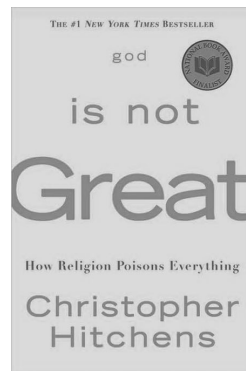
onstrates the points made in the first section, regarding Calvin's influence in many areas. The point is made that "his reforms began in the church and only then radiated outward" (59). The epilogue to this section emphasizes the *humility* of this servant of God, a trait that his enemies have not always acknowledged in him.

The final section of the book contains tributes to Calvin by men of bygone years such as Charles Spurgeon, J.C. Ryle, John Wesley, and D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, as well as men living today such as John Piper, Steven Lawson, and J.I. Packer. All these men come from different segments of Protestantism, not only that which we would call specifically "Reformed"; so the point is made that Calvin's influence is felt by Protestants of all stripes. The final tribute, by a Roman Catholic (!), I found to be rather vague.

The book's main weakness is the fact that it does not devote even one section to Calvin's influence on the church's doctrine. The section regarding his influence on the Christian life does allude to this influence, and several tributes refer with appreciation to Calvin's teachings regarding predestination. But Calvin's influence on the church's doctrine is never made a point in itself; it is only woven into the other points the author makes. One would expect that in a book on Calvin's legacy, this point would be singled out more than it has been here. Does the church no longer appreciate the work of God through John Calvin in leading us to a deeper knowledge of the truth?

Still, the reader who thought that Calvin's legacy was *only* doctrinal will be convinced after reading this book that it is much broader than that. This book is not difficult to read, and is recommended for any and all who

desire to have a brief summary of Calvin's life, work, and legacy. ■



amazon.com (\$14.59). Reviewed by Kevin G. Vink.

Through faith we understand the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear (Heb. 11:3).

Faith is the refusal to panic—D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones.

The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God (Ps. 14:1a).

I must admit, I had never heard of Mr. Hitchens before reading his book. In our circles, the tendency is to focus on the evils of Rome, free-willism, the Federal Vision movement, and other such menaces that threaten our distinctively Reformed views. After reading this book I wonder if more time should not be given to misguided charlatans like Hitchens and his friends.

Who is Christopher Hitchens? He is an avowed atheist who dismisses religion as man-made—God didn't create man, but man created God (or, if you will, an idea called 'god'). Perhaps many of us would dismiss this in the same way Hitchens dismisses religion, as senseless, mindless drivel. Why waste time with such a man and his nonsense? Because Hitchens' book was on the New York Times best-seller list for many weeks and represents a

God is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything, by Christopher Hitchens. Emblem Editions, 2008. ISBN 0771041438. 320 pp. Paperback. Available at most large bookstores and online at

growing spirit in our society that I am convinced we must deal with sooner or later.

Hitchens spares no one in his rant against organized religion. Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims alike are given no quarter. He reduces his objections to these four points:

1. Religion wholly misrepresents the origins of man and the cosmos.

2. Because of this original error, religion manages to combine the maximum of servility with the maximum of solipsism (a word Hitchens is in love with and means "my mind is the only thing that I know exists").

3. Religion is both the result and the cause of dangerous sexual repression.

4. Religion is ultimately grounded on wish-thinking.

Hitchens contends that "serious ethical dilemmas are better handled by Shakespeare and Tolstoy and Schiller and Dostoyevsky and George Eliot than in the mythical morality tales of the holy books." And as far as he is concerned, the Ten Commandments are over-estimated in importance, really unnecessary and trite—everyone knows murder and adultery are bad things. In addition, they demand the impossible. Hitchens: "One may be forcibly restrained from wicked actions...but to forbid people from contemplating them is too much." Such statements run rampant through the book. And the author is a serious proponent of the theory of evolution and "Ockham's razor," the notion we cannot assert that for which we have no proof. In Hitchens' view, proof is achieved only by means of science, reason, and research, while religion is basically a travesty of science and reason.

In fact, the author takes great delight in quoting what the church father Tertullian once said: *Credo quia absurdum*

(I believe because it is absurd). Hitchens argues that "if one must have faith in order to believe something...then the likelihood of that something having any truth or value is considerably diminished. The harder work of inquiry, proof, and demonstration is infinitely more rewarding, and has confronted us with findings far more 'miraculous' and 'transcendent' than any theology." Even more alarming is his answer to the question, "What will you say if you die and are confronted with your Maker?" Hitchens' glib response: "Imponderable Sir, I presume from some if not all of your many reputations that you might prefer honest and convinced unbelief to the hypocritical and self-interested affection of faith or the smoking tributes of bloody altars. But I would not count on it."


