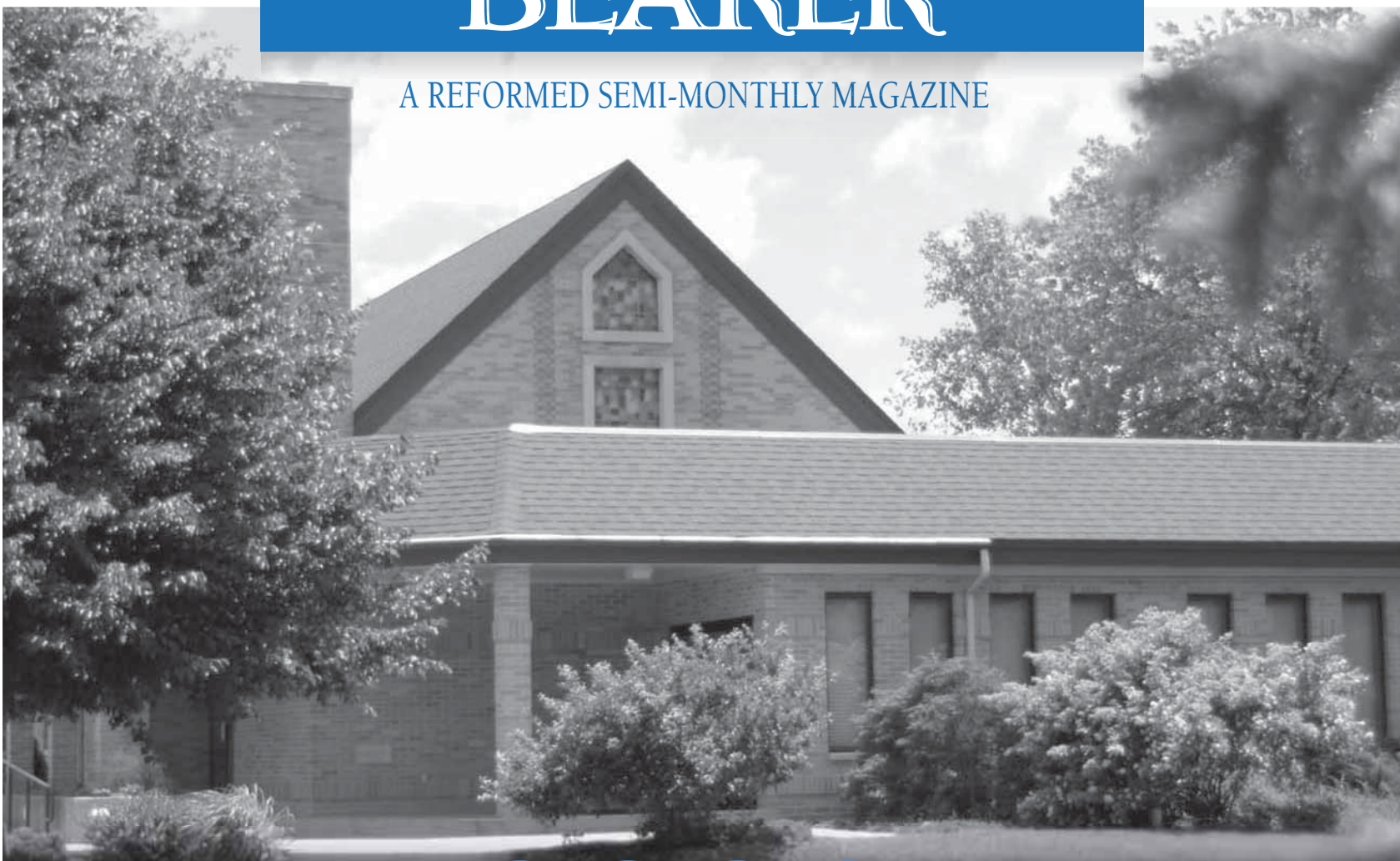


THE *July 2008* STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE



PRC **2008** HIGHLIGHTS



Volume 84 ♦ Number 18

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front cover: *Delegates to Synod (l. to r.):*
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Lou Regnerus, Rev. J. Mahtani, Rev. R. Miersma,
Rev. N. Langerak, Pete VanDerSchaaf, Rev. D. Kleyn,
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Picture layout by Jeff Steenholdt

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

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SUBSCRIPTION PRICE

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

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

Website for RFPA: www.rfpa.org

Website for PRC: www.prca.org

Meditation

Rev. James Slopsema

Buying the Truth

Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.

Proverbs 23:23

Solomon addressed these words to his son. They apply therefore first to the children and young people of the covenant.

Rev. Slopsema is pastor of First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan and president of Synod 2007.

This is the text of the Presynodical Sermon, delivered on June 9, 2008 in Hope PRC.

But these words apply also to every member of the church, to every family in the church, to every congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and finally to every ecclesiastical body of the church—including this synod.

There is a twofold calling set forth in this passage.

First, we are to buy the truth. Those who buy the truth also buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding. The truth comes with a price, and the price may be high. But the truth will always be worth the price we pay.

Secondly, we are not to sell the truth. We may be able to get quite a bit for the truth, but

whatever we get in exchange for the truth will never compensate for the loss of it.

◆◆◆ ◆◆◆ ◆◆◆

A glorious truth!

Truth is reality. Truth stands opposed to the lie. The lie is that which is fictitious, but often passes for reality.

If we will know truth, we must begin with Jehovah God; for God is the God of truth. "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deut. 32:4).

That Jehovah God is truth means several things.

It means, first, that Jehovah is the one true God. There are many false gods (idols), but there is only one that really and truly is God. He is Jehovah, the great I AM.

That Jehovah God is truth means, second, that He is the source of all truth. He has perfect understanding of all reality. He has perfect understanding of Himself. He has perfect understanding of the entire universe and of all that transpires in it. This is because He has eternally willed it, created it, and controls it.

God has revealed to us the truth about these things. He has revealed the truth somewhat dimly in nature, and more fully and clearly in Scripture. Especially in Scripture, God has revealed the truth about Himself, about the creation, about the true nature of man, about His purpose to save a people in Jesus Christ, as well as the way of salvation. He has not revealed all things. Our minds are not capable of understanding all. But He has revealed all that is necessary for us to know in order that we might serve Him and find salvation in His Son.

The glorious revelation of the truth of Scripture is also summarized beautifully in our Reformed creeds.

The revelation of the truth is important. Without it we would not know the truth. We would not know God, the origin of the universe, the true nature of sin, or the salvation of God in Jesus Christ. Those who reject this revelation are left to follow their own imaginations into the most foolish ideas imaginable.

Included in this truth are the three things mentioned in this proverb—wisdom, instruction, and understanding.

Before we consider each of these specifically, we ought to take note of especially two things about them in general.

First, these are not additional things that we must buy and not

sell, but are rather included in the truth. The truth of God's word is wisdom, instruction, and understanding.

Second, these three things make the truth extremely valuable. What great treasures are wisdom, instruction, and understanding! "Wisdom is better than rubies" (Prov. 8:11). "How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!" (Prov. 16:16). Because wisdom, instruction, and understanding are an integral part of the truth of Scripture, the truth is extremely valuable.

Let's consider these three aspects of the truth.

First, there is wisdom. Wisdom is the right use of knowledge that enables us to prosper. Surely the truth of God is wisdom. The truth of God not only imparts knowledge about spiritual realities of life, but also shows how to make good use of these realities so that we prosper. Thus, for example, the truth not only teaches us about salvation in Jesus Christ but also shows us how to apply that knowledge to our lives in the midst of this world so that in Jesus Christ we can avoid the judgment of God and come to the enjoyment of life eternal. In that context, the truth of God also shows us how in Christ we can prosper under God's blessings in our marriages, in our homes, in society, in our work, in our pleasure, and in every part of life.

Then there is instruction. The word here is really the word for verbal correction and chastisement. The truth of God in Scripture corrects and chastens us. It does this by pointing us to our errors, rebuking us, and calling us to repentance.

Finally, there is understanding. This word emphasizes the idea of insight, of being able to distinguish one thing from another and to see how they relate. The truth of God gives us penetrating insight into many

things: ourselves, our problems, the world, and all things we need to know for salvation.

What a fabulous treasure is the truth of God.



A necessary purchase!

This proverb speaks of buying the truth.

The word "buy" is used in two ways in the Proverbs.

It has the original meaning of acquiring. In this sense it is used a number of times in the Proverbs with respect to wisdom and knowledge. Thus, for example, "get wisdom, get understanding; forget it not" (Prov. 4:5). "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all they getting get understanding" (Prov. 4:7).

From this idea also comes the concept of acquiring something for a price. This is the meaning here, as is evident from the mention of selling.

What does it mean to buy the truth?

Obviously, we do not buy the truth as we buy merchandise with money, or perhaps the loyalty of others with favors we show them.

Buying the truth must be understood figuratively.

To buy the truth means first to acquire the truth.

That involves several things. We acquire the truth by coming to a thorough knowledge of the truth as revealed in Scripture. But acquiring the truth also includes embracing the truth with a believing heart, so that we embrace the God of Scripture and the salvation He provides in Jesus Christ. Finally, we acquire the truth when in faith we also embrace the wisdom, correction, and understanding of the truth.

To buy the truth means, second, that we acquire the truth no matter what the cost. It will cost a great deal to acquire the truth. This cost includes the time

and energy necessary to come to know the truth. Acquiring the truth also requires sound preaching. This in turn requires a great deal of expense to train ministers and provide for their living, so that they can devote their lives to the Word of God. Acquiring the truth requires Christian schools, which also are very costly. To acquire the truth will sometimes also cost us the friendship and acceptance of men, jobs or careers, earthly possessions, and perhaps even our lives, as the truth shows itself in our confession and walk. To buy the truth means to acquire, embrace, and live the truth no matter what the cost.

It is our calling to buy the truth.

Many refuse to buy the truth because of the cost.

