

THE *January 1, 2008* STANDARD BEARER

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Volume 84 ◆ Number 7

Lifting Our Eyes to the Hills

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.

Psalm 121:1-2

Psalm 121 is a pilgrim Psalm. It was sung by those who made their pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast days in the temple. Reference is made here to the hills. These are the hills of the holy city. Jerusalem was built on seven hills, the temple being on one of them, Mt. Zion. In turn, Jerusalem was situated on the highest elevation of Canaan, so that the holy city and the temple could be seen for miles around. And when the pilgrims came into view of temple, they sang this Psalm, the theme of which is found in the first two verses: *I will lift (literally, I am lifting) up mine eyes to the hills...."*

It is also very important that we too lift up our eyes to the hills as we begin yet another year. As the people of God we are on the

same journey that the pilgrims of old made when they went to the house of God in Jerusalem. This is not a journey we make just occasionally or on the Lord's Day. It is a lifelong journey. Last year we were on that journey, and this year we will continue it. As we make our way on this journey, it is important that we lift up our eyes to the hills, from whence comes our help.

That will express a great longing that we must have this year.

It will also express a trusting reliance that we must have this year.



This pilgrim song expresses first of all a great longing, a longing to be with the Lord in His house.

The temple was God's dwelling place. God is everywhere present and is not confined to buildings made with men's hands. Yet, in the cloud of glory, God was present in a very special sense in the temple, so that it was His dwelling place.

God dwelt in the temple as Israel's covenant God. The whole

idea of the covenant is suggested by the name LORD. "LORD" is used in the KJV for "Jehovah." And "Jehovah" is God's covenant name. As Jehovah, God had chosen Israel to be His covenant people. In the covenant, Jehovah delighted to live with and bless Israel with all that was good. Israel enjoyed the blessings of God's covenant especially at the temple. At the temple, God dwelt symbolically in the cloud of glory. At the temple were the altar and the blood of atonement, which was the only basis to approach God and find His blessings. At the temple was the priest, who brought Israel symbolically into the very house of God to receive the blessings of God.

And so the true people of God in the Old Testament found it their delight to go up to the house of God.

That delight and longing is expressed here in this Psalm. As the hills of the holy city came into view, the pilgrims sang, *"I am lifting up mine eyes unto the hills."* This was an expression of longing to enter into the house of God once more to enjoy the covenant blessings of His love and fellowship.

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This is the longing of every true child of God and must also be ours.

The pilgrims who sang this Psalm serve as a picture of every true child of God who in this life is on a pilgrimage to the temple of God.

Jerusalem and its temple are pictures in Scripture of heaven. The Bible speaks of heaven as the New Jerusalem, as the city of God, as the temple or sanctuary not made with hands. All this indicates that Jerusalem and the earthly temple were only pictures of a heavenly temple in which God will dwell with His people in Jesus Christ in perfect fellowship and friendship.

Every true child of God in this life is on a pilgrimage to that heavenly temple. He is redeemed in the blood of Christ from all his sin and thus enjoys the beginning of God's blessing in Jesus Christ in this life. But nonetheless, the fullness of God's blessing and fellowship await him in the heavenly temple. And so his life is a pilgrimage. This world is not his home. His dwelling place is in heaven. He is only passing through. His eyes are lifted up in longing to the hills. He longs for the time that he can stand in the courts of God's heavenly temple.

Let this also be our life and perspective in this new year.

Let us not focus attention on the treasures and pleasures of the earth but lift our eyes heavenward in eager expectation and longing for the heavenly courts of the Lord.

And let this reflect itself in all our living. A true pilgrim, who is only passing through this wicked world to his heavenly home, does not live as the world lives, does not talk as the world talks, does not dress as the world dresses, does not seek the world's entertainment culture. His life, conversation, dress, and culture all reflect the longing of his heart and the destination of his life. He is heaven bound. He is eager to enter into the courts of God's heavenly temple.

Let that be us in this new year and every year.

Only then do we show ourselves to be the redeemed in Jesus Christ.



The pilgrim song we are considering also expresses trust and reliance on the Lord.

The psalmist confesses that the Lord is his help.

The psalmist raises a question, From whence comes my help? His answer? My help comes from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.

The word "help" has the idea of surrounding someone, with the purpose of defending him.

This is close to the idea that the Lord is our Keeper, which is repeated several times throughout the Psalm. This emphasizes that the Lord is the One who guards, watches, and preserves His people.

In the Old Testament the Lord was Israel's Keeper from the vantage point of His temple. The Lord is viewed here as being all-powerful. He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. His dwelling place is on the mountains, a symbol of strength. From the height and strength of His holy mountain, the Lord was the Helper and Keeper of His people. He preserved and helped His people in the land of Canaan in the face of all her enemies that posed a constant threat to Israel's existence and to the covenant that Jehovah God had with her. He also preserved and helped His people as they made their pilgrimages to His house.

And the pilgrims who sang this Psalm confessed that they relied upon this help of the Lord. They confessed that their help came from the Lord. And thus they lifted up their eyes to the hills expecting God's help and protection.

