

# THE *April 1, 2008* STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Volume 84 ◆ Number 13

## And Peter

*But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.*

Mark 16:7

**A**t the crack of dawn several women left the city of Jerusalem. Their mission was to anoint the body of Jesus. They had witnessed His death on the previous Friday. They had followed His body to the sepulcher of Joseph of Arimathea. And now on Sunday morning they proceeded to the sepulcher to perform what they considered to be their last labor of love for their Lord.

When they arrived at the sepulcher they received the surprise of their life. The stone was rolled away. The grave was empty. A young man clothed in long white garments (obviously an angel) was present. He informed them that Jesus was risen.

And then he told the women, "But go your way, tell his disciples

and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you."

What concerns us is the fact that the angel made special mention of Peter. The angel singled Peter out. This was very significant in light of Peter's denial of Jesus on Thursday. This message of Jesus through the angel indicated that Peter was very much on the mind of the Lord. The Lord still loved and cared for Peter.

This mention of Peter by the risen Lord through the angel is also important for us. We have often denied Jesus, just as Peter did. From this passage we may know that the risen Lord still loves and cares for us, even as He did Peter.

### A terrible reminder!

The words of the angel repeated to Peter must have been a terrible reminder of the previous Thursday evening.

On that night Peter had denied Jesus three times. This was something Jesus had warned Peter about as they were leaving the upper room for Gethsemane. Peter expressed confidently that this would never happen. He was

ready even to die for the Lord. But deny Jesus Peter did—three times. After Jesus was arrested, Peter followed at a distance to the courtyard of Caiaphas' palace. There he was confronted three different times with the accusation that he had been with Jesus, that he was a follower of Jesus. And three times Peter denied it. With an oath he even confirmed that he never knew Jesus. After the third denial, Jesus passed by, the cock crew, and Peter ran out into the night with bitter tears. He had denied his Master.

And now the word of the angel brought back the bitter memory of that night. There was only one reason for the angel to single out Peter. Peter had singled himself out with his infamous denial. Certainly the women had caught the mention of Peter and reported it back to the disciples and Peter. Perhaps it had been forgotten initially because of the excitement. But upon further reflection, they certainly remembered and relayed this to Peter. What a terrible reminder to Peter of what he had done.

What Peter did in denying the Lord, we have all done in one way or another.

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

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

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To see how true this is, we must understand the exact character of Peter's denial. In essence Peter denied that he was Jesus' disciple. That was the accusation leveled against him in the courtyard. "You were with Him, weren't you? You are one of His followers. You believe His claim to be the Christ, the Son of God. You think that this is the Son of David, and you stand with Him in His efforts to establish His kingdom. You serve this man. He is your Lord and Master." And Peter denied it all.

But how often have not we done the same. We probably have not done that verbally, as did Peter. Although someday in the face of persecution we may. But we do deny Jesus by our actions. Actions speak louder than words. In fact, by our actions we can effectively contradict what we say and confess with our mouth. And so, when we do not live as the disciples of Christ, we deny Jesus just as surely as did Peter. We deny Jesus when we do not oppose the profaning of His name. We deny Jesus when we neglect the study of the Scriptures. We deny Jesus when we do not live as citizens of the kingdom of heaven but conform our lives to the pattern of this world.

Oh yes, we have often denied Jesus.

#### **A blessed comfort!**

The message of Jesus through the angel, making special reference to Peter, was a tremendous comfort to Peter.

To appreciate this we must see Peter's denial in light of Jesus' instruction in Matthew 10:32-33: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in

heaven." Jesus was speaking to His disciples about the enemies they would have to face in the future. Jesus emphasized that whosoever will deny Him before these enemies, He will deny before the Father in heaven.

Peter had denied Jesus before men. The enemies of Jesus had confronted him with the charge that he was one of Jesus' followers. And Peter had denied it. His denial was not so much out of fear for his life. Peter denied Jesus because he was offended by Jesus' refusal to show His power and defend Himself. And so, from Peter's point of view, there was nothing left for him. He did not anticipate the resurrection. And he had denied Jesus. Would not Jesus in heaven deny him before the Father?

But now came the astounding news. Jesus is risen. And through the angel, Jesus had made special mention of Peter. This could mean only one thing—Jesus was assuring Peter that He still loved him and counted him as one of His disciples. He still cared for Peter. Jesus had not disowned him, but still claimed him as His own. Jesus lived, and Peter could say, "I still belong to Jesus."

That this was true was affirmed by the fact that Jesus ap-

peared to Peter later that same morning, as we read in Luke 24:34.

What a comfort this was to Peter!

That Jesus still claimed Peter as His own meant that the resurrection was also Peter's salvation.

Jesus' resurrection is an essential part of the work of salvation. The Heidelberg Catechism points out in Lord's Day 17 the glorious significance of Jesus' resurrection for salvation. Jesus' resurrection is the

proof of our justification. His resurrection is also the power of a new life of obedience to the Lord. And Jesus' resurrection is God's pledge of our final resurrection into glory.

This great salvation of the resurrection, however, is not for all. It is only for those whom Jesus claims as His own, for those who belong to Jesus.

This also included Peter!

At this point, Peter did not fully understand the importance of Jesus' resurrection for his salvation. However, later he would. The resurrection meant that his sins were truly blotted out at the cross. Perhaps Jesus related this to Peter at His appearance to him later that morning. But more. In Jesus' resurrection Peter found the power of a new life, the power to be faithful and not faithless. And in the resurrection Peter had the assurance of the final resurrection into glory.

#### **A sovereign love!**

In all this we see the sovereign love of God.

That God's love for us is sovereign means, negatively, that God's love for us is not motivated by our love to Him. Positively, it means that God loves us first. Our love to Him is the inevitable fruit of His love to us. It also means that God's love is unconditional. There are not conditions we need to meet to have God's love. And finally it means that God's love is unchangeable. He will love us no matter what happens or how we fail.

This is also true of Jesus' love for us. Jesus loves us for God's sake, because God loves us. And so Jesus' love for us as our Mediator has the same characteristics as God's love.

We see the sovereign character of that love in Jesus' dealings with Peter. Jesus did not deny Peter, even though Peter denied Him. Jesus rather gave His life as a sacrifice at the cross to cover also Peter's sin. And then Jesus, after

*We deny Jesus  
when we do not  
live as citizens  
of the kingdom  
of heaven  
but conform  
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to the pattern  
of this world.*

His resurrection, sought Peter out, assured Peter of His love, and restored him.

How then are we to understand the very clear warning of Jesus in Matthew 10:33, “But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven”? Here Jesus referred to those who persist in denying Him, who deny Him without repentance. But in His sovereign love, Jesus also worked repentance

in the heart of Peter, so that Jesus could and does confess also Peter before the Father.


And what of us?

By the sovereign love and grace of God, we also belong to Jesus Christ. We believe in Him as our Savior and Mediator. By that faith we also are His disciples.

But in the weakness of faith we sometimes deny Him, especially by our actions.

The same Jesus that in love

sought out Peter, brought him to repentance, and assured him of the salvation of the resurrection, seeks us out to bring us to the same repentance and assurance.

In the consciousness of that great love, let us repent of all our sins, also the sin of denying our Savior. Then we will hear from the risen Lord in the preaching that He still owns us and will save us to the uttermost in the power of His death and resurrection. 

## Editorial

Prof. Russell Dykstra

# Seeking the Unity of the Church (6) The Benefits

**E**very faithful Reformed or Presbyterian church must seek to manifest the unity of Christ's church by pursuing contacts and when possible establishing relationships with other churches of like faith. God's church *is* one, and God demands that believers strive to maintain this unity (Eph. 4:3-7). Surely God delights in the manifestation of that oneness.

God commands this also for the *good* of His church on earth. That is to say, a church or denomination enjoys tangible *benefits* when she seeks the unity of the church in a responsible and proper way. This concluding article on church unity will draw attention to some of these blessings.

### Strength in Unity

One obvious benefit to the church is the enjoyment of strength in unity. This strength is not political, a unity that gives recogni-

tion and clout, so that a church in association with others can exert more influence in the world. On the contrary, the strength of the church is spiritual. Nonetheless there is strength in unity. Every believer recognizes that one Christian standing alone in the world is very vulnerable to temptation and spiritual attack. United to fellow believers in the body of the church, the same believer is much stronger spiritually.

The same is true of the faithful church of Jesus Christ. When one church or small denomination stands alone, she is vulnerable. The world despises and persecutes her with the taunt, “Where is your God?” The false or apostatizing churches join in, demanding, “How can your doctrine be right since you are alone in what you teach? No other church in the world teaches this. Give up your stand.”

Then the little church begins to look about. And she discovers other churches teaching the same doctrines of sovereign grace. What an encouragement! It is encouraging for Reformed believers to read Augustine, Luther, and Calvin, and

other faithful theologians of the past and realize—we are standing in the same line as they. We teach the same truths. However, those departed faithful theologians did not face all the same issues that the church faces today. Thus we do not get explicit support from those theologians in all areas. For that reason, finding a true sister church that loves the faith of the Reformation is a joy! A church that rejects the lie in its present-day forms; that stands against the attacks on sovereign grace; that has endured ridicule and persecution for the sake of the truth. Such a discovery is an inestimable blessing from God upon a faithful Presbyterian or Reformed church. It gives unspeakable encouragement, especially in the last days of great and widespread apostasy.

### Self Improvement

In contacts with other faithful churches, a church can seek, ought to look for, self-improvement. Consider a few examples of this from everyday life. Every wise carpenter is interested in seeing how another builder constructs a house.

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*Previous article in this series: March 15, 2008, p. 269.*



Every good teacher likes to know how another teacher presents his or her material. Mothers compare notes on how best to handle problems in raising children. Why? Because they know that they might learn something beneficial for their own work. They may discover a better product, learn a better method, or find a solution to a knotty problem.

The same is true for the church. As she looks over the “spiritual house” that a faithful sister church is building in her land and culture, she desires to learn. She is vitally interested in the truth of God and in good order in the church. Perhaps the definitions of some of the doctrines in the sister church are more precise and biblical. How has this or that doctrine developed in the sister church? How has their history and how have the battles they fought directed and molded their teaching? Can we learn from the manner in which they treat material in their ecclesiastical assemblies? As to their church order, instruction of youth, mid-week church meetings, their Psalm book, and so much more—what can we learn from them that will improve us as churches?

To return to our illustration for a moment—some carpenters are foolish and proud. They go through a new house merely in order to find fault with the construction. Their assumption is that everything they do is better than what this other fellow does. They expect to find nothing that they can use in their work. And lo and behold, they discover nothing profitable.