This is true of many young people, who consider the cost of time to learn the truth, and the cost of friendships for living the truth, to be too much. This is true of many homes and families that consider the cost of supporting the gospel ministry, of paying for Christian school tuition, and of lost job opportunities, to be too much. This is true of many churches that consider the cost of smallness and lack of recognition to be too much.

How foolish. Whatever we are required to pay for the truth can never begin to compare in value to the benefits we derive from the truth.

By the grace of God the Protestant Reformed Churches have bought the truth in her 80-year history. She came into existence because of her insistence on the truth of the sovereign, particular grace of God as taught by the Scriptures and the Reformed confessions. Over the years she has maintained the truth of God's grace and developed these truths, especially as they pertain to the covenant. Her members have over the generations of her existence passed that truth down

to each new generation and have lived the truth.

And the price has been high. Endless hours and much money have been spent by parents and grandparents to instruct the covenant seed of the church in the home and the Christian school. Endless hours have been spent by officebearers to instruct the church in the truth. A great deal of money and effort have been expended to maintain a Seminary that can provide our churches with sound preaching. Because of the truth our denomination is small and unnoticed in the church world. Many are not interested in us because of the truth we maintain. Others have left because of our insistence on the truth of God's sovereign, unconditional grace.

Let the 2008 Synod be deeply conscious of this in its work. Let the synod reflect what our churches have done in the past with the precious truth of God. The PRC have bought the truth over the decades and even paid a high cost. Let this synod also reflect that by continuing to buy the truth. Essentially all that this synod has on its agenda involves the truth: missions, Seminary, contact with other churches, appeals concerning the education of our children. Let this synod take her stand on and for the truth of Scripture as set forth in our Reformed creeds. And let this synod not count the cost. Let this synod not only reflect the heritage of the PRC of buying the truth, but let this synod also show leadership in this all important calling to buy the truth.



A necessary warning!

This proverb also speaks of selling the truth. To sell the truth means to give up the truth, to abandon it for the lie, and to do so for a price.

Once we have bought the truth, the devil would buy it back. He works unceasingly to

take the truth away from the church and her members, so that they embrace and confess the lie rather than the truth. And he will pay a good price for the truth.

We see many that have sold the truth or are in the process of selling it.


Many churches have done this. They have sold such truths as the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture, the divinity of Christ, creation, Calvinism, and sovereign grace. The price they received in exchange has been recognition in the church and secular world, acceptance, and numbers.

Many families and individuals have also sold the truth. They have sold the truth of the Sabbath day, marriage, submission to authority in the work place, headship of the husband, the honorable place of the woman in the home—to mention just a few. Often they have done this, while the churches of which they are members were also busy selling the truth. The price they have received is good jobs, high standard of living, and acceptance in the world.

But we must not sell the truth.

The truth has been given to our churches by God as a precious heritage. By the grace of God we have preserved the truth among us during the 80 years of our existence. Let us never forget the price that our forefathers have paid for this truth. Let us be careful not to sell this truth, no matter how much the devil may give us in exchange.

And let the synod be careful not to sell the truth or to make decisions that may incline our churches to sell the truth.

There is nothing that we can ever get in exchange for the truth that can at all compare in value to the truth. Sell the truth and you sell wisdom, instruction, and understanding. Sell the truth and you sell the very salvation of God in Jesus Christ! 

Synod 2008: "The Synod of Article 21"

Every now and again a synod is remembered for one particular issue. The 1981 Synod in Holland, MI, is known to many as the "Baptism on the Mission Field Synod." The 1987 Synod in Hudsonville, MI, is remembered as the "Marriage Synod." There have been others. The unusually thick Acts of Synod taking more than its share of space on one's shelf will bring back memories of other synods where one issue overshadowed the others. Synod 2008 of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, held in Hope PRC, Walker, MI, was another such synod.

To many, Synod 2008 will be known as "The Synod of Article 21," where the sharp differences of opinion on the Church Order and its application were debated and decided.

Because of this dominance of the one issue, other important issues, which should be revealed in the sun's full light, lie in the shadows. Let me highlight some of them and call the churches and the friends of the PRC to rejoice over them, too.

So much more than Article 21

This year the Lord gave to the churches another candidate for the ministry of the Word and sacraments, Mr. Heath Bleyenberg. Mr. Bleyenberg is a son of the Edgerton, MN, PRC. As he witnessed to synod and to a goodly number of visitors in the last hour of his two-day public examination, he heard and heeded God's call to prepare for the ministry after he had worked for a few years as a mechanical engineer. Now the brother has a very dif-

ferent aspiration. May the Lord make a place for this brother, whose examination, synod declared, revealed that he has the gifts necessary to serve as a faithful pastor in the churches. He is eligible for call on July 12. The conclusion of the blessing was the stirring graduation speech by Prof. Engelsma, "The Courage of the Minister," heard joyfully by a large gathering of Mr. Bleyenberg's friends and members of the PRC. Later that week, synod admitted two new students to the seminary: Mr. Stefan Griess, another son of our Loveland congregation who prepares for the ministry; and Mr. David Mahtani, whose twin brother began seminary last year, and whose father, Rev. J. Mahtani, was delegate to synod this year. Nothing may overshadow these great blessing of God to the churches.

Nor should it be missed that Synod 2008 approved of establishing a corresponding relationship with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Australia, whose warm friendship with the PRCA began already thirty-three years ago. Yet to be approved by the EPC, this relationship will include the exchange of observers at the broader assemblies, exchange of all the official documents of both denominations, committee visits, and conferences. From the PRC's side, it also includes an invitation to the EPC to send their students to our seminary for training, tuition-free. What synod did not approve was that seminary students from the EPC be allowed to speak a word of edification in the PRC congregations when the seminary professors would license them. As much as the

PRC and EPC are alike, Synod judged the differences between the two denominations too significant for this: "Allowing on PR pulpits seminary students who differ with the PRC on such significant doctrines as divorce and remarriage and the regulative principle in its applications to such matters as musical accompaniment could be divisive in the Protestant Reformed Churches." The importance of public practice preaching for seminary training did not outweigh the importance of maintaining unity and peace in the PRC. We pray that the EPC brothers and sisters, who also value unity, will understand this.

It must not be lost in the shadows either that Synod 2008 approved the emeritation (retirement), effective September 1, of Professor David Engelsma, who served the churches faithfully for 45 years. The first 25 years were in two pastorates; the last 20 years as seminary professor. By his preaching ministry, by his many books, by his lengthy editorship of this magazine, and by his share of instruction of the eighteen PRC ministers (and not a few non-PRC ministers) who graduated since 1988, the Lord used this brother for the good of the church of Jesus Christ, and not only in the PRC. Synod expressed thanks to God for Prof. Engelsma's devotion to the churches in so many different ways, and expressed the hope that God would maintain the brother's strength so that he could continue in writing and preaching. Prof. Engelsma plans to maintain an office at the seminary, which his colleagues appreciate.

Let light shine also on the good work of the three home-missionaries approved by Synod 2008: missionaries W. Bruinsma (Pittsburgh), A. Brummel (Sioux Falls), and T. Miersma (Spokane). Significant to this writer, but almost unnoticed from Missionary Bruinsma's report, was that he had found "extremely valuable" a course on the history of missions he audited at the RP seminary in Pittsburgh. May God bless all the missionaries and their families!

For too long, in our judgment, the foreign mission work in the Philippines has awaited a missionary to carry on the labors of Rev. A. Spriensma. Now, Synod 2008 approved, as a *standard* manner of working on foreign fields, that *two* missionaries work together. If the Berean PRC in the Philippines approves, the calling church (Doon, IA) and the Foreign Mission Committee will seek to have two missionaries work together in that land. (If the Lord wills, by the time this issue arrives in your mail, the present writer will be preaching and lecturing in the Philippines, accompanied by the Filipino student in our seminary, Mr. Vernon Ibe, and his wife Melody.)

Even synod's *rejection* of a couple of significant proposals should be noted by the churches. The Theological School Committee (TSC)—synod's committee to oversee the work of the seminary—proposed a significant remodeling of our seminary building. Encouraged by large gifts to the seminary, the TSC thoroughly investigated a number of possible changes to the seminary building to enhance its looks but especially its functionality. After watching an impressive presentation by the TSC's building committee, synod rejected the proposal. The one ground was the significant rule of synod that "No proposals of importance shall be presented to synod that have not appeared on

the Agenda, so that consistories and classes may have opportunity for previous deliberation." The delegates had no opportunity in advance to study the matter. The rule protects the churches from proposals that have not been carefully studied *by all parties involved*. Apart from this rule, the proposal may well have been approved, and partly because funding was not through higher synodical assessments but through individual gifts.

Synod also rejected an overture that proposed adding procedures to the Church Order that would regulate the discipline of unfaithful members who are not *confessing* members. A study committee was appointed last year to bring advice on this significant matter. Synod adopted the special committee's advice to reject the overture because 1) it essentially, but improperly, equated excommunication (the discipline of confessing members) with "erasure" (the discipline of non-confessing members); 2) because "a specific *procedure* is not necessary for the correct practice of discipline to take place;" and 3) because "each case must be judged on its own merits, depending especially on the knowledge and level of rebellion on the part of the baptized individual involved." Synod reminded the churches of some old decisions on the subject taken by the Christian Reformed Church in the years 1896, 1918, and 1926. Clerks of PRC consistories would do well to photocopy the page when the Acts of Synod is printed (or find them in the Agenda, pages 286, 287), and distribute copies to all the elders.

Many other important decisions were made over the course of six long days of deliberation and voting. By the good work of our faithful Stated Clerk, Mr. Don Doezeema, the Acts of Synod will appear soon. You can read all the decisions there. For good partici-

pation in the life of the church, all of us ought to do that.

"The Synod of Article 21"

But what overshadowed these important decisions was the difficult work of synod as it treated five appeals from individuals against decisions of Classis East. Synod sustained only one of the appeals. All of them related—directly or indirectly—to Article 21 of the Church Order.