As you might imagine, this is not an easy book to read. Besides the actual content, the author's continual references to people

like James Madison, Thomas Paine, Voltaire, Charles Darwin, Socrates, and a host of others is somewhat tiresome. And his sophomoric references to Christians as stupid, idiots, and in one case, "boobies," does in no way enhance his standing or arguments with the readers, no matter what their convictions may be. In some sense you are led to believe that it's also personal, as Hitchens is a good friend of Salman Rushdie. He charges that it was not just crazed Muslims who threatened Rushdie's life, but that religious leaders from all major faiths agreed Rushdie had it coming. Hitchens complains of continual threats and phone calls as to his demise here on earth and after, as if we are to feel sorry for the plight he is in due to his militant atheism.

Being brought up a Christian, I find it hard to believe that Hitchens honestly holds the firm convictions he has laid out in this book. I fear this will end very badly for him.

Hitchens does make one concession. His own prior allegiance to revolutionary Marxism makes it possible for him somewhat to empathize with us: "To some extent," he says, "I know what you are going through." Nice, I feel much better now.

Finally, Hitchens just isn't a likable character regardless of his beliefs. One look at his picture on the rear sleeve was enough to convince me of his purported romance with nicotine and alcohol (the daily intake of which he has been known to boast was enough "to kill or stun the average mule.")

Surprisingly (or not), I was asked by a number of people why I would even consider reading this book. As reprehensible as the book is, I will use the author's last sentence in the book to respond. "To clear the mind for this project, it has become necessary to know the enemy, and to prepare to fight it." On that, we can at least agree. 

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Evangelism Activities

We begin this first "News" of the new year by finishing some business going back to our churches' and our missions' Reformation Day lectures sponsored in October.

The Pittsburgh Mission arranged for Rev. Kenneth Koole, pastor of the Grandville, MI PRC, to speak at their October 31st Reformation lecture. Rev. Koole spoke on "The Reformation and the Christian Family."

Rev. Richard Smit, the pastor of Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada, spoke at a lecture sponsored by Immanuel on Octo-

ber 31. Rev. Smit spoke on "The Antithesis."

The Loveland, CO PRC sponsored a lecture on Reformation Day, October 31. Prof. Robert Decker spoke on "The Foolishness of Preaching: The Heart of Reformation Preaching."

The Evangelism Committee of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI sponsored a lecture October 31 at their church. Prof. Ronald Cammenga spoke on "The World and Life View of the Reformation."

Prof. Herman Hanko spoke on behalf of the Evangelism Committee of the South Holland, IL PRC on October 31. The lecture, held at Cornerstone PRC, was entitled, "The Reformed Ecumenical Movement: Was the Reformation a Mistake?"

Rev. Angus Stewart, pastor of the Covenant PRC, our sister church in Ballymena, Northern Ireland, spoke twice on the topic, "The Reformation's Teaching on the Church." On October 30 Rev. Stewart spoke at the Portadown Town Hall, and then again on October 31 at the Ballymena Protestant Hall.

The Evangelism Committee of the South Holland, IL PRC recently distributed to each family in their congregation the informative DVD entitled, "Introduction to the PRC," with the hope that members would pass it on to relatives and neighbors who they thought would be interested in learning about our denomination. The Evangelism Committee also added a link to the video on their church's website, so that it can

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

be attached to an email and sent out.

A recent Hudsonville, MI PRC bulletin provided information from their Evangelism Committee that their church services can now be heard live through their church website. Visit hudsonvilleprc.org for more information.

Sister-Church Activities

For some time now the Covenant PRC in Ballymena, NI has labored in the town of Limerick, Republic of Ireland. Those labors have progressed to the point that the Limerick Reformed Fellowship began having two meetings each Lord's Day, starting November 30.

Congregation Activities

On Sunday morning, November 23, Rev. Ronald Van Overloop was installed as the second pastor of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI. Prof. Barry Gritters led that service, preaching from the Word of God found in II Corinthians 11:2-3, under the theme, "A Pastor's Jealousy for the Church's Purity." That evening the newly-installed Rev. Van Overloop led his first service as pastor at Grace, preaching from II Corinthians 4:6-7, under the theme, "Great Treasure in Earthen Vessels." This service was followed by a welcome program with special music provided by the choir, Sunday School, young people, and others. We pray that Rev. Van Overloop, his wife, Sue, and daughter, Michelle, will experience God's richest blessing while they serve the cause of Christ at Grace.

With winter weather now a reality in West Michigan, it is interesting to note that two of our churches there are offering a valet parking system for those who have some difficulty getting to and from their cars at church. The Transportation Committee of Faith in Jenison began offer-

ing the service on December 7. And elderly members of Grace could sign up to have their cars warmed up and scraped off after church services, also beginning on December 7.