Churches can be like that too. Such churches assume that they are the purest manifestation of the church of Christ on the face of the whole earth. Other churches, they are certain, can learn from *them*. But they should not expect to learn from others. Any flow of benefits will be one way.

This is ecclesiastical pride. All pride is offensive to the Holy God. Such a church must hear the in-

spired irony of Paul’s rebuke of the Corinthians: “What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?” (I Cor. 14:36).

To be clear on this, it is true that each believer must be convinced that his church is the purest manifestation of the church in his area or country. Indeed, if a believer is not convinced of that, but rather becomes convinced that another church more clearly manifests the marks of the true church, he must do something about that. He is bound by love to seek to instruct his own church and turn her to the right way. And if he cannot convince her, he has an obligation to join the church that is more faithful.

However, that is not the same as assuming that one’s church is clearer and better in every respect than every other church in the world. Or having the attitude that other churches in the world can gain from us, but we can gain little or nothing from others. Recall John Calvin’s observation that “there is no man who is not involved in some mist of ignorance.” Surely that can be said of every church as well, since every church is comprised of sinful people. Until the Lord returns, the church must constantly be seeking clearer understanding, deeper insights, and greater faithfulness to the Lord in worship and doctrine.

We believe that, for the most part, this spirit prevails in the Protestant Reformed Churches. Her ministers do not read only the *Standard Bearer*, Herman Hoeksema’s *Reformed Dogmatics*, and other RFPA books. (At least, they had better not!) They have been instructed in seminary to read widely—to read many magazines and books, also those

with which they disagree. Protestant Reformed ministers also attend conferences put on by other churches. Why do all this? Because they are wise builders. They want to learn. Thus they compare. They may discover that they prefer the way that the PRC “does it.” They may disagree with both what and how another church teaches. Sometimes comparisons result only in a deeper conviction concerning the truth as maintained in the PRC. They are not looking for change for its own sake. They do not seek to be “novel.” They are grounded in the Reformed faith. They stand squarely on the confessions.

However, often, by their reading and listening to others, ministers learn. They are enriched theologically and grow spiritually through books and conferences. They are encouraged in their ministry.

So it can be with the Protestant Reformed Churches. We seek contacts in North America and in distant lands. Sometimes the result is that we recognize that the other church is too far away doctrinally for it to be wise to pursue further contact with them. Sometimes the other church is moving

away from the truth. But we continue to search for new contacts, believing that we can learn from the strengths of another church, that is, a faithful, Scripture-believing, creed-maintaining, God-honoring church.

Seeking the unity of the church becomes a blessing to us.

### Wisdom of Counselors

Sister-church relationships can give the blessing of profiting from the wisdom of others. This wisdom is of two kinds.

*Until the Lord returns, the church must constantly be seeking clearer understanding, deeper insights, and greater faithfulness to the Lord in worship and doctrine.*

The first might be described as the culminated wisdom of the tradition. Churches in every tradition have worked through problems and have left a record of how they dealt with them. When a Protestant Reformed church has a problem, the officebearers research past decisions—of the congregation, of the classis, of the synod, and even of the mother church. They look at other Reformed denominations as well. That is wise. If the PRC has relationships with other denominations, she can also inquire whether the other churches have dealt with particular issues in their history. Perhaps they have a different perspective, perhaps a valuable precedent to offer.

Churches can also seek wisdom from the current officebearers of a church in ecclesiastical fellowship. In a multitude of counselors there is safety (Prov. 11:14). A tangible benefit of having a sister church is that a church can benefit from the sister's judgment. In some situations, it is good to seek the advice of a sister church. If churches regularly send wise and knowledgeable delegates to attend the sister's gatherings, these ecclesiastical assemblies enjoy this benefit year by year.

### **Clearer, sharper, united witness to the truth**

Iron sharpens iron. Churches that seek unity with other faithful churches will, through their contact, be better equipped to defend the truth against the lie, and be better equipped to promote the truth, to preach the gospel, especially in different lands and cultures.

Why is this? Consider how a missionary becomes better equipped. As a missionary works with people in a foreign land, he learns much about how best to proclaim the one gospel of salvation by grace. Paul demonstrates this. He approached the Athenians on Mars Hill (Acts 17) very differently than he did the Jews in Antioch (Acts 13).

Contact with a faithful church,

particularly one in a foreign land, forces a church to evaluate herself as to how she presents the message of the gospel. She wants to convey clearly and precisely the doctrines she maintains to the potential sister church. If the other church does not see a particular point, does not understand, what is the cause? Is cultural difference part of the problem? Is the presentation unclear? An excellent opportunity presents itself to evaluate how we present the truth! Here are people who are friendly to the gospel of sovereign grace. What are we saying, or how are we saying it, that it is not clear to them?

The result should be that a church learns how to present the gospel in another culture more clearly and precisely. In that connection, seeking the unity of the church gives opportunities to share with other churches the blessed truth that a church has received from God.

### **And so much more**

We cannot elaborate on all the ways that sister churches can benefit each other. Consider these advantages listed by just one member of the Contact Committee:

- Supporting and encouraging each other in doctrine and life.
- Watching each other as regards faithfulness—mutual accountability.
- Defending each other from attacks from others.
- Working together to develop the truth.
- Learning to overlook and put aside minor differences and focus on what really matters.
- Financial assistance.
- Seminary training.
- Ministers on loan.
- Assistance in mission endeavors.

Those are tangible benefits. Another Contact Committee member pointed out the spiritual benefits to the individual who visits another faithful church. This includes the blessing of meeting God's people in a faraway land and


culture and experiencing unity in the faith. It certainly gives a new, experiential appreciation for the confession "I believe an holy catholic church" and "the communion of saints." And then there are those who find a spouse in a faithful church, and the blessings grow and multiply.

The list of benefits could be longer. The time fails to tell them all.

However, the most significant incentive must still be mentioned. To seek church unity is to seek God's glory. For church unity manifests the power of God's grace, and thus gives glory to God.

Consider the glorious work that is the church of God. This church is chosen in eternity; born in time in every nation, tribe, culture, and race. One church is gathered, defended, and preserved by the Son through His Spirit and Word out of all the world. Every member has a place in the local church, and in the glorious body. But this powerful work of God is so marred by our sins that often it is difficult to behold the glory of the work of building the church. Division obscures the glory of the one work, when, "the members of the Church being severed, the body lies bleeding."

On the other hand, when the church is unified in the truth, the power of God is on display. When faithful churches do settle differences and find agreement in the one truth, surmount divisions caused by national boundaries, distance, race, culture, and language, and manifest the unity of the body of Christ—to what is this astounding feat to be ascribed? Simply to the grace of God and the power of the Spirit. It is all of God. And in that unity, the catholicity of the one church manifests itself. And the powerful work of God shines forth. A glorious work.

Let us also, therefore, manifest the willingness of Calvin to cross ten seas to seek the unity of the church. 

## Henry Danhof (3) The Pastor of Sully CRC

**A**n officebearer in Christ's church entering into office is in need of courage. He needs courage because his task of caring for Christ's flock on behalf of the Good Shepherd Himself is not a task he can accomplish in his own strength. So it was with Joshua when he was given the work of leading Israel into Canaan. Four times in Joshua 1, God encourages him with the exhortation, "Be strong and of a good courage."

God Himself supplies that courage. He did for Joshua, and He does for His officebearers today. God supplies that courage with the promise, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee... the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Josh. 1:5, 9). The officebearer is assured that he does not undertake his office alone, but God will give him strength, wisdom, discernment, firmness, patience, and all of the other gifts needed to perform his duties. Another way of saying this is that God not only *calls* a man into office, but He also *qualifies* him for office. Here is encouragement for ministers, elders, and deacons! Their work does not depend upon them and their own strength, but upon God and His strength.

Henry Danhof is an illustration of the truth that God qualifies the man whom He calls. Danhof's first years in the ministry were demand-

ing, especially for a relatively young and inexperienced man. But he was given strength by God to do good work in his first charge, so that the congregation would later recall concerning him, that "the Lord richly blessed the labors of this youthful shepherd."<sup>1</sup>

Henry Danhof's first call to the ministry came in the summer of 1910 from the Christian Reformed Church in Sully, IA. Henry accepted the call, and he and his wife, Annie, packed up their belongings, left Grand Rapids, MI, and headed for the congregation in Sully. The congregation was delighted at the arrival of their candidate, the fourth man they had called in their vacancy. Henry was installed by Rev. S. Bouma on September 18, 1910, and became Reverend H. Danhof.

When Henry and Annie arrived, the congregation saw a man whose appearance was striking. He was not tall, nor was he athletic, but he exuded a strength and firmness of character that could not be missed. He always dressed in black, and sported a Frenchman mustache that extended a full two inches into the air on either side of his mouth. Yet it was not so much his appearance as his personality that made a lasting impression on people. The saints in Sully soon came to know their pastor as a very intelligent man. The interest he had as a boy in every facet of the creation was evident in his ministry, for he could speak knowledgeably on nearly any topic. Not only was he intelligent, he also had a strong character; some would even say stubborn or hard-headed. This

trait would manifest itself again later in his ministry, when he and Herman Hoeksema would part ways.

But it was especially Henry's gift for preaching that stood out in Sully. He was an excellent preacher. His sermons were interesting and deep. In keeping with his character, he would often thunder from the pulpit. The congregation knew they were hearing God's Word preached to them, as is evident from their later recollection that he was a "very 'spirit-filled' man."<sup>2</sup>

The congregation in Sully was busy with improvements to their buildings when Henry and Annie arrived. The church was in the process of constructing a new, larger building for worship, which was dedicated in 1911, to the great delight of the congregation. Apparently the parsonage was in poor condition, for the consistory made efforts to find a more suitable dwelling for their minister. They decided to build a new parsonage and new horse stables to house the horses and buggies that were the means of transportation in that era. Henry and Annie moved into the new parsonage, which was "modern in every respect, save gas and electric light."

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1. Sully Christian Reformed Church 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Program, p. 8. The information in this article comes from several Sully CRC anniversary programs, as well as the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary program of Sully Christian School.

2. Sully Christian Reformed Church 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Program, p. 4.

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*Previous article in this series: February 1, 2008, p. 208.*



At the same time that the congregation was busy providing a home for the Danhofs, Henry was busy laboring among the congregation. It is plain that Danhof's strength in Sully did not come from himself, but from God. The evidence is that, although Henry was relatively young and inexperienced, and although he had an enormous amount of work to do, God used his work to prosper and bless the congregation of Sully.

Henry Danhof's labors included the normal work required of every minister: making and preaching two sermons each week; teaching the catechism classes; visiting the sick and shut-ins; chairing the consistory meetings; leading societies; and more. These labors were no small tasks in a congregation the size of Sully. When Henry arrived in 1910, there were 48 families (285 total souls); when he left in 1914, there were 69 families (420 total souls). There were more than 150 catechism students to teach each week and more than 50 young people in the Young People's Society.