Any attempt to *explain* synod risks misrepresenting synod's decisions themselves. But simply quoting the decisions is not helpful, either. I am confident that readers will study the decisions when the Acts of Synod appears, and compare them with the explanations here, which, it must be admitted, cannot do justice to all the appeals and all the issues.

The PRC's Church Order, Article 21, which every officebearer promises to abide by, says: "The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant."

Although some of the appeals wanted to make (and, in fact, did make) the issue homeschooling *itself*; and although much discussion of the issue both within and without the denomination assumes that the issue is homeschooling itself; the fact is that homeschooling per se was not the issue. The issue rather was the matter of an officebearer who had withdrawn his children from the existing good Christian schools because of criticisms of the schools. It must be clear: the essential issue was not *any member* homeschooling his children; the issue was an *officebearer* homeschooling. It must be clear: the issue was not an officebearer homeschooling his children *where no good Christian school was available*; the issue was an officebearer who withdrew his children from the existing good Christian

school without giving adequate explanation to the congregation.

The history of the case

After examining the matter, the consistory of the minister approved his actions and notified the congregation. Protests against this approval were lodged with the consistory by members of the congregation. When the protestants did not receive satisfaction, they appealed to Classis East.

Classis East did not sustain the appeals but, over the course of some months, did make important decisions with regard to an officebearer homeschooling when there are good Christian schools available. These decisions include: 1) Article 21 is binding on all officebearers in the PRC. 2) The article mandates consistories to see to it that there are good Christian schools maintained by the community of Reformed believers, and to see to it that the parents of the congregation have their children instructed there according to the demands of the covenant. 3) The article refers, historically, to parental Christian day schools, not home schools (a protest was eventually lodged against this decision). 4) An officebearer who does not send his children to the available good Christian schools, and does not give valid reason to the satisfaction of the consistory cannot effectively fulfill the duties of an officebearer required by Article 21: he cannot promote the existing good Christian schools when his own children are elsewhere (see #2 above). 5) If he cannot use the good Christian schools, the pastor's conscience is not to be decisive; but he must have good reasons, judged by the consistory.

These basic positions of Classis East the synod did not modify.

Protests against the decisions of Classis came from two sides of their position.

First, in the course of their decisions, Classis East maintained that "homeschooling falls within the area of Christian liberty." Classis made this statement because one early protest asked the consistory to *require* the officebearer to use the good Christian schools. Classis judged that it would be wrong to *require* a man to act against his conscience on a matter of Christian liberty because homeschooling is a matter of Christian liberty (even though, in certain instances, exercising this liberty might jeopardize his office because he would not be upholding Article 21). This assertion of Christian liberty by Classis was protested, and the protestant eventually appealed to Synod 2008. The appellant denied that homeschooling could be a matter of Christian liberty, contending that Scripture requires the use of the schools. Synod 2008 did not agree, but declared that Classis was correct to say that "Scripture does not specify exactly how the instruction of covenant children is to be accomplished. God gives covenant parents the freedom of their sanctified judgment to determine the best way to educate their children."

So synod refrained from making the *manner of carrying out* one's covenant calling to rear his children a scriptural *dictate*. Indeed, Synod understood the *covenant's demand* to be Christian education. Implied is that if a man does not carry out this covenant calling, he is to be disciplined. On the other hand, synod understood *Article 21's* requirement to be the existing good Christian schools (not home schools), which the consistories must urge upon every Christian parent. And implied is that this urging is to be strong and reasoned, but that it will stop short of discipline.

On the other side of Classis East's decision were those who defended homeschooling. Although Classis had said that the

manner of Christian education was a matter of Christian liberty, Classis had also made clear 1) that an officebearer may jeopardize his office if he does not use the existing Christian schools, and 2) that the "schools" referred to in Article 21 are not home schools. This position of Classis was objectionable to some. One maintained that a "good Christian home school...maintains the demands of Article 21." Synod did not uphold his appeal. Another maintained that the matter of Christian education is not "an ecclesiastical matter," that Article 21 of the Church Order requires only Christian *education*, and that to require of an officebearer that he send his children to the good Christian school is legalism. Synod declared that Article 21 *makes* Christian education an ecclesiastical matter, and that Article 21 calls consistories to promote *schools*, not merely *education*. Synod said:

Article 21 requires that consistories promote "good Christian schools"—which, as VanDellen and Monsma point out, has always been understood to mean "good Christian Day Schools." Article 21 not only sets forth the principle that the children of the church are to be instructed according to the demands of the covenant; it also specifies how this should be done.

Nor is it legalism to require of an officebearer to use the existing good Christian schools, for the Church Order lays many demands on officebearers that are not expressly required by Scripture, but arise out of the principles of Scripture and are an application of biblical principles.

There were other matters treated in the five appeals. Read the Acts. Pray for the parents, the children of the covenant, all those who are involved in carrying out the demands of the covenant. And pray, as did almost


every delegate at synod when he led in devotions, for the welfare of the congregation, consistory, and officebearer involved. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. They shall prosper that love thee."



And note well: Synod did not address those who homeschool

where no good Christian schools are available. At the same time, where the good Christian schools are established, Article 21 mandates the consistory to call the congregation to use them, to maintain them, to do nothing to undermine them. All the members of the congregation are bound by Article 21. Willingly so. Willingly Reformed parents have

joined the churches that maintain Article 21. Officebearers must take the lead. And where there are no good Christian schools, Article 21 implies the calling of parents to establish these schools when that is possible and wise.

God bless our homes, our schools, and the covenant rearing of the covenant's seed. 

Letters

Rev. Audred Spriensma

Missions in the Old Testament

I want to comment on Wilbur Bruinsma's article in the January 1, 2008 *SB* on "God's Covenant: The Foundation of Missions." He states that Israel in the Old Testament did not do mission work. But wasn't Israel meant to? (Is. 43:10, 12; 44:8; 52:5; Dan. 12:3; Prov. 14:25). God's covenant did include those outside Israel, e.g., Ruth and Rahab. And Noah was most certainly a preacher of righteousness to those around him. I would agree that up until New Testament times we hear of very few outside Israel who were part of the covenant, but it seems to me, from Genesis 17:7, that God's plan was always for all nations. (Abraham was told to circumcise, i.e., include in the covenant, all his servants, who, I guess, were pagans previously.) Is it not true to say that Old Testament Israel failed in its mission? God's name, instead of being honored and known, was blasphemed among the nations because of Israel's disobedience.

Dr. Julian Kennedy
Bournemouth, UK

RESPONSE:

Before answering the letter of Dr. Kennedy I would like to thank him for writing. I want to thank him for two reasons. First of all, he reveals a genuine inter-

est in missions and in what is being written in the *Standard Bearer* about missions. Sometimes those who write for the *Standard Bearer* wonder how many people are interested in, and therefore even reading, what they write. Dr. Kennedy's letter indicates such an interest.

In the second place, I thank Dr. Kennedy because his questions and comments give me opportunity to expand on a certain aspect of missions that otherwise would receive only a cursory treatment. His letter certainly gives us food for thought. Neither do I consider my response to his letter the end of the discussion on the Old Testament's teachings concerning mission work. A careful study of this subject would be of great value to the church.

God's plan for the nations

One important point that Dr. Kennedy raises is that it "seems to me, from Genesis 17:7, that God's plan was always for all nations." I agree with this assessment, especially in light of the verses that precede verse 7. We find in these verses that Abram was to be called Abraham, "for a father of many nations have I made thee." Furthermore, we find in verse 4 that God would establish His covenant with these nations. The only conclusion that we are able to draw from these verses is that God's desire

according to His eternal plan for all things was to include all nations of the earth in His church and covenant. If we were to view God's counsel from an organic point of view, it was eternally God's will to include all nations in His church.

The question we confront, however, is *when* did God plan for this to take place in time? Was it in God's plan to gather the nations into His church and covenant during Old Testament times? Or was it His plan to gather in the peoples and nations of this world after Pentecost? We realize, of course, that if it were in God's counsel to gather the nations in the Old Testament, then the events of the Old Testament would have unfolded in such a way that this would have been accomplished. God's eternal counsel is determinative for what takes place in time. But the point is, God did *not* intend to gather all nations into His church in the Old Testament. Noah prophesies in Genesis 9:26, 27 that God's covenant would be established with Shem's seed, and only later with Japheth's seed. The scope of the covenant was narrowed even more when God told Abraham that in Isaac His seed would be called. Moses encouraged Israel before entering into the land of Canaan with the words of Deuteronomy 7:6-8: she was chosen to be God's church "above all

people that are upon the face of the earth." Later in Israel's history, Isaiah comforts the elect remnant with these words in chapter 41:9: "Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth and called thee from the chief men thereof...."

The New Testament Scriptures explain what the Old Testament Scriptures only heralded concerning the grafting in of the Gentiles. The apostle Paul gives a beautiful explanation in Ephesians 2:11-22 of the breaking down of the middle wall of partition that separated the Old Testament church from the Gentile nations. In verse 13 Paul writes, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who were sometimes far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

It is also on the basis of God's plan regarding the grafting in of the nations of the earth that we receive the instruction of Galatians 3:16-29. This passage traces the line of the covenant from Abraham through Israel until the present, revealing that the promise of the covenant was intended for all those who are in Christ.

God's plan for the nations revealed in the Old Testament

This does not mean that the Old Testament church was unaware of God's plan to graft into the church in the future all nations of the earth. God's people were sensitive to their place in this plan. After citing a number of instances that reveal that Israel lived in the consciousness that it was under the scrutiny of the heathen nations (Ex. 32:12; Num. 14:16; Deut. 9:28; Josh. 7:9; etc.), J. H. Bavinck, in his book *An Introduction to the Science of Missions*, page 15, comments on this:

Israel was thus strongly under the impression that its history was not a particular affair of no concern to anyone else, but that God utilized its history to deal with other nations, rather with the whole world. Israel's defeats and victories, its

greatness and subjugations, its wonderful deliverances, and its heavy sufferings are all included in God's plan for the world. God stretches out his arms to all the world in such events. It is remarkable that Israel is so conscious of its unique position.