The ladies of two of our congregations in Canada enjoyed their annual cookie exchange in early December. The Covenant Ladies Circle of First PRC in Edmonton, AB enjoyed their exchange on December 4, while the ladies of Immanuel in Lacombe enjoyed their exchange on December 5.

During the month of November, the congregations of both Georgetown and Hudsonville, MI PRC's were given the opportunity to share what the Lord had given them by way of a food drive for others in their church family. Members could place nonperishable food items in their church kitchen, or gift certificates in the collection plate, by Sunday, November 30, for distribution in early December by their deacons.

Mission Activities

A delegation from Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI, the calling church for Missionary Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma and the work in Pittsburgh, PA, visited the Mission the last weekend in November. Rev. Arie den Hartog preached for both services on


November 30, and the delegation also scheduled time to meet with Rev. and Mary Bruinsma, as well as the members of the Fellowship.

The recent DMC delegation's visit to the Heritage PR Fellowship of Sioux Falls was very enjoyable, and the men were pleased with the evidence of God's blessing upon the work there, both spiritually and numerically. The Fellowship consists of a group of nine families, who meet for worship in the Holiday Inn in Sioux Falls. They are energetic in their witness in the area and continue to grow in faith. They are also very appreciative of the diligent labors of their missionary-pastor, Rev. Allen Brummel, and family. If your travel takes you to that area, be sure to worship with them.

Minister Activities

Rev. Rodney Kleyn declined the call he had been considering to serve as the first pastor of the Calvary PRC in Hull, IA.

Missionary-pastor, Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma declined the call extended to him from our Doon, IA PRC to serve as foreign missionary to the Berean PRC in Manila, the Philippines.

On December 3 the Byron Center, MI PRC extended a call to Rev. Eriks to serve as their church's next pastor. 

Announcements

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

January 11, 2009 marks the 35th wedding anniversary for **WESLEY and GLENDA KOOPS.**

Happy Anniversary, Dad and Mom! Thank you for your example of integrity and godliness, your heart for the hurting and unsaved, and your strength and conviction to follow Christ no matter the sacrifice. Your commitment to Deuteronomy 6:5-9 has blessed our lives. We have learned from you what it truly means to live for Christ.

- * Peter, Chera, and Ellie Rizk
- * Annise Koops
- * Luke Koops
- * Ginelle Koops

Holland, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of the PRC of South Holland express Christian sympathy to Mrs. Eunice VanBaren, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Koontz and family, and Mr. and Mrs. Frank VanBaren and family in the death of their husband, father, grandfather, and great grandfather,

MR. MICHAEL VAN BAREN.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever" (Psalm 23:6).

Rev. N. Langerak, President
Bert Worries, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council of Grandville PRC expresses its Christian sympathy to Tom and Gretine Bodbyl and to Dan and Anna Mae Bodbyl regarding the death of Gretine and Anna Mae's father,

MR. BERNIE MEELKER.

May the families find comfort in the words of Hebrews 12:22-24a, "But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant."

Rev. K. Koole, President
H. DeVries, Asst. Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA express their sympathy to Mrs. Anna Mae Meelker and her family at the passing of

BERNIE MEELKER.

Q. What is thy only comfort in life and death?

A. That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ... (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 1).

Rev. Martin VanderWal, President
Chris Feenstra, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mary-Martha Society of Hope PRC in Redlands expresses its deepest sympathy to fellow members Anna Mae Meelker, Janine Meelker, Karen Meelker, Bonnie Meelker, and Deanna Meelker and their families in the loss of their dear husband, father-in-law, and grandfather,

MR. BERNIE MEELKER.

May the family be comforted by these words found in Deuteronomy 33:27: "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

Rev. Martin VanderWal, President
Jeanne Karsemeyer, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Fellowship of Hope PRC Redlands extends their Christian sympathy to fellow members Berend and Janine Meelker, Henry and Karen Meelker, and Gerrit and Bonnie Meelker in the death of their father,

MR. BERNIE MEELKER.

May their hope and comfort rest in the Lord.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3).

Rev. Martin VanderWal, President
Linda Smit, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Southeast PRC express their Christian sympathy to Mark and Cindy Ophoff and their children, David, Brad, and Dan, in the death of their mother and grandmother, and especially to Joe Van Kampen in the death of his loving, faithful wife,

GWEN VAN KAMPEN.

May Joe and his family find their comfort in God's word in John 11:25, 26, "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

Rev. William Langerak, President
Ron Kooienga, Assistant Clerk

Reformed Witness Hour

January 2009

Date	Topic	Text
January 4	"Ye Are the Light of the World"	Matthew 5:14-16
January 11	"Crowning Our Families with Glory"	Proverbs 17:6
January 18	"The Power and Necessity of Preaching"	Romans 1:16
January 25	"Strive to Enter in at the Strait Gate"	Luke 13:24