Danhof and the consistory also had to make decisions about the life and worship of the congregation. For example, there were some complaints about the organ music that was being played before the worship service began, and the consistory had to admonish the organists to use proper music.

In addition to this work on behalf of his congregation, Danhof had denominational work to do. His intelligence and capacity for work must have been recognized by the churches early on, for he was appointed Stated Clerk of Classis Pella.

Not only was he busy in the church, but Henry's family life became busier as well. Very soon he had more than only a young wife to care for, for God blessed the Danhofs with the births of two children, Clarence and Jeannette, during their years in Sully.

One of the most lasting works

of Henry Danhof in Sully was the repeated exhortation that the parents of Sully must establish a Christian school for the education of their children. Already in 1908, before Danhof arrived, a few men in the Men's Society agreed that a Christian school was needed. At a subsequent meeting of interested parents, a Society of Christian Primary Instruction was organized and a school board was elected. The board worked hard to encourage the parents to build a school, but as time wore on, the enthusiasm for the cause began to wane.

When Danhof arrived in 1910, he very quickly made the cause of a Christian school in Sully his own cause. Early in 1911, a general meeting was called, and the young pastor pressed the need for a Christian school and encouraged the members to organize several "propaganda meetings," as they were called.

The fruit of Danhof's labors was a plan for a summer school. Although not the final goal, it was hoped that these classes, held in the consistory room of the church, could be used as a stepping stone to a full-fledged Christian day school. This summer school opened its doors in 1911.

After two years of overseeing the summer school, the board, with Danhof urging them, made every effort to establish a real Christian school by the fall of 1913. The result was that a school house was constructed, a full-time teacher hired, and the doors were opened for the school year beginning September 1913.

Interesting and instructive for the Protestant Reformed Churches is the conviction with which Sully Christian School was founded. At every opportunity, the message was proclaimed: God and His covenant demand that we establish a Christian school. At the very first meeting of parents in 1908, two area ministers "made a sincere and impressing plea for the covenantal promise pledged in the baptismal

vow by the parents toward their children, God's heritage."<sup>3</sup>

After the first two years of summer school were completed, it was noted that many had been won over to the cause of the Christian school through these efforts. Now more than ever, the families saw the need for an elementary school "in order that the baptismal vows might be fulfilled according to the demands of our covenant God and that the entire instruction rendered should be in harmony with the Scripture."<sup>4</sup>

The efforts to establish a school did not go unchallenged. There were several in the congregation who opposed the school vigorously. In fact, there was more opposition from within the church than from without. And yet, those who persevered always maintained that they were following God's covenant command, and that those who opposed them were disobeying God's covenant command. "There was much opposition by those who failed to see their covenant responsibilities, [but] the Lord does not forsake those who seek to follow His commands and shoulder the task set before them."<sup>5</sup>

Because the school was founded upon that conviction, it was able to weather some fierce trials. Right from the beginning, the conviction that this Christian school was the demand of the covenant motivated several families who lived too far away, to sell their farms and move as close to Sully as they could. Later, when an anti-Dutch sentiment swept through the neighboring counties, and the members received death threats from unknown persecutors, as well as orders from the county seat to shut the school down, the parents maintained the school. The men of the congregation even volunteered to take turns sitting in the school building through the night, on the lookout for arsonists. That kind of conviction warms the hearts of Reformed men and women, because that conviction it-



self is Reformed. The conviction that Christian schools are a demand of the covenant, and that they are worth maintaining even in the face of persecution, is nothing new in the church. It is a conviction that goes back to the Reformation, and indeed, to the earliest years of Christianity itself.

Danhof's work with Sully Christian School was not finished even when he left Sully in 1914. In 1920, he was invited back to

speak at a School Society meeting. Again, as he had so often in the past, Danhof urged the cause of Christian school education upon the saints of Sully, and they "returned home with happy and thankful hearts to our covenant God for His guiding hand so clearly shown...."<sup>6</sup>

From Henry Danhof's time in Sully we can see that God not only calls, but also qualifies men for office. Let every elder, deacon, and

minister—especially the first-time officebearers—heed God's encouragement, "Be strong, and of a good courage; for the LORD thy God is with thee withersoever thou goest."



3. School for Christian Instruction 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Fifty Years in Retrospect, p. 12.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., p. 15.

*Go Ye Into All the World*

*Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma*

## Missions: the Work of the Church

**T**o perform the work of missions correctly takes knowledge of the Scriptures. There are right ways and wrong ways to conduct mission work. God demands more of His church and people than the attitude that because other churches are doing it we should be doing it too. Sometimes saints in our churches who take an active interest in missions but are unhappy with the slow results of mission work cast longing eyes on the church growth movement or the prosperity religions and ask, "Why are not we doing what they are doing? Look at the masses of people these movements reach. Look at how excited they are." As a result, these saints want to adopt the methods such movements use, without examining them according

to Scripture. This is not to say that our churches cannot learn from others. But neither ought we blindly follow after methods that are contrary to God's Word. Mission work and methods that carry away God's approval and blessing must be grounded in the Scriptures.

What we define as missions and the work of missions depends upon, in the main, a proper ecclesiology (doctrine of the church). Although all the truth must bear upon proper mission work, one's concept of the church and her calling will have a direct influence on it. The Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church makes this a point in its manual on church planting in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

It is vital for the church planter and those who work with him to have a well-thought-out concept of the nature and purpose of the church. The doctrine of the church must be a well-studied subject for those who have responsibility to steer and guide the de-

velopment of a new church. The Reformed faith presents a deep and robust understanding of the nature, purpose, work, and structure of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. These Biblical concepts impact every aspect of the work and ministry of church planting. So it is important from the beginning of the process to stress what the Bible teaches about the kind of local church Christ intends to build.<sup>1</sup>

For this reason, it is foolish to jump into any kind of discussion on missions without having a thorough knowledge of the doctrine of the church.

It is this Reformed ecclesiology that is reflected in our definition of mission work. The 1962 synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches defined missions as "the work of God in Christ *through the*

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*Previous article in this series: January 1, 2008, p. 164.*

1. The Committee of Home Missions and Church Extension of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, *Planting an Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (Willow Grove, PA: The Committee on Home Missions and Church Planting of the OPC, 2002), p. 5.

*official ministry of the Word by the church.*" My own definition is based on the same understanding: it is "that work of our ascended Lord by which He, *through the church, proclaims the gospel.*"<sup>2</sup> The work of missions belongs to the official ministry of the church.

### **The official work of the church**

The chief task of the church institute in this world is the preaching of the gospel. The church is not a social institution; she is not a medical institution; she is not a business. It is not her calling to entertain the masses, shelter the homeless, feed the world (except, of course, with the gospel), or tackle the political issues of the day. The church institute has been given by God the work of preaching the gospel of salvation to sinners. This is the work to which she must devote herself. This is an *official* work, that is, the church carries out this work by means of the offices established in the church. God has ordained in the church pastors and teachers to preach the gospel. God has ordained elders to oversee and govern the preaching and preacher. God has ordained deacons to see to it that the work of the ministry is supported by the members of the church. Preaching belongs to the church institute in her offices.

Especially does this work belong to the office of a preacher. Not just anyone may declare himself a preacher and stand up in the midst of the congregation of the church and begin preaching. God calls and sends men as preachers by means of the church itself. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent" (Rom. 10:13-15)? In keeping with this passage of Scripture, Reformed churches have al-

ways maintained that to be a pastor and teacher in the church a man must be called by Christ, properly trained, and ordained by the church.

This is also revealed in the Greek term used in Romans 10 (see also I Cor. 1) for "preach." Literally this word means "herald." This term reveals the official character of the preaching. A herald was an ambassador appointed by a king to announce his decrees to his subjects. Not just anyone could presume to speak officially on behalf of the king. Others might pass the news along, but it was the herald alone that spoke on behalf of the king himself. The same is true of the preacher and his preaching. He is appointed by the King of the church, Jesus Christ, to declare to all the will of God. He is the ambassador of King Jesus, who is sent out on official business to publish the Word of God. He alone is given this task. It belongs to none other. Others may pass that Word along by way of witness. But the church is called to preach the gospel of salvation through the office of the pastor and teacher. Preaching is the official work of the church.

The same is true on the mission field. The missionary sent out by the church to preach on the mission field holds the same office and authority of Christ as the minister of an established church. The Form of Ordination of Missionaries makes this clear.

Although all ministers of the Word have in common that to them is committed the preaching of the gospel,...and although from the difference of the field of labor no difference is resulting concerning office, authority, or dignity, since all possess the same mission, the same office, and the same authority, yet notwithstanding this, it is necessary that some labor in the congregations already established, while others are called and sent to preach the gospel to those without, in order to bring them to Christ.<sup>3</sup>

It makes no difference whether the Word of God is proclaimed to those within the church, or outside of the church, the task of preaching belongs to the office of the minister of the gospel who is officially sent out by the church to preach.

This calling of the church through the office of the pastor and teacher is a fundamental principle of Reformed mission work. Many in Reformed circles are familiar with *The Church Order Commentary* on the Reformed Church Order co-authored by Idzerd Van Dellen and Martin Monsma. Less known is the treatise Martin Monsma later wrote entitled *The Fundamental Principles of Reformed Evangelism*. By the term "evangelism" Monsma meant the preaching of the gospel to the unchurched and unconverted in Christian lands. His studies in evangelism were included in a book that was a compilation of writings on missions. The book is entitled: *Reformed Evangelism*. Monsma writes:

However, let us ever remember that *the work of evangelism in its more purposeful and organized form is definitely the prerogative, the privilege, and duty of the instituted or organized church.* "The manifold wisdom of God," must "be made known through the church" (Eph. 3:10). *The Church* is the pillar and ground of the truth. (I Tim. 3:15) Christ commanded *his Church* through the eleven disciples to preach the Gospel to all men (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15). And it was through *the church* at Antioch that the Spirit separated Paul and Barnabas unto the task of preaching the Gospel to those still in darkness and unbelief. (Acts 13:2)<sup>4</sup>

Mission work is *the preaching of the gospel* to those outside of the confines of the church institute, by the church and through those called to preach. That is it. It is that simple. An unauthorized group of people (those not sent by the church institute and/or called by the church to preach), who go some place to help people in their poverty and to witness of Christ,

may be performing a kind and benevolent deed, and might even leave a positive witness for Christ. But this is *not* mission work. There are, of course, many matters of a practical nature that surround the preaching that others may perform on a mission field. But we may not lose our focus. Mission work is the preaching of the gospel by the church. We emphasize this because today all kinds of humane efforts go under the name of mission work. Some view missions as the church attempting to make this world a better place to live. That becomes their focus. The official preaching of salvation to a world lost in sin and under God's curse is secondary—even a side issue.