God's church prior to the coming of Christ was constantly reminded of her place among the nations of the world. She was reminded of it in her laws (Ex. 12:28; 20:10; Lev. 19:33, 34), in her songs (Ps. 67:2), and in her prophecies (Is. 2:23). There were even events and people in the Old Testament that served as types and shadows to point God's people to the future gathering in of the nations. Dr. Kennedy brings up Ruth the Moabitess and Rahab the harlot of Jericho. Another amazing instance is the call God issued to Jonah to preach in Nineveh—the very city that would later take captive the nation of Israel!

Israel's calling toward the nations

A second important point that Dr. Kennedy raises is that Israel "did not do mission work. But wasn't Israel meant to? ...Is it not true to say that Old Testament Israel failed in its mission?" The passages he cites are good ones to consider in this regard. The reader can study them for himself. For the most part these passages bring up the truth that the people of Israel were called to be witnesses of who God is and of His great power. The Hebrew term used in these instances means literally "to repeat over and over again." This colorful term exhorts God's people to speak repeatedly to others of the power and blessing of God. Of a truth, it *was* the calling of God's people and of His church as a whole in the Old Testament to be witnesses of Jehovah. It is equally true that Israel failed miserably in this! Dr. Kennedy makes a most striking statement: "God's name,

instead of being honoured and known, was blasphemed among the nations because of Israel's disobedience." May the church of Jesus Christ today take note of that! There is no new thing under the sun. The church can boast of missions today, yet at the same time, by the witness of her members, cause the name of God to be blasphemed among the nations.

Again a couple of points need emphasis in this regard. In the first place, God's people and church always are called to be witnesses. One cannot be a true Christian (before the coming of the Messiah [Christ] or after His coming) unless he gives witness to others by his life and speech. It was by means of the witness of a young Jewish girl that Naaman came to Elisha and was cleansed of his leprosy and his sin. Daniel and his three friends were witnesses of Jehovah in the courts of many a king in Babylon, just as was Joseph in the home of Potiphar and the palace of Pharaoh. Surely, God's people in the Old Testament had the calling, just as God's people today, to be witnesses of God.

Not only was this true of God's people individually, but it was the calling of the church as a whole in the Old Testament too. As we mentioned earlier, the nation of Israel was keenly aware of her unique place among the nations. She knew she was a witness to God. She knew that God was utilizing the affairs of this nation toward the future salvation of the nations. It was to her shame that she so utterly failed in her calling! How shameful of the Jewish people that by the time of Christ they actually believed that salvation belonged to them simply because they were Jews—as if salvation was inherent in their genes by virtue of their natural birth. By means of this attitude the nation of Israel was not a witness for good among the nations, but made the cause of Jehovah


God "to stink among the inhabitants of the land" (Gen. 34:30).

In the second place, however, we may not confuse the witness of God's people and of the church as a whole with the work of missions. I tried to make it clear in the last article I wrote, *Missions: the Work of the Church*, that mission work is the official ministry of the church through which she sends out her ambassadors into this world to preach the gospel. This call the church of the old dispensation did not receive. Noah preached righteousness to the world prior to the Flood, that period of time in the history of the church when God had not yet limited the scope of the covenant to the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When Jonah was called and sent by God to preach to the city of Nineveh, it was a unique occurrence, certainly not the norm.

The prophets in Israel were not sent out by God to preach to the nations. They were sent to speak God's word to the nation of Israel. I do not believe that it was the calling of the nation of Israel to send out men to do mission work among the nations.

Neither was it God's plan or purpose in the Old Testament to draw other nations and peoples into the confines of His church and covenant. There were times in her history when the nation of Israel *did* leave a good witness to the nations. There were many of God's people, then, who did live in faith and in the active hope of the coming of the Messiah. This witness, however, did not serve to bring the nations to faith and repentance. When Jonah preached repentance in the streets of Nineveh, it spared the city. Many repented of their sin.

But this did not serve to incorporate this city into the church and covenant. In fact, it was not many years later that the king of this city took the ten tribes away captive.

For these reasons I believe that it was God's purpose to gather the nations into His church after Pentecost, not before. In that connection, I also believe that the Great Commission to preach the gospel to all creatures was not given by God to His Old Testament church, but was given by Christ to the church in the new dispensation. Certainly, I do not believe that my response is the final authority on this subject. There is much more that can be discussed on the subject. As I said at the outset, the subject Dr. Kennedy raises is worthy of an in-depth study. I appreciate his bringing it up. 

All Around Us

Rev. Michael DeVries

"Bibles" Multiplied

Yes, we live in a consumer-oriented society. Yes, each one of us is a unique individual. But do I need a Bible entitled "Heart of the Outdoors Bible"? Do you need a Bible entitled "Path to Victory," with pictures of sporting activities on the cover?

Perhaps you have a problem. "The Journey of Recovery" New Testament is just for you, since it provides "real-life help and lasting hopes to free the addicted."

Or is your home on the highway? Do you need "The Road Home New Testament"? It "steers truckers to Christ." Maybe you are young and require the "aka The Bible." This is the Bible for teens and tweens! "For those who didn't want the simple black cover."

Do you require a different Bible if you are presently incarcerated? "Free on the Inside" – it "unlocks hope to prisoners."

Or do you have Jewish heritage? The "New Covenant Prophecy Edition New Testament" is just for you. It uses terms familiar to Jewish culture to help readers recognize that *Yeshua* (Jesus) is their true Messiah.

There is a Bible that is designed to speak to unbelievers. This one "engages the Bible from a non-believer's perspective who may be cynical towards Christianity."

Also, with permission of the U.S. Army, the International Bible Society has developed a "military Bible," using the new digital camouflage design. This is perfect for one of my young grandsons! The first color he learned was "camouflage"—(his dad enjoys hunting).

This is just a sampling of the "Bibles" available today in a

multitude of versions and paraphrases. Those mentioned above are advertised in a recent International Bible Society catalog.

In the May 31/June 7, 2008 issue of *World* magazine, Janie B. Cheaney comments on this in an article entitled "Comfort Seekers," subtitled "But everyone's favorite book is more about transformation."

According to a Harris Poll conducted in April, the Bible remains the all-time favorite book of a majority of Americans, regardless of age, gender, or ethnicity. (For those who are wondering, fave No. 2 is *Gone with the Wind*, followed by *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy.)

This news is heart-warming, but mind-troubling. For few Americans seem to read their favorite book.

Biblical illiteracy is growing, especially among the young. A 2004 Gallup survey of teens revealed that two-thirds couldn't place "Blessed are the poor in

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HOPE PRC, WALKER, MICHIGAN



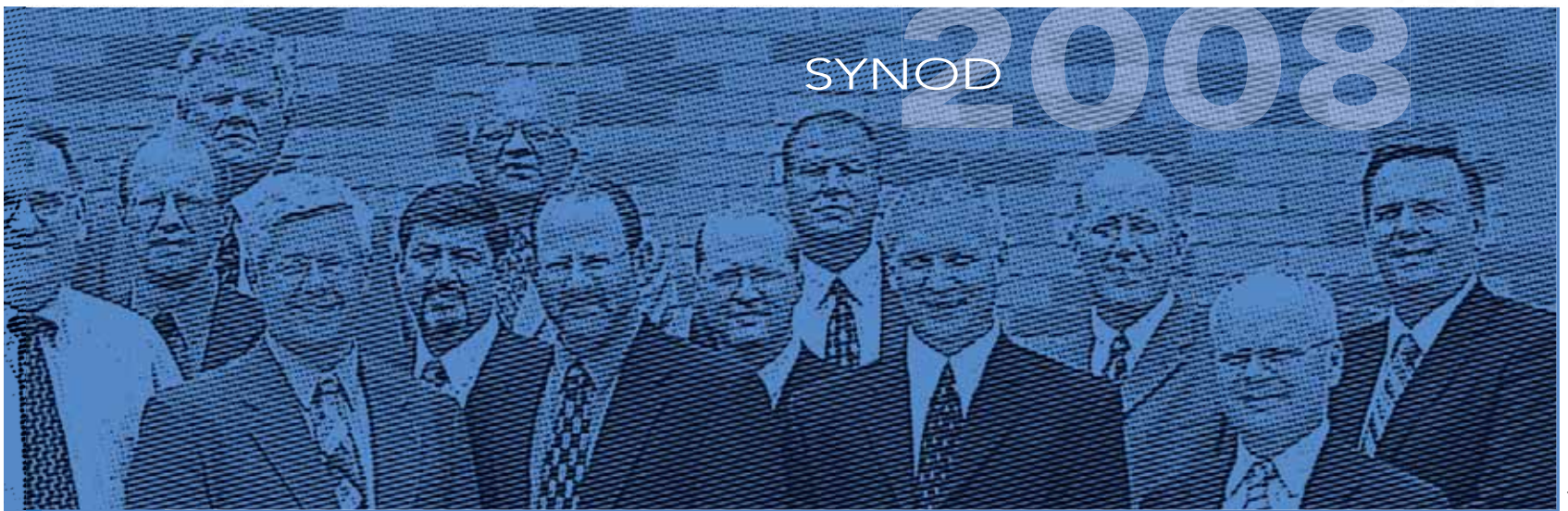
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SYNOD 2008



spirit" in the Sermon on the Mount, or recall what happened on the road to Damascus. An earlier poll conducted by George Barna showed an ignorance or rejection of basic Christian doctrines (such as the sinlessness of Christ) among a significant number of self-identified Christians.

Imagine a Margaret Mitchell fan who can't identify Ashley Wilkes or recall who said, "Tomorrow is another day." In defense of the average reader, the Bible lacks the narrative drive of a novel, the focus of a self-help book, and the chronological order of a biography. In an age of declining literacy and short attention spans, it's no wonder such a demanding book loses readers.

And in an age of public license, it's evident that even those who read do not heed.