In contrast to this earthly focus of many, the mission (commission) of the church is to preach the Word! This is how God is pleased to call people out of darkness into the light of salvation. That, after all, is what is of grave concern to the church, the salvation of the souls of God's people who are out there in that mass of fallen humanity. Who they are and where they are we do not know. God alone knows. It may be that man or woman we least expect to believe whom God chooses to call unto salvation. But we do know one glorious truth: the preaching is the power of God unto salvation! So the church preaches and is instant in season and out of season, calling men to faith and repentance—and God uses that preaching of the Word to save His people. That is mission work.

### **What makes a person a missionary?**

In that connection, we need to distinguish the work of a missionary from others who may help him on a field of labor. It is already clear from what we have written that a missionary is one called and sent by the church to preach the gospel of salvation. But let it be understood, that is exactly what makes a missionary a missionary:


he is a preacher. There must be a clear, concise separation between a missionary and those who help him on a field of labor.

I make a particular point of mentioning this matter because, hand in hand with the misunderstanding today of what constitutes mission work, is a blurring of what makes a person a missionary. When I labored on the island of Jamaica as missionary, my family and I had close contact with another family from the States. This family was asked to come to Jamaica and teach the students in a Baptist Bible School how to support themselves using the land surrounding the school. They were in all reality farmers who had sold their farm and come to Jamaica to till the ground around the school there. We really enjoyed the fellowship of this family since the children were about the same age as ours. But I could never quite figure out then why they were called a missionary family. When reflecting on this later I realized that the concept of missions in many churches is that anyone who goes to labor on a mission field is a missionary.

But this cannot be established biblically. Nowhere does the Bible teach us that those who helped Paul in his labors on the mission field were themselves missionaries. I am not arguing that this man and his family did not serve an important function on behalf of missions while laboring in Jamaica. I am not belittling the sacrifice that he made on behalf of the gospel. In fact, I commended him and his wife for it! There is a place for such people on the mission field—especially a foreign field. But they were not missionaries.

I realize that some will say that I am majoring in minors here. But I am not. In much of our present church world the preaching of the gospel is becoming obsolete. For some time now it has been replaced by a social gospel that is at heart humanism—the desire to help hu-

manity out of their poverty and social ills. This type of labor in essence requires no missionary. It requires no preaching of salvation from sin by one sent by the church. Yet, instead of throwing away the term “missionary,” the term is being redefined. Everyone who goes to a mission field, it is said, is a missionary. Many churches that insist that an ordained minister must preach the Word in the established church have no qualms about calling everyone who goes to labor on a mission field a missionary. Churches that will not allow women into the office of pastor and teacher in established congregations have no trouble at all sending them out as missionaries. It is as if a missionary is not of the same status as ordained pastors in established churches. We must be so very careful in our mission work to remain faithful to what God's Word teaches us regarding the church, her work, and her offices. A missionary is a pastor and teacher officially sent out by the church to preach the gospel to those outside the church.

This being said, I do *not* believe that all this eliminates the role members of the church have in our mission work. According to God's Word, members of the church *must* have a part in the mission work of the church. We will deal with this whole subject in a future article. Before considering their role, we want to address the danger of para-church organizations that assume to themselves the work of missions. 

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2. Confer our article “Defining Missions” in the November 15, 2007 issue of the *Standard Bearer*.

3. The Form of Ordination of Missionaries, adopted by the Synod of Dordt in 1618-19 and still used in many Reformed churches today. It is found in the back of the *Psalter*, the songbook used in the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

4. Grand Rapids Board of Evangelism of the Christian Reformed Churches, *Reformed Evangelism* (Baker Book House, 1948), p. 18.



## The Fruit of the Spirit (4): Joy (2)

**I**n the previous article about “Joy,” we learned that Christ calls us unto the production of His wonder-fruit by His Spirit through His Word, which includes, for example, the command, “Rejoice in the Lord, and again I say, Rejoice!” (Phil. 4:4)

Because in fulfillment of that call of Christ the sovereign Spirit works in and through us the gift of joy, we consciously learn and experience this joy according to our new nature. This joy is not a mere emotion, although it is often true that, because of this joy in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are moved emotionally. This is a virtue that is connected with the knowledge and conviction of our faith. Hence, as the Lord works this fruit of joy in us by His Word and Spirit, we rejoice for knowable and worthy reasons. In antithetical contrast to all the sinful and self-centered reasons that the wicked world has for its fleeting joys, the child of God has many good, virtuous, substantial, and lasting reasons.

The primary reason for joy in our hearts is that God, whom Christ our Lord reveals, is great in His being, power, and majesty. Delight in God because He is God. Rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ because He is God!

What is even more joyful is that

the triune God for Christ’s sake is *our* God! He is the God who dwells in Zion. He is God who is our guide even unto death!

We rejoice in the Lord, who is God the Creator. By Christ, God made the heavens and the earth and all the creatures therein. God instantaneously, by His Word and Spirit, made all things. By faith, the child of God delights in the glory of the living God that His handiwork displays day unto day. What delight it is to know that the God whose creation shows forth His sovereignty and omnipotence is our great Creator.

We have joy because this God is the God of our salvation. We are His new creation in Christ Jesus.

We rejoice because, to make us that new creation of God, Christ has removed from us the curse due to our sin. We rejoice that Christ became for us the man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, feeling the weight and inexpressible anguish of the suffering of God’s wrath, especially when it engulfed Him on the cross. We rejoice that He became the man of sorrows so that we might be His joyful children.

When beholding the wonder of Christ’s redemptive suffering for us, we rejoice to know that the Lord joyfully gave Himself for us. Even in the darkness of being forsaken, it was His joy to do the Father’s will, which required that hellish death on the cross for our redemption. That it was Christ’s delight to do the will of God, even in that hellish hour, is evident when He cried out, “My God, my

God, why hast thou forsaken me?” That word of Christ on the cross was both the fullest expression of His complete agony under the wrath of God for our sin, and also, at the same time, the clearest expression of His obedience and joy to fulfill the Father’s will. As He was made to feel the utter bitterness and misery of the curse for our sin, there were upon His heart the psalms of God, one of which He uttered upon the cross in the darkness (Ps. 22:1). When Christ came out of that second death, His joy was His God because He declared, “I thirst!” He thirsted for the living God! His joy and delight in His misery and humiliation remained in the Father. What a joy to know that because of Christ’s redemptive joy and delight, we have righteousness in Christ before the Father through faith alone. Therefore, rejoice for the deliverance we have in and through Christ from the eternal misery of our sin, and for the right we have in Him to eternal joy with the Father.

Then, we may rejoice that the Lord counts it all joy to come into us and dwell in us. The Lord does not remain far from us. He does not forget about us, nor does He regard our needs as a hindrance to His joy. Rather, He delights to dwell in us by His Spirit. He delights to work in us sovereignly and in His wisdom and good time by His grace what is beautiful and pleasing in His sight. Rejoice that He is the author and finisher of our faith. Rejoice that He is our wisdom, strength, and very present help in trouble.

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*Previous article in this series: January 15, 2008, p. 186.*

This Lord who dwells in us by His Spirit is the Lord at God's right hand. He is seated in all royal power and authority. Before Him shall every knee bow. All shall declare Him to be Lord. What a reason for us to rejoice! Why? This truth shows that nothing in heaven or on the earth happens by chance, but that all things in our present history are directed and governed by Christ according to the Father's will for the sake of the church, His body.

We are given another reason for joy in the hope that Christ will establish and preserve His church by His Word and Spirit. This is the church to which He has knit Himself. To each of the living stones, eternally chosen and redeemed by His blood, Christ is joined by His Spirit. To Himself, Christ joins a body with infinite variety and diversity, and makes us all one in Himself. Against that church, which Christ builds upon Himself, the solid Rock, the gates of hell cannot prevail. We rejoice in the preserving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which keeps us as living members of His church.

As members, then, of His church, as sheep of His flock, we rejoice because the Lord cares for us.

He does care for us, does He not? Is He not our shepherd, because of whose care we lack nothing? Is He not our great high priest, who knows our tribulations and constantly seeks from the Father and obtains for us the grace sufficient for each day? Is He not our refuge and rest in times of trouble? Has He not carried us through the fires and the floods of life? Has He not shown that He is ever-merciful and gracious? Rejoice that, because the Lord is your shepherd, you lack nothing.

Regarding those things that we need each day, rejoice in the sure promise that your God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19).

We have another reason for joy, in the privilege that Christ has given us to serve Him together in the fellowship of the saints. The Lord, having saved us, does not save us and preserve us like a fine heirloom, placed in a locked cabinet, there to be observed unmoved. The Lord, having saved us, gives us the privilege to be His servants in His holy temple. He has given us the privilege to spend ourselves for the cause of His kingdom and covenant. He has given us that privilege to work together in a congregation for the faithful proclamation of His gospel, or to work to our utmost in the faithful education of our covenant children. He has given us the privilege to witness, in our daily life and work, of the greatness of our Lord and His grace.

Under the faithful proclamation of the Word of Christ, you are given a great reason for joy. There, through the Word preached, Christ is not silent to us. He does not leave the child of God to guess what He is thinking, or what He might be saying at God's right hand about him. Through the preaching of the Word, Christ declares the love of the Father for His church. Therein He reveals His grace and goodness towards us; He declares our justification; and He assures us of eternal life. He works in us powerfully, by that means, a growing faithfulness and a life of thankfulness. Rejoice that the Word of the Lord is powerful to save and powerful to comfort.

As we live at the end of the ages, there is also reason for joy in the fact that God has graciously preserved and entrusted to us the rich heritage of the Reformed faith. Rejoice in the truth of God's sovereign, particular, unconditional, and adorable grace in the Lord Jesus Christ!

Concerning all those promises of the Lord to bless us, be joyful! Those promises are not shaky, uncertain, man-dependent possibilities. God's promises are rock-solid

in the Lord Jesus Christ for His people. Although they are proclaimed through all the earth unto countless generations, yet they, by the Spirit and grace of Christ, are fulfilled particularly in believers and their spiritual seed. Rejoice greatly when God in His grace fulfills His promises in your life.

Rejoice evermore, because the Lord will work all things together for good (Rom. 8:28). Rejoice that all the events in your life do not unfold arbitrarily and without any real purpose. Rejoice that the Lord sovereignly governs and fulfills every detail of your life, and does that with the goal of good. That goal is chiefly that throughout your whole life God's greatness and glory may be revealed. That goal is that you may fully taste and see that the LORD is good in the full salvation and glory that awaits us.

When ought we to exercise this fruit of joy? We must rejoice at many times in our lives.

We must rejoice in the Lord as we worship in God's house (Ps. 100:1-2) or worship God in our family and personal devotions.

We rejoice when we may baptize our children and receive a token of God's covenant faithfulness.

We have great joy when we see our children walking in the truth (III John 4).

We have joy when we see our children faithfully marry in the Lord.

We have an occasion to rejoice when God grants us, for another day, food and health, and grants that to us as a blessing for Jesus' sake.

Besides that, there are numerous other occasions and circumstances in which God provides us with ample reasons to grow in the gift of joy in Him.

But now listen to God's Word again in Philippians 4:4. God through the apostle says, "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, Rejoice."

When ought we to exercise this fruit of joy? The Lord's answer is

“always.” Rejoice, not only in times of spiritual positives in our lives, but also in times in which, according to our flesh, we would be prone never to do it.

Is it even possible to rejoice in the time of trouble and anguish?


How can a believer rejoice when he is persecuted for the name of Christ (Acts 5:41, Acts 16:25)? How can we glory in tribulations (Rom. 5:2)? How can the child of God rejoice when he is gripped in tribulations or in the dark way of depression or loneliness? How can we be joyful when afflicted with constant, gnawing pain? Joy when near the stepping stone of death and in the heat of that last battle (II Tim. 4:8, 17-18)?

It is humanly impossible to bring forth this fruit of joy in such tribulations. Nevertheless, the

Spirit of the Lord by His grace will have His own wonderful way with us, in us, and through us. After all, He is the master grower and pruner, working on and in us, who are His living branches and who are ingrafted into Christ. By His mighty Word and grace He calls us in a living faith unto joy. He works in us by His grace the blessed fruit of joy, which is always *in Him*.

Therefore, even in the darkest gloom and sadness, we possess in Christ that deep-seated, spiritual, heavenly, triumphant joy. Although when you and I might even feel physically or mentally miserable and lonely beyond description, yet by the grace of God we possess in the Lord the joy that the misery of this life cannot destroy. We may still enjoy, even in the darkest

gloom, that one and only, constant delight: “That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ...” (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 1). And that is our one and only constant delight because Jehovah’s almighty, tender, and sustaining mercy towards us endures forever (Ps. 90:14, Ps. 100:5).<sup>1</sup>

May the Spirit of Christ guard us from all ungodliness that would pollute and quench this joy, and may He work in our regenerated hearts His wonder-fruit of heavenly joy... always. 

1. For more on the relationship between joy and God’s mercy, read: “Christian Joy,” by Rev. D. Kleyn, in the Feb. 15, 2002 issue of the *SB*, pp. 236-237.

## Strength of Youth

Rev. Martin VanderWal

# Spiritually!

*“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”*

Romans 8:6

**G**rowing up in this world, you are surrounded. You are surrounded by all the sights and sounds of this world. You receive its sensations: you touch, smell, and taste all the things in this world. The world’s sights and sounds are growing more intense. You are bombarded from every possible angle. This world’s information is pressed upon you with stunning intensity. Images jar your senses at lightning speed.

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A hand from another world, however, has taken your hand. That hand has led you to the other world—a world that is far different from this one. That world is not fictional or imaginary. It is not the world of cyberspace, of a television show, or of a novel. That world is just as real as the one that you inhabit, the sights and sounds of which surround you. That world is the world of spiritual things. That is the world pointed out by Holy Scripture. That is the world you enter by faith. It is known in Scripture as the kingdom of God. “Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God” (Luke 14:15). “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 14:17).

The hand that has led you to that other world is the hand of

God. In some ways the hand of God has operated indirectly. It has done its work through your parents, your Christian school, your church. It has done its work through the reading of Scripture and the preaching of Scripture. That hand has also worked directly. It has translated you into that other world. It has given you being and existence in that world—regeneration. God’s hand has opened your ears to hear the tidings of the gospel. It has opened your eyes to see the kingdom of God. It has softened your heart to love that kingdom—faith. That hand is the operation of sovereign, irresistible grace, bringing you into the kingdom.

The direct work of God’s hand is absolutely necessary. Without that work, reading Scripture and hearing it preached is like hearing



about another world but never entering into it. Without that hand the wonderful tidings of the kingdom are just like another novel or television show. But by that mighty hand of God's sovereign grace you know that kingdom and your blessed place in it.

Your blessing is to know, enjoy, and grow in that world, the kingdom of God. Becoming mature as a young person and young adult in the faith means that you are able to occupy your place there on your own. You need not be continually introduced into that other, spiritual world by those around you—your parents, teachers, minister. You go into that world and you occupy your place there on your own accord. You find your delight in that world. You enjoy the riches of its peace. There you find blessed fellowship and communion with your God.

To occupy yourself in that world is noted in Scripture in different ways. It is to "walk by faith, not by sight." It is to be "spiritually minded." It is "to walk by the Spirit."



Now consider not only the *fact* of your place in that other world, but also *how strong* it is. How spiritually minded are you? How is your walk by the Spirit? How deeply rooted and grounded are you in that other world?

We can ask the same question in a more practical way. How much do you dwell upon the kingdom of God? What place does it occupy in your heart? How often can you say you exercise yourself in that place? How much time do you spend there?

Always there is the answer: "Not enough!" A true answer this is. This world is certainly too much with us. But you must be careful that this answer does not become an excuse. Never adopt the mindset that you are spiritually minded enough to get you by. This is the thinking that characterizes the people who live only in this

world of flesh and blood. Yes, they have heard the stories of that other world. They know enough of those stories to know that they should do something about that world. So they go to church on special occasions. Or they try to think about God once in a while. They try to be good, moral people devoted to their families. And they think that on the Judgment Day God will be nice to them and allow them into heaven. This mindset is the mindset of unbelief. It is based on the doctrine of works and is rooted in a fear of hell and an erroneous view of heaven. This mindset must not be yours. This is not what it means to be spiritually minded.

To be spiritually minded means that your desire is always to *grow* in the kingdom of God. Not to get by, but to *flourish*. Not to know that you have a place there, but to *dwell* in that place, even while living, walking, and doing your business in this world.



So what do you do about that answer "Not enough!"? How do you grow in the kingdom? How do you become spiritually strong?

The answer is the constant, disciplined exercise of faith. Faith is the sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell of the kingdom of God. To be strong in faith is to be spiritually minded. If you think of faith as a hand that lays hold on the kingdom of God, then you can consider the increase of faith as the strengthening of the grip of that hand. If you understand faith as an ear by which you hear the speech or music of the kingdom of God, you can think of the increase in faith as the training of that ear in its hearing.

How is that hand strengthened? How is that ear trained? By constant, concentrated use of those instruments. The hand that is never used becomes atrophied and withered. The ear that is never made to hear becomes dull and insensitive.

There are two ways to become stronger in the kingdom and to become more spiritually minded. The first way is to *receive*, or to *hear*. You must set before yourself the kingdom of God and spiritual things. You must set them before yourself in all their riches, glory, truth, and beauty. You must set them before yourself as the objects of your desire and happiness. There is your prosperity and peace with God!

Now, having the kingdom of God set before you, partake! Lay hold upon it and enjoy its riches and treasures. Fill up your heart with its prosperity and peace. Reach out and lay hold on its strength. Reach out and appropriate to yourself its joy and delight. Seek out the preaching of the Word of God. As you hear, give yourself to eat heartily of the food that is set before you. Memorize Scripture and meditate on it. Seek out your fellow saints, your fellow young people. Talk together about the Word and of the kingdom. Make talk about the kingdom familiar speech upon your tongue and in your mouth. Would others be surprised to hear such talk from your lips? Surprise them, and get them accustomed to such speech from you!

The second way is to *give*, or to *speak*. This is the seeking of God's face in prayer and in other acts of worship. Engage in worship from the heart. The simple activity of prayer, beautifully expressed as drawing near to God (James 4:8; Ps. 73:28; I Sam. 14:36), brings you into the kingdom of God. You stand before the living God, the King of the kingdom you seek. Before Him you speak your words, declaring His praise and glory, rejoicing in Him. Before Him you pour out your heart in supplication and prayer. To Him you bring words of thanksgiving from your heart filled with His blessings. In all this activity of worship, you become more and more conscious of God, His pres-

ence, His power, His glory, and His kingdom.

These two ways, giving and receiving, or hearing and speaking, are the exercise of fellowship and communion with God. Receiving from God and giving to Him are the life of the covenant, lived by faith.



This conscious, heartfelt activity of fellowship with God is the very strengthening of your faith. In these times of fellowship your earthly senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell become weaker. In these times the world in which you are born by nature becomes more dim, less noisy and bothersome. At the same time faith becomes stronger. The kingdom of God grows brighter and clearer. Your desire for it grows greater. Your aim becomes higher.

Being spiritually minded means that you are strong and secure in your beliefs. You not only know the truth well, but it has a secure place in your heart. Going about in the world, you are bombarded with its alluring sights and sounds. But you remain unwavering in your principles. As you are exposed to all kinds of different, rival beliefs, you are not enticed. You remain firm in your convictions. In the midst of temptations and trials, you enjoy great, unshakable peace. You are deeply rooted in the kingdom of God. Your foundation remains sure beneath your feet.

Being spiritually minded is also the way in which you are drawn to the proper worship of the Lord in church. You find the popular ways of worship in so many

churches to be shallow, superficial, and therefore abhorrent. You find your delight in the preaching of the gospel where the truth of God's Word is explored in its depths and riches.

How enjoyable and profitable is this spiritual mindedness! The kingdom grows in your heart. Spiritual thoughts become more and more delightful. The covenant becomes more precious. Your heart yearns for God and desires to spend more time with Him. Religious exercises, public worship, and private devotions are not burdensome but sweetly delightful. They are nourishing and profitable for this life and for the life to come.

In spiritual things you find all your happiness and joy. In them you discover your true blessedness ....spiritually!

*All Thy Works Shall Praise Thee*

*Mr. Joel Minderhoud*

## *Cycles – The Providential Provisions from an Unchanging God*

**T**he creation abounds with "cycles." Spring, summer, fall, and winter arrive consistently at their appointed times without interruption. The moon has its waxing and waning crescents, and the stars appear in the sky in their characteristic formations in a regular and repeatable fashion. Lake and ocean waters evaporate, form clouds, then fall to the earth in some form of precipi-

tation, and eventually trickle their way back to the lakes and oceans. A sequence of hormones rushes through the body of a woman each month, preparing her body for the bringing forth of covenant seed.

Whether it be in the heavens or on the earth, God made and governs numerous cycles by which He provides us with much of what we need in this life. These cycles do not "run on their own," as the deist would maintain, but are intricately governed and upheld by our heavenly Father.