But that doesn't explain why the Bible remains so popular, No. 1 on a list that includes such anti-biblical titles as *The Da Vinci Code* (No. 6) and *Atlas Shrugged* (No. 9). Its sales regularly outstrip not only the latest Harry Potter (No. 4) but any phenomenal seller of any given year.

Part of the reason must be its talismanic quality. Even non-churchgoers pick up a Bible now and then for a perusal of Psalm 23 or I Corinthians 13, or to look up those passages listed under "When You're Feeling Alone." It's a point not lost on Bible publishers, who have become ever more creative at packaging.

What began as accessibility with *Good News For Modern Man* (Today's English Version) and *The Way* (Living Bible paraphrase) is now big business. Around the turn of this century came an explosion of new formats (glossy-paged, laminated, color-coded, personalized) aimed at niche markets; teens, dads, married and career women; surfers, hikers & bikers; health nuts and executives. There's even a paraphrase called *The Voice*, tailored for the emergent church movement and "re-authored" by novelists and artists as well as scholars.

The word is the word, and does not return void. But trendy packaging obscures its purpose:

not to meet the felt needs of a particular group but to transform individual lives. Sidebars by celebrity Christians or bite-sized scripture applications amount to spot-cleaning, when what we need is a daily bath....

... A few years ago Paul Caminiti, head of Zondervan's Bible division, explained his company's mission by citing Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch. The evangelist "provides just a little bit of color commentary, and the light comes on.... And that's what we're doing. We're coming alongside the text and providing some color commentary." Perhaps the eunuch could have used a Chief Financial Officer's Bible, with daily planner sidebars and money-wise tips.

An acquaintance once told my daughter that he didn't go to church but reading the Bible gave him comfort. Her reply: "It shouldn't." If that's the only reason they read it, maybe the Bible shouldn't be Americans' favorite book, either.

Cheaney makes several important points. How true it is that there is a grievous ignorance of Holy Scripture in our day. Hosea 4:6 resounds throughout our world, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."

Obviously it is not "the law of thy God" that attracts people to the Bible. For the precepts of our God are trampled underfoot as never before. Yet there is an almost superstitious attitude toward the Bible that yet remains for many—what Cheaney refers to as "its talismanic quality," a magical or protective property. In other words the Bible is considered a good-luck charm for many. It is the old "fox-hole theology": if you're in a pinch, pick up the Bible and read a classic verse and feel better.

It is certainly true that the "trendy packaging" obscures the purpose of the Bible. To my mind it trivializes the Bible. It certainly detracts from a proper respect for this Book as the very Word of God. It makes the Bible look like a multitude of other books. As far as its appearance is concerned, the distinctiveness is gone!

What is of far greater concern, however, is what Cheaney touches on when she speaks of "accessibility" with reference to modern versions and paraphrases. The purported purpose of the plethora of Bible versions/paraphrases is to make the Bible accessible. The concern of these is not in being thoroughly faithful to the infallibly inspired Word of God. No, reading the Bible must be made easy. Some of them stoop to using the everyday language of the street, even slangy, vulgar language. The Bible, it seems, must be "dumbed-down." It must be filled with "color commentary" so that it meets "felt needs."

The most extreme example I have seen arrived as a sample from the Bible League of Canada a few months ago. The introductory letter explains:

Dear Pastor,

We live in a world where engaging young people and adults in the Bible and the Christian faith is increasingly difficult. The Bible League of Canada is pleased to introduce a brand new publication called *Manga Messiah*, which has taken steps to bridge that gap.

Manga Messiah has intersected faith and culture making the Gospel message relevant, world-class and simply remarkable. *Manga Messiah* uses the four Gospels (adapted from ancient texts) and develops for the reader the life of Christ in such a way that the plot thickens as Christ's life unfolds.

Young people and adults alike have found it difficult to put *Manga Messiah* down once they begin to read.

Manga Messiah is illustrated in the genuine Japanese Manga style, and is unlike any other Christian resource in today's marketplace....

...*Manga Messiah* is an excellent way to introduce children, young people and adults to the Bible. It is compelling and highly engaging. Pastor, please do not miss this opportunity to share the Gospel in a culturally relevant way with your community.

The accompanying publicity explains the "highly popular Japanese 'Manga' comic style art form."

MANGA (pronounced 'Mahn-ga') is the Japanese word for comics. A huge hit with North American teens and 'tweens, the Manga graphic novel format has emerged as one of the most popular genres in present day publishing. Appealing to kids and adults alike, the edgy rendition of the Gospel is both compelling and highly engaging. This authentic art style combined with fast-paced story-telling delivers timeless biblical truths to an ever-changing culture.

What a travesty of the gospel of Christ! What an abomination in God's eyes (and ours, I trust) is this freaky, comic-book portrayal of the Christ of God! The "Manga Bible" is to be available soon.

One item of good news in this regard was reported in *World* magazine (May 17/24, 2008). Good riddance to the TNIV:

Ever since Zondervan and the International Bible Society published the TNIV (Today's New International Version, with gender-inclusive language), observers have been waiting for a verdict. Would evangelical readers and churches go for the neutered version or not? According to *Christian Retailing*, the TNIV's biggest success has been a "celebrity-driven audio Bible."

Sales have been slow in Christian bookstores that cater to the evangelical base. "We...

are not content with the current level of awareness and adoption," Zondervan's Paul Caminetti told *Christian Retailing*. Booksellers interviewed by the magazine characterized TNIV sales as "very little" and "pretty unimpressive." One retailer told the magazine, "We hardly even stock that version any longer, having sent most of them back and declining to bring in most of the newer ones presented simply based on past sales history of the translation."

Make no mistake, the doctrine of Scripture lies at the very heart of the faith of the church of Jesus Christ. We should not be surprised that the devil and his allies attack at this point. All our faith stands or falls with the answer to the question: Is Scripture the infallibly inspired and therefore authoritative Word of God?

If it is not, whether in whole or in part, it is reduced to merely a human book. Then we can consider it useful for encouragement when we're depressed, or as a moral guide for troubling ethical questions, or as a fascinating source of ancient belief. Then we may legitimately put it into a comic-book form or the language of the street. Because then its authority is gone, and we can take it or leave it. But then we may not try to pass it off as *God's* Word.

But faith insists: The Bible is the very Word of God! "Thy Word is truth," John 17:17. For "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God..." (II Tim. 3:16).


This makes the matter of which version of the Bible we use very important. It must be a translation that is thoroughly faithful to the Word of God, i.e., faithful to the very words (not just the idea or meaning) that God inspired. Whatever lacks this faithfulness is worthless—it is in fact a threat, a danger!

In addition, my Bible must be clear, understandable. And, in close connection, it must have a

smooth-flowing, readable style. But because it is God's Word, that style must be dignified. It must foster proper reverence for the majestic, glorious God whose Word it is. I remain convinced that the Authorized (or King James) Version continues best to meet these qualifications. Using it we may have confidence in our Bibles!

But then, we must use them! God forbid that we be numbered among the multitude that have Bibles but are biblically illiterate. The problem is not that the Bible is deep and dark and difficult to understand. The problem is that all too often we are not faithful to read, study, and meditate upon it as we ought. The appalling ignorance of the Bible today is not an intellectual problem, but a spiritual one. God gives knowledge and understanding of His Word through diligent, prayerful study, memorization, work!

Does *your* Bible remain on the shelf? Let us endeavor to be diligent in using the Bible in our personal devotions. Let us prayerfully listen while God speaks to us from His Word. And let us not be the generation that lets that blessed Reformed practice of family devotions pass away. Let us work to make our family worship meaningful and not just a superficial routine. Finally, let us take advantage of opportunities to join together with our fellow saints to study the Scriptures.

Do not be confused by the virtual flood of Bible translations in recent years. Do not be swept along by the spirit of novelty, the craze for new things, also with regard to Bible versions. Consistently using our same old, trustworthy Bible leads to spiritual growth and steadfastness for the people of God in every age. It leads to a vital knowledge of the Scriptures, "which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 3:15b). 

Examining Parachurch Missions

A proper view of the doctrine of the church will have a direct bearing on the work of missions. What the Bible teaches us about the church and its work will determine who is called to do mission work, as well as the way such work is carried out. We began our consideration of this proposition in the last article when we established that it is the calling of the church to carry out mission work. Christ commissioned the church institute to do this work (Matt. 28:19; Eph. 3:10; I Tim. 3:15; Acts 13:2). The church does this through the offices of pastor, elder, and deacon, but especially through the office of pastor and teacher. The missionary himself is properly trained, called, and sent out by the church to perform the work of missions. Not just anyone sent to a field of labor in missions is a missionary. A missionary is an ordained pastor in the church. His task is to preach and teach the gospel. That is the calling of the church in missions: preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15).

However, since the time of the "Great Awakening" during the mid 1700s and the century of Protestant missions during the 1800s, many organizations arose out of the church that, independent of the authority of the church, assumed to themselves this work of missions. Many different societies were established that sent out missionaries to labor

independently of the church.¹ This was not true of most of the societies that were formed at that time. Most of them were formed by denominations of churches to oversee and coordinate their mission endeavors. Admittedly, some of these societies were interdenominational, but they were still answerable to the churches that formed them. At the same time, however, a large number of societies were formed, independent of the church institute, that sent out men (and women) to carry on the work of missions. This trend, though losing some of its impetus during the early 1900s, never really died. Since the 1960s the number of independent organizations involved in mission work has greatly multiplied. These organizations, among a host of others, were lumped together under the name of parachurch organizations. The number of parachurch groups has continued to grow over the past several decades.²

In the next two articles we wish to examine the validity of parachurch organizations doing the work of missions. Does the Bible allow organizations other than the church institute to carry out the mandate of missions? Is there support in Scripture for the parachurch in mission work?