These "cycles" are an occasion for our humbling. They are a daily reminder to us of our awesome and unchanging God and thus a re-

minder of our own frailty and utter dependence on Him. Our willing and able Father unfailingly provides us with all we need in this life, both in body and in soul. Of this we are confident, for He is the sovereign, unchanging God, who controls all things for His glory and for the salvation of His people.

### **The Nature of Cycles**

Solomon put his finger on the essence of cycles when, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he wrote, "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun" (Eccl. 1:9). Cycles,

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by their very nature, are repetitious. This repetitive nature is something that speaks volumes about the vanity of life in this world apart from God—which we, the Lord willing, hope to discuss in a future article. However, this repetitious nature of cycles gives us an opportunity to see that there is a certain order and stability to the creation. Because God does not change, He sovereignly rules in the creation in an orderly manner. We anticipate seasons, weather patterns, and a renewal of resources. These things come to pass because God sees fit to provide us what we need by way of orderly cycles. They are constant reminders to us that our faithful God does not change, or fail to accomplish what He promises to us.

It is worth noting from the outset that the world in which we live, including the cycles with which we interact in our daily lives, is different from what existed prior to the Fall and prior to the Flood (II Pet. 3). Nonetheless, they are ordained and directly established by God as part of His wise design and eternal counsel. Before the Flood there was no rain as we understand it today, but the earth was watered by a mist from the earth (Gen. 2:5-6). Now the Lord “calleteth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth” (Amos 9:6), and “He maketh small the drops of water; they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof: which the clouds do drop and distil upon man abundantly” (Job 36:27-28). After the Flood, God established the seasons as we know them today when he promised Noah that, “while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease” (Gen. 8:22). And thus, though the cycles may be different from what existed before the Flood, nevertheless we know they are just as assuredly sovereignly governed by the almighty word of God’s power.

As we read in Job 37, these many creation ordinances “do whatsoever He commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth.”

### God’s Wise Design

Though the Creator instituted many cycles within the creation, time and space limit us to a detailed discussion of just one—the hydrologic or water cycle—in order to demonstrate vividly God’s wise design. All creatures in the creation depend, and have depended for thousands of years, upon a constant supply of fresh water in order to live. The obvious question is, “From where do today’s billions of humans, not to mention all the other creatures—animals and plants alike—get fresh water each day?” In God’s infinite wisdom, He formed a water cycle, which He constantly governs and upholds by the word of His power.

God’s wise design in the creation of a water cycle begins and ends in the endless storehouse of water found in the oceans, lakes, and polar ice caps. Scientists calculate that there are some 330 million cubic miles of global water—enough water to cover the entire USA to a depth of 80 miles. However, 97% of this global water is non-drinkable saltwater. And, surprising to many, of the remaining 3% that is drinkable fresh-water, two-thirds of it is frozen in the polar ice caps. The majority of the remaining freshwater is found below the surface of the Earth in groundwater supplies.<sup>1</sup> Despite the small percentage of global water that is in usable freshwater form, there is still a great abundance to serve all the creatures of God’s creation.

From this storehouse of oceans, lakes, and ice caps, water evaporates. At the surface of all bodies of water, the water molecules are not as tightly held to neighboring water molecules as they are below the surface. In addition, these surface-layer water molecules obtain energy from the sun in order to es-

cape from their liquid water-molecule neighbors. Consequently, they evaporate, and enter the atmosphere as gaseous water. If the water evaporates from a salt-laden body of water, the water escapes into the atmosphere, leaving the salt behind. Thus, the wisdom of God is displayed in the very first stage of the water cycle. God, using the means of evaporation, causes the “contaminant particles” to be left behind, purifying the water.

These vaporized water molecules join with all the other molecules in the sky and form our atmosphere. Mixed in with the carbon dioxide gas, oxygen gas, and nitrogen gas molecules, the water vapor forms an important component of the atmosphere. It is one of the components that “trap” the heat radiated from the surface of the earth. Earth is habitable, in part, because of the heat that is trapped inside our atmosphere. Secondly, water vapor collects in the atmosphere, congregating into clouds, to protect the earth from too much solar radiation. Interestingly, clouds both “trap” necessary heat and also keep the earth cool by blocking some intense solar radiation and reflecting it back into space.

Eventually, the water vapor in the clouds condenses and falls to the earth as some form of precipitation. The conditions that cause the water vapor to condense (turn from vapor form to liquid form) vary. Changes in atmospheric pressure and/or in atmospheric temperature can initiate the change in state from vapor to liquid. Under cooler temperatures, for example, the water-vapor molecules slow their movements and congregate closer together. When the water-vapor molecules cool, they condense into liquid form, becoming denser than the atmosphere.

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1. Statistics and information found at the US Geological Survey Website: <http://www.usgs.gov/>



Therefore, they fall to the earth as some form of precipitation. Scientists calculate that a storm that drops one inch of rain on a one square mile plot of land, dropped some seventeen million gallons of water. Thus, in the wisdom of God, water returns to the earth in rich abundance in order to supply all the creatures with refreshing water. Although it is true that rain does not fall in equal amounts everywhere on the earth, nevertheless, the creation as an organic whole is well supplied with bountiful freshwater.

Some of this water runs off the top of the soil and trickles across the earth into various streams and water reserves—eventually leading back to the great water storehouses of lakes and oceans. Much of the precipitation infiltrates the soil and is either used by plant life for its nourishment or trickles down into underground aquifers. From these aquifers (and from the freshwater lakes) man obtains his life-supplying water. The water in these freshwater aquifers is crystal clean—ready for human consumption. As the water seeps through the soil and across rocks and pebbles the water is cleaned by pathogen-devouring bacteria and other microscopic organisms. What a simple yet unfathomable method of cleaning our water supply! In some neighborhoods where each home has its own well and septic and drainage field, this is most evidently displayed. Dirty waste water (toilet, shower, dish, and laundry water) eventually filters through the drainage field—a layering of rock and gravel and soil—until it finds its way into the underground water supply, which later is drawn up for cleaning and drinking needs.

Water that is consumed by humans or animals and plants will either return to the atmosphere directly out of the creature's "skin" (transpiration in plants; perspiration in animals and humans) or it will be discharged in another form,

eventually working its way back into the cycle. Slowly the evaporated water from the water storehouses is returned to the storehouse again, after having been used in many places and ways along the journey. The cycle is complete and the creatures have their life-supporting water.

It is amazing how the Lord provides for His creation and the creatures in it in such a wise and orderly fashion. The mystery and wonder of it all is found alone in the hand of an almighty, sovereign, and most-wise God. And so it is with all the cycles in the creation.

### God's Faithful Provisions

The continuous nature of the cycles, whether water cycle or otherwise, certainly teaches us that God sees fit continually to sustain life within this creation by systematically providing us with the things necessary for life in this world. Each day, when according to the cycle of the movement of the planets the sun rises in the east, warming and enlightening the earth, and later sets in the west to give us darkness for our needed sleep and rest, we must with confidence and thanksgiving confess that God has again supplied us with an abundance of earthly gifts in order that we might live and serve Him. When we see the leaves fall from the trees in autumn, making a bed of rich nutrients to be taken up by the earth to be used by trees and other plants alike for their nourishment and production of new leaves in the spring, we see the wisdom of our God to govern and direct these cycles so that all creatures in His creation are provided for in order that they may serve Him.

By means of cycles, plants produce food in such abundance that, with proper administration and stewardship, all the people of the earth can eat plentifully. With the means of hormonal cycles in the body, we grow tired when it is dark and sleep a number of hours

so that our bodies are refreshed and ready to labor with renewed vigor the next morning.

Everywhere we turn we see cycles that are governed by the powerful hand of God so that we have all that we need for our physical existence. Our Heidelberg Catechism directs our attention to what our attitude should be when we see that God grants us our physical needs.

Which is the fourth petition? Give us this day our daily bread; that is, be pleased to provide us with all things necessary for the body, that we may thereby acknowledge Thee to be the only fountain of all good, and that neither our care nor industry, nor even Thy gifts, can profit us without Thy blessing; and therefore *that we may withdraw our trust from all creatures and place it alone in Thee*(my emphasis) (QA 125).

As the Lord abundantly provides for all our physical needs in an orderly and perfectly-timed fashion, so also does He provide all we need spiritually. This is most certainly our experience. We have faithfully been given spiritual food and living water through the preaching of the gospel and through the instruction in the catechism room. We are instructed concerning our life in this world by godly parents in the home. We further grow in our knowledge of our God and His works in history and in the creation by faithful instruction in our good Christian schools. In the study of God's Word in our homes and in our Bible societies we are nourished and built up in the faith. All of this, God is pleased to provide us—often in the way of continued generations. Even in the endless cycle of life and death we see God's faithful provision. Although one generation dies, God in His faithfulness raises up another generation. How grateful we are for His covenant faithfulness!

### Our Unchanging Covenant God

The constantly governed cycles give us great encouragement in an ever-changing world. When the economy goes sour, when our health declines, or when friends and family forsake us, the ever-repeating cycles draw our attention to our unchanging God, who alone is in control. He teaches us to wait on Him. Sometimes the spring may seem long in coming, but it will certainly come. In the midst of our difficult ways, we see the sun rise in the morning and we arise and pray, "All is well!" His mercies are new each morning. When our day has been extremely trying and we see the sun set again on the western horizon, our minds are drawn to the unchanging God who governs these cycles. We then bring our petitions to our faithful, unchanging Father, and confess, "All is well!" Whenever we see a creation cycle—whether it be the hydrologic cycle, the cycles of the planets and stars, or the bodily cycles—we are comforted.

Our comfort arises from the fact that our God is in control. He who sovereignly rules all the cycles


in the creation, also rules in our lives and over all things. And though all earthly pictures fall short, our comfort also arises from the fact that our Father in heaven does not change, as pictured to us in the seemingly unchanging earthly cycles. He reveals Himself as the unchanging God in Scripture particularly with regard to His covenant promises. In Jeremiah 33:20 we read,

Thus saith the LORD; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne....

As we see God's faithfulness to His ordinances of heaven and earth, we are reminded that God's word is sure. His promises never fail, but certainly come to pass. Christ *did* come of the line of David as promised, *does* even now sit upon the throne of David as King of kings, and certainly *is* returning to take His citizens to the new, heavenly Jerusalem. In fact, every time a

cycle is completed, we are reminded that Christ comes!

Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors (Matt. 24:32,33).

We are a privileged people to have been given eyes to see the faithfulness of our God in the cycles within the creation and not a hopeless vanity. Through the means of various cycles we are privileged to receive the good gifts of this creation from our faithful Father in love, and we are assured that His word never fails and that surely our Lord and Savior is coming at the fullness of time. God is accomplishing His purpose, even using the cycles as His servants, bringing the return of Christ, the glorification of His chosen people, and ultimately the glory of His name. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:11). 

*When Thou Sittest in Thine House*

*Margaret Laning*

## Putting on True Beauty

**I**f you have ever hiked through rugged, towering mountains for a week without the convenience of running water, toilets, or electricity, then you have experienced a taste of what campers relish as "roughing it." When I was 15 years old I joined such ranks when I went on a

church youth group backpack trip in the California High Sierra Mountains. Prior to the trip, we were told exactly which bare essentials to bring, and by no means could we bring anything else. We were to backpack every day to new and uninhabited locations, so having a light pack was important. Being the inexperienced camper that I was, my idea of "essentials" was a bit different than that of our camping coordinators. On the day before we left, the leader had us bring

our backpacks in to get them weighed. I then realized to my horror that he was checking in our backpacks to make sure they were filled according to regulations. When my pack was opened, he took out a curiously wrought cosmetic device. "What is this?" he asked with a puzzled look. I whispered sheepishly, "An eyelash curler." He proceeded to lift up my personal toiletry item high in the air and call to everyone to come look and see what I had managed

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to smuggle in. I was a fine public example. Having received this rebuke for disobeying the rules, I felt I had received a gentle chastisement from the Lord for my vanity.

The kind of beauty the Lord desires women of His covenant to have requires that which cannot be packed in a backpack or suitcase anyway, for such beauty takes much prayer and all-out warfare. We live in a day when we and our children are pummeled by an onslaught of what the world and media think is attractive. It is not surprising that teens and even pre-teens are increasingly preoccupied with their bodies, relating to an epidemic of depression, eating disorders, and promiscuity. For such a time as this, our girls and women must seek the antithetical beauty taught in God's Word. This is a beauty that Satan would love to rob us of and a beauty we must fight for. In the Scriptures, Esther spent much time preparing herself physically to be attractive for the king. In Esther 2:12, we read of a royal beauty treatment that lasted for twelve months: "six months with oil and myrrh, and six months with sweet odours...." One may think that is a lot of time to make oneself look presentable, but that is nothing in comparison to how much time Christian women are to spend beautifying themselves. For we are to beautify ourselves *spiritually* for the King of all kings.

How do we do this? By putting off our old man of sin and putting on our new man in Christ every day all day long. We are called to be soldiers, putting on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:11). We are also called to be beautiful women, adorning ourselves with a chaste conversation, sobriety, modesty, and a meek and quiet spirit (I Tim. 2:9, 10 and I Pet. 3:1-4). Putting on the armor of God and adorning ourselves are spiritually one and the same. This is what putting on *Christ* is all about. Christ is the only One who is perfectly lovely, without spot or wrinkle. We put

on Christ by coming to Him and learning of Him: "take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. 11:29). The more we in humility spend time with Christ by faith in prayer, in study of His Word, and in seeking to imitate Him in all good works, the more we begin to reflect His beauty.

When we lose sight of Christ as our standard, we cease to be beautiful. When a woman is striving to be dangerously thin, for example, she is not putting on true beauty. "You can never be too rich or too thin," touted the late American-born Duchess of Windsor, Wallis Simpson. Truly a foolish motto many have lived and died by. Tragically, even Christian girls and women (and a smaller number of males) are falling into harmful eating disorders, which may include purging their food or virtually stopping eating altogether. Such women have a distorted body image, an extreme fear of gaining weight, and a refusal to maintain a minimally normal body weight. This self-inflicted starvation is not at all beautiful. Rather, it is disruptive and dangerous to God's design of the body. God made all of our tissues, organs, and systems to work together at just the right time, revealing how marvelously we are made. May we encourage these struggling saints to glorify God by caring for the "temple of the Holy Spirit" God has given them. Only when we are glorifying God are we beautiful. "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well" (Ps. 139:14). May we with them grow to desire more the only good kind of weightlessness—the weightlessness we experience when we cast all our burdens upon the Lord.

When a woman is striving to be enticing she is not putting on true beauty; for spiritual strength is what is beautiful. Modesty and

a chaste conversation are strong and beautiful virtues. There are many verses that point to spiritual strength as beautiful, as in Psalm 144:12, which says, "...that our daughters may be as cornerstones, polished after the similitude of a palace." The virtuous woman in Proverbs 31:17 has a similar idea, "She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms." Being a temptress is the opposite of this. Yet, in order to fight this sin with spiritual strength we have to recognize it within ourselves.

I had a conversation with a Christian woman about the difficulty in finding modest clothing for our girls. We agreed that the stores (especially the teen departments) are filled with clothing designed to seduce, with tight-fitting apparel, plunging necklines, and elevated skirt hems. We then got on the subject of beach attire, lamenting how immodest most bathing suits were, especially the two-piece bikini. "But you know," she said, "if a man finds himself lusting, that's his own fault. I'm not responsible for his sin." Although it is true that each man must answer to God for his sin, this woman's comment hits on a problem. Crucial in putting on godly beauty is that we do whatever is in our power not to tempt others in our dress, words, and actions. Our sinful nature wants attention and desires heads to turn to look at us. When we give in to our sins, we are no longer clothed. Spiritually, we have cast off our adorning and are shamelessly naked. Each morning when we dress for the day, this responsibility should guide our choices. Out of a concern for our soul and the soul of others, we have this obligation. Let us put on the armor of beautiful light, as Romans 13:12-14 says,

The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.... But




put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Godly sorrow for sin and fervent love for Christ are beautiful. One of the most lovely women in Scripture is she who washes Jesus' feet with her tears and hair. In Luke 7:36-50 we read of her meekly coming to Jesus while very conscious of her many sins. She knew she was a sinner, but she knew she was a forgiven and repentant sinner. The fact that she loved much, was proof that she knew she had been forgiven much. As she contemplated this unmerited forgiveness, she wept upon Jesus' feet with tears of overwhelming gratitude. To demonstrate her love for Him she took her most beautiful, glorious feature and proceeded humbly to wipe His soiled feet. She then anointed the feet with precious, costly ointment. When we, like this woman, view ourselves as being forgiven much, we will love Christ with a fervent love that is beautiful. As we live in the con-

sciousness of being forgiven sinners, may we glorify God in loving service, using all of the beautiful gifts He has given us.

Parents teach their children by word and example what true beauty is. We do well to stress the biblical truth in I Peter 3:4 that true beauty is the "hidden man of the heart." A meek and compassionate heart is far more beautifying than any costly creams or tanning sessions. No mascara or eyelash curler can produce eyes that shine with sincere interest at those who are speaking with them. Lip gloss is fine, but a smile upon one's lips is beautiful when it conveys the message, "I am glad to see you." When our children learn meekness as Romans 12:10 says, "...in honour preferring one another," they learn to look outside of themselves and see beauty in others. Parents can help point out the value of this and show the many places that this beauty is seen. It is seen in the hunchback elderly woman who has washed the saints' feet, having been spent for others in loving ser-

vice. It is found in a repentant sinner's heartfelt words, "I am sorry, please forgive me." It is also seen in the contentment of God's children who are sick, crippled, maimed, and mentally challenged, who believe that one day their bodies and ours will perfectly reflect the beauty of Christ.

In Dostoevsky's classic novel *The Idiot*, the Prince says, "I believe the world will be saved by beauty." This is an intriguing thought, and regardless of what the author may have meant, it is quite true. The Beautiful One will indeed save His cosmos, as the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). What a blessed hope we all have in the promised resurrection that we will one day experience. "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (I Cor. 15:53). May we put on true beauty while we wait in glad expectation for this perfect, heavenly, and everlasting beauty that will never fade away. 

## Report of Classis East

January/February, 2008  
at the Georgetown PRC

Classis East met at its regularly scheduled time on Wednesday, January 9, 2008, but because of the business before it, held continued sessions on February 13, 14, and 27, 2008. All the churches were represented by two delegates for these sessions. Rev. C. Haak served as chairman.

Classis treated protests from four individuals and a consistory against decisions taken by classis in September, 2007 regarding a pastor's calling with regard to the education of his children in light of Article 21 of the Church Order. Classis did not uphold any of these protests, thus allowing the original decisions of classis to stand. (For a complete presentation of the de-

cisions taken by the September, 2007 classis confer the Report of Classis East given in the November 1, 2007 issue of the *Standard Bearer*.)

Classis also dealt with the report of a special committee appointed to assist the Grace PRC in implementing the decisions taken by classis. The discussion of this report and of the advice of a committee of pre-advice was held in closed session.

Classis, however, decided to make its decisions public. Classis decided 1) that, in light of the requirements of Article 21 of the Church Order, Grace PRC's consistory erred when they judged valid the reasons for their pastor's withdrawing his children from two good Christian schools and home schooling them; 2) to advise Grace

PRC to work with their pastor to show him the inadequacy of his reasons, and to inform their congregation of this and of the fact that they are working with him to show him that his reasons are not acceptable as the pastor of Grace PRC. Because of classis' concern for the welfare of the congregation of Grace PRC and for the restoration of peace and unity in that congregation, it further advised the Council of Grace PRC to consider whether their pastor can be an effective preacher/pastor to his congregation and whether he can lead them out of their present unrest. Classis appointed another special committee to assist Grace's Council and Consistory in implementing these decisions should they desire such help.

An overture to Synod 2008 re-

garding Article 21 of the Church Order was considered and judged to be an improper overture. The consistory submitting this overture subsequently withdrew it.

Elections at this session resulted in the following: Delegates to Synod 2008: MINISTERS: *Primi*: C. Haak, D. Kleyn, K. Koole, J. Slopsema, R. VanOverloop; *Secundi*: A. denHartog, M. DeVries, G. Eriks, R. Kleyn, W. Langerak; ELDERS: *Primi*: D. Doezeema, V. Haveman, G. Kaptein, S. Miedema, P. VanderSchaaf; *Secundi*: R. DeYoung, J. Kalsbeek, D. Moelker, J. VanBaren, G.


VanderSchaaf. Delegates *ad examina*: Rev. K. Koole was elected to a three-year *primus* term; Rev. R. Kleyn to a three-year *secundus* term. Rev. A. Lanning was elected to a three-year term on the Classical Committee; Revs. J. Slopsema and K. Koole were chosen to be church visitors, with Revs. A. denHartog and R. VanOverloop as alternates. Jon Huiskens was appointed to serve another three-year term as Stated Clerk; Rev. R. Kleyn was appointed to serve another three-year term as Assistant Stated Clerk.

Classis heard a report from its church visitors and also a report

from the First PRC, Grand Rapids, of its continuing pastoral support of the former members of the Covenant PRC, New Jersey.