Definition of a parachurch

Although many parachurch organizations do not like the

label, their name accurately describes their existence and function. The term "parachurch" simply means "alongside of, near," or "beside" the church. Parachurch groups labor "near" the church, gaining much of their financial support from churches. But these groups also labor "alongside of" the church, since they refuse to be under the authority or direction of the church. They take on work related to the church—usually some specialized ministry—but are not answerable to any church. They may cooperate with instituted churches, but they maintain their own autonomy. Now, this is a broad definition, under which many organizations have been listed. Parachurch organizations are involved in campus evangelism, political activism, medical missions, media, jail and prison ministries, crisis counseling, book publishing, Bible translation and studies, world relief, financial planning, and a host of other labors, including foreign and local missions.

Because this definition is broad and includes so many organizations, it complicates the issue of the validity of the parachurch. There are those who contend that "all legitimate functions [of parachurch organizations] must be under the authority or control of the church (either local or denominational, depending on one's ecclesiology)."³ But is this really true? Though Christians certainly may join together in societies to publish books, translate Bibles into different languages, make political stands, send relief to those who are starving in far-off lands, etc., do all of these

¹ Jerry White, *The Church and Parachurch: An Uneasy Marriage* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1983), pp. 46-51.

² Wesley K. Willmer, J. David Schmidt, Martyn Smith, *The Prospering Parachurch* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998), p. 12.

³ White, p. 31.

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groups need to be under the authority and control of the church? These matters do not involve the work of the church institute. The work of the church institute is to preach the gospel, administer the sacraments, and exercise Christian discipline. Not *every* parachurch organization, therefore, is illegitimate. Take, for example, the Reformed Free Publishing Association (RFPA). This association not only publishes books that contain Reformed sermons or theological themes, but it also takes upon itself the task of publishing the semi-monthly religious periodical, the *Standard Bearer*. It performs an important function on behalf of the church of Jesus Christ. But this book association is “free,” that is, it is not under the authority of any particular church or denomination. This means that the RFPA fits into the category of parachurch organizations. Yet, it is a legitimate organization. It does not attempt to take upon itself the task of preaching. For that reason we can say that certain parachurch groups are indeed legitimate. If individual believers desire to organize societies to aid and assist others in various ways while giving a Christian witness, such societies are valid and can even be of great worth.

The parachurch groups that we take to task are those who usurp to themselves the work of the church in the preaching of the gospel. As was mentioned, there are those parachurch societies that take upon themselves the training and sending out of men and women to preach the gospel on foreign mission fields. There are groups formed that see it as their work to send out “evangelists” in an attempt to bring people to mass conversion. These “crusades” are independent of any denomination of churches, neither are they meant to gather their “converts” into any particular denomination.

There are groups who develop a Bible curriculum and then involve themselves in Bible studies apart from the church and the doctrines of any particular denomination (usually these studies are free-willest in nature and stress personal experience rather than truth). There are also parachurch groups that go under the guise of a specialized ministry, but who use this as a front to become involved in the preaching of the gospel. Most often the people sent out by these organizations to labor as missionaries or evangelists are neither thoroughly trained in the Scriptures nor ordained by the church to perform the work of preaching. These kinds of groups are becoming legion today.

Arguments used in favor of parachurch missions

There are a number of basic arguments used by parachurch groups to justify their existence.

The argument most often used is that the church is more than the church institute. The church is the body of Christ in this world. That body of Christ comes to manifestation in this world in more ways than simply by means of the church institute. Willmer and Schmidt, in their book *The Prospering Parachurch*, explain the view of most parachurch advocates.

The word [parachurch] does not imply that there are Christian organizations that work outside of the universal Church. Instead it simply describes an alternative institutional form in God’s kingdom.... An essential part of the definition of the parachurch

is that it is separate from the traditional church. Yet perhaps these organizations that are beyond or beside the institutional church have something to teach us about God’s Church, with a capital C. Traditionally we have identified God’s institutions with the buildings with steeples and filled parking lots on Sunday morning. We assume that God is working and accomplishing his plans through these staples of religious life. Yet there is no doubt that God is working through parachurch organizations in addition to the traditional churches, and this enlarges our conception of what God’s Church is—God is not limited to any one institutional pattern.¹

Others within the parachurch movement will go so far as to say that the New Testament Scriptures know only of the church as the body of Christ—the community of those who have faith. The

Bible never speaks of the instituted church. “Any institutional structure is therefore a culturally relative venture.”²

A second argument that is often heard from those who seek to justify the parachurch organization’s involvement in mission work is an appeal to the office of all believers. Jerry

White explains it this way:

...we need to consider the function and responsibility of the individual believer in a local congregation. Earlier, I pointed out the critical issue of unity. There is another issue which is critical both doctrinally and practically. It is the priesthood of the believer....

Under the new covenant, the believer has direct access and individual responsibility to God

¹ Willmer and Schmidt, pp. 22-24.

² Willmer and Schmidt, p. 24.

without the intercession of an earthly priest. This priesthood brings a new freedom for the believer, both in worship and in service. It is the cornerstone of the ministry of every believer. Thus the believer as an individual and the believer in fellowship with other believers has personal responsibility to obey God's commands about evangelism, discipleship, serving others, helping the poor, and so on.

He is also personally responsible to exercise his gifts. The spiritual gifts of believers are given for the building up of the entire body of Christ, not just the local church. God certainly uses these gifts in the local congregation, but they are not the property of that congregation. They belong to the whole body....

When viewing the ministry in the entire body of Christ, I see no restriction on a structured ministry not under the direct control of a local church or denomination. The members of a local church are not restrained from forming other associations for spiritual purposes. Para-local church structures, made up of individual believers around a common purpose, are as much a part of the universal church as any local congregation.¹

We would not deny entirely what White states here. Certainly, our responsibility as believers goes beyond the local church. We ought to be interested in the church universal in this world and support and assist that church as much as we are able. Each believer is personally responsible to exercise the gifts God has given him on behalf of the church of Christ in this world. But the point that White is making here is that there are no limits on what individual believers do with this responsibility. They are entitled to go out and perform "the work of the ministry" just as well as the ordained pastor and teacher. This is an expression of the office of all believers. A

fellow in a blog on the Internet site *Triablogue* put it bluntly, "the Protestant Reformation regarded the lay state as no less of a divine calling than the pastoral vocation. And many parachurch ministries draw upon the expertise of the laity."

There is one other argument used for the validity of parachurch organizations: the church has no time to specialize in certain "ministries." Different parachurch groups are able to carry on specialized tasks in certain areas. Again, White comments:

There are many differences in the two structures (which we refer to as local church and para-local church...). The local church is broad, concerned with the total person, ministers in a geographical locale to a wide spectrum of ages and needs, and is narrow in doctrinal interpretation. The para-local church society is usually narrow in purpose, specialized in task, narrow in the age of those involved, broad in doctrinal tolerations, crosses denominational lines (except for denominational para-local church structures) and often is geographically scattered.²

Again, we do not deny that the church's function in this world is that of preaching and teaching God's Word. There are other functions that Christian's can be involved in that need not be directly under the control of the church. But take note of what White's summary to these specialized "ministries" of parachurch groups is:

Both the local and the para-local church groups comprise vital and viable parts of the body of Christ. The para-local church finds its theological legitimacy in the freedom of form given in the

New Testament, in the necessary expression of each believer-priest in his ministry, and in the examples of local and mobile functions of the universal church. The local church is God's basic medium for meeting the broad needs of people of all ages and in all situations. *The mobile para-local church structure is God's method for the two-fold task of missions and specialized ministries* (emphasis mine—W.B.).³

The conclusion drawn from this argument of specialized ministries, coupled with the other reasons for what is thought to be the legitimacy of the parachurch organization, is: the parachurch is "God's method" for the task of missions.

We take serious exception to the theological arguments used in favor of the involvement of parachurch groups in mission work. Obviously, we do not have enough space in this article to get into particulars. But here are our objections in summary form.

1). The Bible clearly teaches that the church as the body of Christ comes to manifestation in this world only in the way of the church institute. 2). The Bible teaches us that there is a clear and necessary distinction between the official work of the church through

her offices and the life and work of individual believers in the church.

3). The Bible teaches that there are no "specialized ministries" other than the church when it comes to the preaching and teaching of God's Word.

4). The parachurch movement has become a major cause for the proliferation of doctrinal error in the church world of today.

We will expand on these in the next article. 

We take serious exception to the theological arguments used in favor of the involvement of parachurch groups in mission work.

¹ White, pp. 80, 81.

² White, p. 84.

³ White, p. 85

Not Anabaptist But Reformed (8) *

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

Chapter 4. The Confessions and Common Grace (1)

Next Rev. Van Baalen devotes a chapter to the confessional side of the matter. We will respond accordingly.

If the attempt made by the brother here should fail, then certainly his entire booklet will be a failure. And in fact both this chapter and the entire pamphlet are a failure, indeed a total failure. We cannot imagine that our church papers have recommended this work to our people just as it is, without any criticism. Especially we do not understand the high praises from Dr. H. Beets in *The Banner* and from K. W. Fortuin in *De Wachter*. The brothers have nothing but praise. Language and form and content are all considered praiseworthy. And Rev. Karel Fortuin even thinks that the matter is clear enough now to take action. We do not understand this.

But let us take a look.

Rev. Van Baalen makes an attempt to demonstrate that our confessions clearly teach common grace. The very term appears in the Canons! Well then, that must mean that our fathers believed in common grace. And the fact that our confessions speak of common grace only one time must prove

all the more that the fathers believed in it. The brother strays here from the subject being discussed. Let us suppose once that what he says is true. Even then the question is not what our fathers believed, but what they set down in the confessions.

But Rev. Van Baalen gets back on track. And then on pages 64 and 65 he attributes to us a reprehensible argumentation greatly resented by us because it leaves the impression that we are dishonest. According to him, we indeed recognize that our confessions teach common grace, but we rationalize it away as follows: The confessions name a certain doctrine only one time. But another doctrine, which Rev. Hoeksema cannot bring into agreement therewith, is expounded in the confessions much more at length. He claims that our remedy to this is simply to eliminate what does not please us and preserve what seems good to us. And, seeing that the latter has indeed been expounded much more at length, we still have the greatest part of the confessions on our side. Thus, says Van Baalen, we calmly proceed, all the while claiming that we are in agreement with the confessions.

Then Rev. Van Baalen adds that this comes from men who were so convinced that Rev. Bultema had to be deposed because he taught something not stated anywhere in the confessions! Now in this last point the brother once again shows his own ignorance with respect to our confessions and the Bultema affair. He is obviously not very well informed on this matter, or else

he is totally ignorant of Bultema's positions which were condemned by Synod. The kingship of Christ over His church—is it not stated in the confessions, brother Van Baalen? The unity of the Old and New Testament church—is it not stated in the confessions, brother? You might do well to investigate this matter first, before you bring such a notion any further into the church.

But concerning the argument that you want to attribute to us, we definitely take it evil of you. To argue like that would definitely be low and dishonest. You know as well as we do that we never have. The whole argument is a figment of your own imagination. That you think that we would argue like that reveals more about yourself than about us. Such arguments do not arise in our brain, brother. You are once again quite wrong.

The confession puts the point we are dealing with like this:

"The true doctrine having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those..."

"Who teach that the corrupt and natural man can so well use the common grace (by which they understand the light of nature), or the gifts still left him after the fall, that he can gradually gain by their good use a greater, namely, the evangelical or saving grace and salvation itself" (Canons, III/IV, Rejection of Errors, Art. 5).

And what now was our argument?

This, that the fathers who drew up the Canons placed the term "common grace" on the

* 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: May 1, 2008, p. 324.

lips of the Remonstrants. The Remonstrants spoke of nothing other than "common grace." The fathers, however, did not want to make themselves accountable for this term. They preferred to speak of the light of nature, as they actually do in Canons III/IV, Article 4; or of the gifts which were still left to fallen man, as in Belgic Confession, Article 14, and here. So that in my view the meaning and sense is that this is "the common grace by which they understand the same thing as we do when we speak of the light of nature." It was the Remonstrants who preferred to speak of common grace; the fathers rather avoided that term.

You will surely agree that this argument is entirely different from that which you ascribed to us, will you not?

And, as a brother, will you not also want to express publicly that you have wrongly ascribed to us this foolish argument and that this truly grieves you?

But we now take it a step farther. The explanation of the meaning which we gave above, and which can in itself also be interpreted differently, is confirmed by the fact that our confessions speak nowhere of common grace, not even where one would expect to see it.¹ How do you explain

¹ After all, it is indeed quite clear that in the drawing up of the confessions, especially of the Canons, our fathers were not thinking about the "doctrine" of common grace [*gemeene gratie*] as it is being developed among us now. The subject that they always defended tooth and nail was that of sovereign election and reprobation. The term "common grace" [*gemeene genade*] for them belonged within the framework of universal reconciliation. According to the Arminian interpretation, man by "common grace" became capable of accepting saving grace. And it is very noteworthy that Rev. Van Baalen comes with the argument that whoever does not believe in universal grace cannot preach the gospel! *Ex ungue leonem*: From the claw one recognizes the lion!

this fact, brother Van Baalen? We explain it this way: that they have intentionally avoided that term. Why, for example, do they not use that term in Canons III/IV, Article 4? There it states: "There remain, however, in man since the fall the glimmerings of natural light, whereby he retains some knowledge of God, of natural things," etc. The question is, why have our fathers not employed the term "common grace" in this passage. You yourself admit that they were familiar with it. You will also agree that, if anywhere, they would have used it here. How do you explain that they do not do this? You cite the example of the deity of Christ. But if you are actually positive about the deity of Christ, would you then avoid the very term? Explain this once, brother.

You have the same thing in our Belgic Confession. There in Article 14 it states: "And being thus become wicked, perverse, and corrupt in all his ways, he hath lost all his excellent gifts which he had received from God, and retained only a few remnants thereof, which, however, are sufficient to leave man without excuse; for all the light which is in us is changed into darkness," etc. Here again you face the same reality. You will agree with me that the confession is speaking here about things which you would

call common grace, correct? You also agree that our fathers were familiar with that term. Question: Why did they not use the term there?

And when they shortly arrive at the rejection of errors, they lay this same term upon the lips of the Remonstrants. This is indeed strange, brother, when you imagine, as you do, that the term was already a favorite with our fathers. Would you please give your explanation of that? If, for example, you would write our confession, brother, would you also handle it this way? Would *you* omit the term from Article 14 of the Belgic Confession and Canons III/IV, Article 4, and then use it in the way our fathers did in the rejection of errors? No, you wouldn't, would you? You would put "common grace" everywhere you possibly could.

Well then, my explanation of this fact is that the fathers avoided the term on purpose. The term had a bad aura for them. They did not want it. Therefore they speak of natural light and of the gifts that have remained, but they intentionally speak nowhere of common grace. This explanation leaves nothing to be desired for clarity, don't you agree? It is a completely different way of reasoning than that which you attributed to us, brother!



SEMINARY GRADUATE: Mr. Heath Bleyenbergh

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Hope PRC (Walker)
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Report of Classis East

May 14, 2008
with continued sessions on
May 15, 16, and 28

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, May 14, 2008 with continuing sessions on May 15, 16, and 28 at the First PRC of Holland, MI. All churches were represented by two delegates; Rev. Daniel Kleyn served as the chairman for these sessions.

On its first day of meeting, Classis was able to make the joyous decision to organize a new congregation. A group of people, mostly from the Faith PRC, had been meeting for several months and were known as the "Faith Daughter Group." Sufficient attendance at these services prompted this group to ask the Faith PRC to bring a request to Classis East for organization. A petition from twenty-six families and one individual was received.

Classis East approved, along with the delegates *ad examina* from Classis West, that this new congregation should be organized. Classis appointed the Council of Faith PRC to serve as its committee for organization, and Rev. Andrew Lanning was appointed as their moderator once they organize. Once the organization occurs, the new congregation will be known as the Providence PRC. According to their request, they hope to locate their congregation in the south Jenison area.


Five protests and one appeal were also treated. The five protests were against decisions taken by Classis East at its meeting in January/February, 2008 regarding the Grace PRC matter: home-schooling by the pastor of Grace, the requirements that Article 21 of the Church Order place on an officebearer, etc. Classis rejected all five protests, so the decisions of Classis East taken originally

at its meetings of September/October, 2007 and reaffirmed at its January/February, 2008 meetings stand.

The appeal from a member was considered not to be legally before the classis on the ground that Article 30 of the Church Order had not been satisfied (the matter was not finished in the lower assembly).

Classis also had to deal with the request of the Grace PRC Council to release its pastor, Rev. Mitchell Dick. This matter was dealt with in closed session. Classis, with the concurrence of the delegates *ad examina* from Classis West, approved this request of Grace Church.

Expenses for this classis amounted to \$3,219.54. Classis will meet next on Wednesday, September 10, 2008 at the Trinity PRC.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk 

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Congregation Activities

In early May the ladies of the First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada hosted a Spring Ladies' Lecture. Tuesday morning, May 13, the ladies met with the ladies of neighboring Immanuel PRC in Lacombe to hear their pastor, Rev. John Marcus, speak on the "Profit of Personal Bible Study." Coffee was served before the lecture, and a nursery was provided in the parsonage basement.

At the meeting of Classis East in May, the Classis gave unanimous approval to the request of twenty-six families and one individual to organize a new congregation in the Jenison, MI area.

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

These families come from Faith PRC, as well as from a number of other of our churches in the area. They have chosen the name Providence PRC. Faith's Consistory will oversee the organization, and Rev. Andrew Lanning, pastor of Faith, was appointed moderator. We give thanks to God for His blessing evident in giving to our churches another confessional Reformed congregation.

The Consistory of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI sponsored an Adult Sunday School class to run the same time as the regular Sunday School this summer. These classes began on Sunday, June 8. Rev. Carl Haak began the series with slides and a talk on his recent trip to Singapore. Future classes, to be led by the elders, include: Article 21 of

the Church Order, A Reformed World and Life View, and This Was John Calvin.

The Fellowship Committee of the Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI scheduled a Song Service, with a light supper following it for after the evening worship service on May 18.

Rev. Rodney Kleyn, pastor of the Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI, participated in the Hudsonville Memorial Day Service as a representative pastor of the community. This service was held Memorial Day, May 26, at Veteran's Memorial Park in Hudsonville.

Seminarian Martyn McGeown, a member of the Covenant PRC in Ballymena, NI, attending the Hudsonville, MI PRC during the school year, led the monthly song service at Hudsonville on May 25,

at which the congregation sang, without accompaniment, Psalms from the Scottish Metrical Version of the Psalter, the Psalter used in Ballymena.

Sister-Church Activities

The plans for the much anticipated church building of the Covenant PRC in Ballymena have been approved. Covenant is now able therefore to get quotes from contractors. The plans will go to the Ballymena council and building control for final ratification.

Denomination Activities

Professor Ronald Cammenga, accompanied by his wife, spent several days in the eastern United States in late May. Prof. Cammenga preached in the Pittsburgh Mission, and then on Tuesday through Thursday of that week the Cammengas and Bruinsmas attended the annual meeting of the Heidelberg Reformation Association in Bedford, PA, of which our eastern home missionary, Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, is one of the founding members. At this conference, Prof. Cammenga gave four speeches related to the general topic "Great Reformation Themes in the Heidelberg Catechism."

The Council of Hope PRC in Walker, MI continues to work with Rev. Titus and the saints in the PRC in Myanmar following the devastating cyclone that struck there in early May. In response to their great need, the deacons of many of our congregations continue to schedule special collections or have set up other

means for their congregations to assist the saints in Myanmar. God in His infinite love and wisdom has seen fit to destroy many of their homes and belongings with the recent cyclone, and He has given us the opportunity to do good to these fellow members of the household of faith. May God continue to uphold and strengthen them, as He has promised that He will never leave nor forsake His people.

Rev. Arie den Hartog and his wife left for Singapore on June 3. Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church had invited Rev. den Hartog to speak for their family conference. This conference was held at a resort in Malaysia as in past years. Rev. den Hartog gave five speeches at this conference, one each day. The general theme of the messages was, "The Pursuit of Godliness." In addition, Rev. den Hartog preached twice each Lord's Day for the Covenant congregation.