In financial matters, classis approved the subsidy requests for 2009 from Kalamazoo PRC and Wingham PRC for \$25,000 and \$30,000 (Canadian) respectively. The expenses of these sessions of classis amounted to \$2,816.20.

Classis will meet next on Wednesday, May 14, 2008 at the First Holland PRC, Holland, MI.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jon J. Huiskens,  
Stated Clerk 

## Report Classis West

On Tuesday, March 4, delegates to Classis West's March meeting, officebearers, high school students, and other members from Hope PRC gathered for an officebearers' conference, which addressed the theme, "Promoting Sabbath Observance in the 21st Century." Delegates and visitors enjoyed the speeches presented by the speakers (Rev. M. VanderWal, Rev. J. Mahtani, Rev. S. Key, and Rev. D. Kuiper). According to the many comments that the undersigned heard, those who attended also enjoyed the discussions led by the speakers after their presentations.

Classis convened at 8:30 A.M on Wednesday. Rev. J. Marcus provided the opening devotions, including a meditation on Luke 4:14-21. Once classis was declared constituted, Rev. R. Smit assumed the duties of chairman, Rev. M. VanderWal served as vice-chairman, and Rev. J. Marcus performed the duties of clerk.

Classis treated the regular reports of the stated clerk, of the Reading Sermon Library committee, and of the Classical Committee. Classis also adopted the re-

port of the church visitors, who informed classis that, by God's grace alone, peace and unity prevail among the congregations.

Rev. S. Houck submitted a request to classis through his consistory of Peace for support from the churches from March 2008 to March 2009. Classis approved this request and forwarded it to synod. Classis expressed its appreciation to Rev. Houck for his willingness to remain active in the work of the ministry and encouraged him to wait patiently upon the Lord's will.

Pulpit-supply appointments were scheduled for Calvary PRC through the middle of September.

The 2009 subsidy requests from Bethel (Roselle, Illinois) for \$35,000 and from First (Edmonton, Alberta) for C\$17,604 were approved. Classis noted with thanksgiving to God that our sister congregation in Lacombe did not request subsidy for 2009, indicating that the Lord has blessed her with the opportunity to be self-supporting in the coming year. The expenses for the meeting totaled \$11,737.12.

Classis conducted its annual elections. Synodical *primi* delegates were chosen as follows:

Ministers—S. Key, D. Kuiper, N. Langerak, J. Mahtani, R. Miersma; Elders—Keith Bruinsma (Peace), Pete Brummel (Hull), Al Meurer (Bethel), Lou Regnerus (Randolph), Fred Tolsma (First-Edmonton).

*Secundi* delegates are: Ministers—D. Lee, J. Marcus, D. Overway, C. Spronk; Elders—Chuck VanMeeteren (Hope), Loren Gritters (Hull), Evert A. Van Maanen (Hull), Philip Kooiker (South Holland), Jim Wierenga (Immanuel-Lacombe).

Classis appointed Rev. D. Overway to serve another 3-year term on the classical committee.

Rev. S. Key (*primus*) and Rev. N. Langerak (*secundus*) were elected to serve three-year terms as delegates *ad examina*. Rev. D. Overway (*secundus*) was elected to serve a two-year term. Classis elected Revs. S. Key, D. Kuiper, R. Miersma, and R. Smit as church visitors for 2008-2009, with Revs. S. Houck and J. Mahtani as alternates. Classis reappointed Rev. R. Smit as stated clerk and Rev. D. Kuiper as assistant stated clerk for three-year terms.

Having completed all of its work, Classis adjourned on

Wednesday at about 2:00 P.M., with the chairman leading in closing prayer.

For its next regular meeting on September 3, 2008, classis will be

hosted by the Peace PRC in Lansing, Illinois, the Lord willing. Classis West is planning to have its March 4, 2009 meeting hosted by Edgerton PRC, and the Septem-

ber 2, 2009 meeting to be hosted by the Randolph PRC.

Rev. Richard Smit,  
Stated Clerk 

## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Minister Activities

**R**ev. Daniel Kleyn, pastor of the First PRC in Holland, MI, received the call from the Doon, Iowa congregation to serve as our denomination's missionary to the Philippines. May the will of the Lord be shown to Rev. Kleyn, and may the Berean Protestant Reformed Church in the Philippines be preserved in truth and grace.

The Calvary PRC in Hull, Iowa has extended a call to Rev. James Slopsema, pastor of First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI, to be their first pastor.

Rev. Rodney Miersma, pastor of the Loveland, CO PRC, continues to recover from a recent stroke. He reports in a recent bulletin to his congregation, "As to my health, progress is continuing to be made; however, it is going to take time and much patience. The therapist said that the stroke was a high level one, which means that it affects the fine motor skills. It also means that there will be ongoing therapy for several months yet. We wait upon the Lord for all things. Thank you for your prayers and concern." We can also add that Rev. Miersma preached for the first time since his stroke on Sunday evening, February 17.

### Sister-Church Activities

**T**he Covenant PRC of Ballymena, NI ([www.cprf.co.uk](http://www.cprf.co.uk)) now has some 203 translated articles in the Italian section of their website. Saturday, March 1, Mr. Francesco De Lucia e-mailed his

first translation of the Covenant Reformed News (Italian) to interested persons in Italy. We include here one brief quote from a reader of that Italian material. "All the CPRC Italian section is a true gold mine.... I am reading some articles...and I find them very edifying indeed. I am reading particularly the eschatology section, and the brief and clear articles by Rev. Ron Hanks are so useful. My felt gratitude for your commitment and encouragement to continue."

### School Activities

**T**he Board of the newly-named Trinity Christian High School in Hull, Iowa met in late February and several important decisions were made. The Board approved an information session for current eighth graders and their parents for Saturday, March 15. Further, the Board approved a floor plan, with stages, and called a special Society Meeting for the approval of this plan on March 19. And the Board finalized plans for a seminar on the "Kingdom of God and the Protestant Reformed Christian School," scheduled for Saturday, March 29 at the Hull PRC.

The Ladies' Aid of Covenant Christian School in Lynden, WA invited the supporters of Covenant to a Family Game Night and small craft and baked goods sale the evening of March 7 at the school. Guests of the Ladies' Aid were reminded to bring their favorite games and were also encouraged to donate baked goods or any small craft items for sale that evening.

Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, MI presented their annual All-School Program the

evening of February 21 at Fair Haven Ministries in Jenison, MI. The students developed the theme, "The Psalms: A Reformed Heritage."

### Congregation Activities

**T**he Council of the Doon, Iowa PRC has decided to begin a small church library for their members' personal use and for help finding materials for Bible studies, etc. At this point, Doon will begin the library using only publications from the RFPA.

The Jr. Christian Fellowship Society of the Hudsonville, MI PRC organized a game night for everyone 60 years and older in their congregation for February 29 at their church.

The Consistory of Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada decided at its February meeting not to submit to the March 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of Classis West a subsidy request for 2009, due to the substantial balance in their General Fund. Immanuel expressed humble thanksgiving to our heavenly Father for their current financial prosperity and for the opportunity as a congregation to be self-supporting for the coming year.

On Wednesday, February 20, the Christian Fellowship Society of the Hudsonville, MI PRC invited all widows, widowers, and senior citizens of their congregation to enjoy an evening of Christian fellowship over a dinner of several hot homemade soups, rolls, and desserts.

A recent note regarding sermon requests in a Georgetown PRC Hudsonville, MI bulletin caught my eye. It said, in part, that, be-

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



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Jenison, MI 49428-7137


## THE STANDARD BEARER

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cause their tape recorder broke and would not be replaced, cassette tapes of worship services would no longer be available, only CDs. How the times continue to change. It wasn't that many years ago that young men from First PRC in Grand Rapids recorded the worship services on a reel-to-reel tape and brought that one recording to shut-in homes throughout the week. That, of course, gave way to cassette tapes, and now that in turn to CDs and DVDs. What next? Quite possibly the Internet and live-streaming of services through your home computer.

### Denomination Activities

**C**lassis West of our churches met in early March at the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA. As is their custom before many of these meetings, the delegates and other interested church members gathered the day before for an Officebearers' Conference. This latest conference took place on March 4 and looked at the subject of "Promoting Sabbath Keeping in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." Rev. Martin VanderWal, pastor of Hope Church in Redlands, gave the Keynote Address that morning on "The Force of the Fourth Com-

mandment in the New Testament." He was followed by Rev. Jai Mahtani, pastor of the Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL, speaking on "Keeping the Sabbath Holy: Fellowship with God and Believers." After lunch, two more speeches were given: "Resting from Labor: The Fourth Commandment's Prohibition of Work," presented by Rev. Steven Key, the pastor of the Hull, Iowa PRC; and "Calling the Sabbath a Delight: Recreation and the Sabbath," presented by Rev. Doug Kuiper, pastor of the Randolph, WI PRC. 

## Announcements

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

We rejoice with our parents and grandparents,

**JOHN and SANDRA HEYS,**  
as they celebrate their 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on April 5, 2008, Lord willing. We are thankful to God for the many years that He has given them, and pray that He will continue to bless and preserve them in the years to come.

"For the LORD is good, his mercy is everlasting and his truth endureth to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).

\* John and Tracy Heys

Dustin, Randy, Cheyenne, Callie

\* John and Lorinda Tolsma

Aliyah, Bailey

\* Sonja Heys

\* Brian and Trisha Kotman

Loveland, Colorado

### NOTICE!!

All standing and special committees of the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as individuals who wish to address Synod 2008, are hereby notified that all material for this year's synod should be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than April 15. Please send material to:

Don Doezema

4949 Ivanrest Ave. SW  
Grandville, MI 49418

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Doon Martha Society expresses Christian sympathy to fellow member Ann Miersma, in the death of her brother,

#### ART VER HEY.

May she find comfort in the first Lord's Day—that we are not our own but belong both body and soul to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ. Psalm 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints."

Rev. David Overway, President  
Geraldine Blankespoor, Secretary

### NOTICE!

Faith Christian School in Randolph, Wisconsin is seeking applicants for a combined first and second grade classroom starting in the 2008/2009 school year. Interested applicants are encouraged to contact Mr. John Huizenga, administrator, at (920) 326-6186 or [principal@randolphfcs.org](mailto:principal@randolphfcs.org). Résumés may also be e-mailed or sent to Mr. Huizenga at Faith Christian School, 611 N Columbus St., Randolph, WI 53956.

## Reformed Witness Hour

### February 2006

Date	Topic	Text
April 6	"Now No Condemnation"	Romans 8:1
April 13	"Set Free by the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus"	Romans 8:2
April 20	"I Will Remember the Works of the Lord"	Psalm 77:11, 12
April 27	"Spiritual Strengthening"	Ephesians 3:16-19