Mission Activities

Members of the PR Fellowship in Pittsburgh, PA enjoyed their annual Memorial Day picnic May 26. In addition to the usual picnic agenda of good food and fellowship, the Fellowship heard Prof. Cammenga speak on the subject, "The Christian's Calling to Put Up a Good Warfare."

Members of the Heritage PR Fellowship of Sioux Falls, SD were invited to a night hike at Big Sioux Recreation Area by Brandon, SD on June 9. The evening began with a time of fellowship with finger food and s'more fixings. Once it was dark, the night

hike began. Children and adults were reminded to bring lawn chairs, flashlights, and, of course, bug spray.

Evangelism Activities


The Evangelism Committee of the Hudsonville, MI PRC invited their community to a three-week seminar on the important topic of "God and Marriage." On May 9 Prof. Barry Gritters opened the seminar speaking on "God's Design for Marriage," followed one week later by Rev. Ron VanOverloop speaking on "God's Calling to Husband and Wife in Marriage." Rev. Garrett Eriks concluded the seminar on May 22 by speaking on "God's Way of Building and Strengthening Marriage."

The Evangelism Society of First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI sponsored a slide presentation on the Philippines on May 25 after their evening service. Seminarian Vernon Ibe, along with his wife, Melody, gave the presentation.

Minister Activities

Rev. Doug Kuiper declined the call he was considering to become the first pastor of the Calvary PRC in Hull, Iowa.

Rev. William Langerak declined the call he received from the Doon, IA PRC to serve as foreign missionary to the Philippines and the Berean PRC in Manila.

We extend our congratulations to Rev. Garrett and Jennifer Eriks of the Hudsonville, MI PRC on the occasion of the birth of their daughter, Ellie Grace, born on June 6. 

Announcements

NOTICE!!

New bulletin clerk at Randolph:
Miss Jackie Regnerus
W1787 Hollnagel Rd.
Randolph, WI 53956
920-348-5478
janjaclyn@yahoo.com

ADVANCE NOTICE

The Loveland Protestant Reformed Church will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary on September 19, 2008. If you plan to attend, please call Ray Ezinga at 970-667-5702 or email tammyjvan@aol.com

CORRECTION

Our June 2008 issue ran an announcement for the 40th wedding anniversary of Arthur and Anetta Sarah DeJong. Two of their children's names were inadvertently omitted from the announcement: Andrew Michael and Grace.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With gratitude to our ever faithful, covenant God, we rejoice to celebrate the 50th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

DUANE and JANET VAN DEN BERG,

on July 1, 2008. What a great and wonderful blessing the Lord has given to them and us, by His grace, in preserving us as a covenant family. We are profoundly grateful for their godly instruction and example. We pray for the Lord's continued blessing upon them in the years to come. "Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts" (Psalm 145:3, 4).

✿ Doug VanDenBerg

Nick and Amanda Kamps
Carl, Heather

✿ Jim and Kathi Holstege

Dan, Nate, Lynn, Joe

✿ Doug and Beth Mingerink

Doug and Larissa Mingerink
Braylon, Jake

Rick and Carmen Mingerink
Hailey

Jon and Tina Mingerink
Scott

Grand Rapids, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With thanksgiving to God, we rejoice with our parents,

EDWARD and JENNIE STOUWIE
as they celebrated 60 years of marriage on June 18, 2008.

The Lord has richly blessed them with many years together. We, as their children, are so thankful to our covenant God for their godly and faithful instruction in the truth of His Word. We sing along with them the versification of Psalm 26, Psalter #69, verses 4 and 7: "The habitation of Thy house is ever my delight; the place where dwells Thy glory, Lord, is lovely in my sight. Redeemed by Thee, I stand secure in peace and happiness; and in the Church among Thy saints, Jehovah I will bless." Our prayer is that the Lord will continue to bless them in the years to come.

✿ Lenore and Albert VanderMeer

✿ Randy and Jan Bode

✿ Ed and Mary Stouwie

✿ Gys and Joanne VanBaren

✿ Craig and Sharon Derks

17 grandchildren

25 great-grandchildren

Crete, Illinois

NOTICE!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will convene at the Peace PRC in Lansing, Illinois on Wednesday, September 3, 2008, at 8:30 A.M. All material for the agenda should be in the hands of the stated clerk by Monday, August 4, 2008. Delegates or visitors who will need lodging or transportation should notify Peace's clerk: Mr. Barry Warner (219) 322-9773 or barry.t.warner@cognis.com.

Rev. Richard J. Smit,
Stated Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

In the passing of our faithful fellow member,

HARLAN VAN ENGEN,

the Men's Society of the Doon PRC wishes to express our sincere sympathy to his wife, Jeanette VanEngen. May our comfort be found in God's Word. Psalm 27:1, "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

C.E. Hunter, Vice President
Perry VanEgdom, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies' Society of Hudsonville PRC expresses Christian sympathy to Grace Bruining in the death of her daughter,

BETTY BRUINING.

May she be comforted by the words of Psalm 46:1 and 2a: "God is our refuge and strength a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear."

Heath Bleyenbergh, Pres.
Donna Boven, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the Hudsonville PRC expresses Christian sympathy to member Mr. Bernard Bruining and his family in the sudden passing of their daughter,

BETTY BRUINING,

on May 21, 2008 at the age of 39. May the family find their comfort in Romans 8:18: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us."

Marvin Lubbers, President
Erv Kortering, Secretary

NOTICE!!!

The faculty of the Protestant Reformed Seminary have licensed seminarians Daniel Holstege and Martyn McGeown to speak a word of edification in the meetings for public worship. The scheduling of the seminarians' speaking in the churches is done by the seminary.

Prof. David J. Engelsma, Rector

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With thanksgiving to our covenant God, we celebrate with our parents and grandparents,

CORNELIUS and FRANCES DOEZEMA,

their 55th wedding anniversary, July 21, D.V. We are thankful to our heavenly Father for their faithful and godly instruction. They have truly raised us in the fear of His great name. We pray the Lord will continue to bless and keep them in His care.

"But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17).

✿ Steve and Neva Feenstra

✿ Robert and Debra Doezema

✿ Roger and Anne Veldman

✿ Henry and Dorothy DeJong

✿ Glenn and Beth Feenstra

✿ Charles and Heidi Doezema

✿ Timothy and Joan Kaiser

50 grandchildren

6 great-grandchildren

Holland, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

We rejoice with our parents and grandparents,

BOB and RUTH GARVELINK,

who celebrated their 50th anniversary on June 27, 2008. We thank our heavenly Father for blessing us with our Christian parents and grandparents who have provided us with a covenant home and godly instruction throughout our lives. We thank the Lord for the many years He has given them together and pray He may continue to bless and preserve them in the years to come.

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

✿ Craig and Samantha Garvelink

✿ Jeff and Denise Lanting

✿ David and Kim Monsma

✿ Dan and Pam Kramer

and grand/great-grand children

Jenison, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of Doon PRC wishes to express sympathy to fellow members Jim and Brenda Regnerus and their family in the death of Jim's mother,

MARTHA REGNERUS.

Our prayer for the family is that they may find comfort in God's Word. "I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope" (Psalm 130:5).

Rev. David Overway, Pres.
Vi De Boer, Sec'y/Treas

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of the PRC of South Holland express Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Edward VanderMeulen and family, Mr. and Mrs. Ryan Regnerus and family, and Mr. and Mrs. Homer DeJong and family in the sudden death of their mother, grandmother, and great grandmother,

MRS. MARTHA REGNERUS.

"Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (Psalm 73: 24-25).

Rev. N. Langerak, President
Bert Worries, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The congregation of Byron Center PRC extends its Christian sympathy to the Sid Miedema and Duane Mingerink families in the death of their sister and aunt,

CAROL ANN MIEDEMA.

May they receive comfort in the words of Jesus found in John 11:25, 26: "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet he shall live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

Rev. R. VanOverloop, President
Mike Elzinga, Clerk

July 2008 SUMMER CLASS SERIES

The Sanctifying Power of Suffering
Prof. Herman Hanko

in Hope Church, Walker
on Tuesdays at 7:30

July 1: The Meaning of Sanctification
July 8: Does the Believer Grow
in Sanctification?
July 15: How Suffering
Works Sanctification
July 22: A Study of Selected Texts
on Suffering

Sponsored by:
The Reformed Witness Committee
Hope Protestant Reformed Church
1580 Ferndale Ave. SW
Grand Rapids, MI 49534

For tapes of the series contact
Ryan Morris at:
hoperwc@gmail.com

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Christian Fellowship Group expresses Christian sympathy to the family of

BETTY BRUINING.

We will miss her being a part of our monthly outings. But we say with the psalmist: "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

The Special Needs
Christian Fellowship Group

NOTIFICATION OF CANDIDACY

All Protestant Reformed congregations are hereby informed that the 2008 synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America has declared Mr. Heath Bleyenbergh a candidate for the gospel ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches. Candidate Bleyenbergh will be eligible for a call on or after July 12, 2008.

Mr. Bleyenbergh's contact information: see page 428.

Don Doezeema, Stated Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Women's Wednesday Morning Bible Study of the Southwest PRC and their leader, Rev. A. denHartog, express sincere Christian sympathy to fellow member Mrs. Oscar Faber in the death of her beloved husband,

MR. OSCAR FABER.

May she receive strength and comfort from God's Word. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:1, 2).

NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 10, 2008 at the Trinity Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, MI. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 10, 2008.

Jon J. Huisken, Stated Clerk

Reformed Witness Hour

July 2006

Date	Topic	Text
July 6	"I Am God"	Psalms 46:8-11
July 13	"Job's Confession"	Job 1:20-22
July 20	"Fear Lest We Come Short"	Hebrews 4:1, 2
July 27	"God's Worship Preserved in Babylon"	Daniel 6