We must do the same in this new year.

The pilgrimage we are on to the heavenly house of the Lord is perilous, fraught with danger. The devil and the powers of darkness


do not want us to reach the destination of our pilgrimage. They hate the Lord our God and His covenant. They seek to destroy the work of God by destroying our faith and the work that God has begun in us. Many are their methods, which we will again encounter in this year. They will distract us with the allurements of sin's pleasures. They will oppose us as we continue our pilgrimage, thereby to intimidate or discourage us. In times of adversity the devil seeks to work bitterness and rebellion in our soul.

So as we continue our pilgrimage this year we must lift our eyes to the hills, that is, heavenward, where the Lord our God dwells.

We need His help. Of ourselves we cannot overcome the resistance of the powers of darkness. Left to ourselves, we would quickly be overcome. We need the help of someone greater than we, greater than the powers of darkness. Our help comes from the Lord, which made the heavens and the earth. The one who made the heavens and the earth is more powerful than those that oppose us. If He will help, we are safe.

And He will help us. He is our covenant God. As our covenant God He has provided for us a place in His eternal house in heaven. He has done that through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Mediator. As our covenant God He will also provide us safe passage through this life, so that we reach our eternal destination. He will do that in His providence, limiting the powers of darkness through the events of history. He will do that by the Word and Spirit, strengthening us so that we may resist the wiles and attacks of the powers of darkness.

Let us in this new year remember this, so that we are not afraid.

Lift up our eyes to the hills, through prayer and seeking His Word, to find the help of our great God. 

Editor's Note:

In this issue you will find the first article by Rev. Andrew Lanning on the life and ministry of Rev. H. Danhof, a man whose name "has a prominent place" at the beginning of PRC history. But it may well be that many of the *Standard Bearer* readers know very little about Danhof. You will find this, and the subsequent articles, to be a fascinating account of the life of one of the three ministers deposed by the CRC in 1924, but who never became Protestant Reformed. Along the way, Rev. Lanning points out important lessons that can be drawn from the history. I look for-

ward to the rest of the articles.

This issue also contains the fourth installment of Mr. Daniel Holstege's translation from the Dutch of an old pamphlet never before put into the English language, that also has an important place in the history of the PRC.

By an oversight of the managing editor, the last installment of Rev. R. Hanko's exposition of Malachi was overlooked. Here it finally appears (with the manager's apologies).

A blessed New Year to all our readers. Please tell your friends and fellow-saints about the maga-

zine, in which we witness to God and His Christ, His cause and truth. (Available on-line as well as in the mail.) Write us sometime, if you would.

The Lord is coming. Look for Him.

O send the day of joy and light,
For long has been our sorrow's
night;
Afflicted through the weary
years,
We wait until Thy help appears;
With us and with our sons
abide,
In us let God be glorified.

—BLG 

Editorial

Rev. Kenneth Koole

The Horsemen—Still Running

Year of our Lord, 2007, year's end.

Looking back, not a year marked by significant events. So we might judge.

Not like 2001 and 9/11 and the collapse of the World Trade Center towers.

Not like 2004 and the tsunami off the coast of Sumatra, the day after Christmas, with the resulting tidal wave breaking the set bounds of the sea, sweeping life away upwards of 200,000 souls.

Not like 2005 and the series of hurricanes that battered our coasts, culminating in Hurricane Katrina and what it did to New Orleans, that city of sin, as well as to the surrounding area.

One and all, unmistakable evidence of the running of the "Four Horsemen" of Revelation 6, reminders that the judgments of God are still running over the four corners of the earth, and running in an increasingly powerful way.

What was noteworthy about

those catastrophic events was the repercussions, the seismic effect they had on seats of power, having political fallout, and having noticeable effect on Wall Street and the financial world as well.

In addition, these recent events served to underscore that there are forces out there before which man is still vulnerable and which he is powerless to control. Modern man is not comfortable with such a notion. What good are politicians and governments if they cannot save us from such uncertainties and death? Who will step forward and provide the safety and security we crave? Who will save us? The running of the horsemen make that question more and more pressing as time gallops along.

We might be inclined to say that nothing like those memorable events occurred in 2007 (at least not at the time of the writing of this article in early December). Well, maybe not any one event that stood out from all the others, but that is

not to say the horsemen and the judgments of the ascended Lord Christ were not running in 2007. They were, and are, and, until Christ returns, shall be.

Just to mention a few to refresh our memories.

There is the war in Iraq and the deeply-rooted political, social tensions and violence it represents and even causes worldwide. The Red Horse is running.

But there is also plenty of evidence that the Black and Pale Horses are alive and running. There was no lack of natural disasters and calamities worldwide this past year, with resulting death on a large scale.

Perhaps we have forgotten, but there was a massive earthquake (registering over 8.0 on the Richter scale) early this spring in Northern Chile, with widespread destruction and loss of life, whole villages being buried. And that was just one of many powerful earthquakes that rumbled worldwide

this past year, though not resulting in the same loss of life.

And while North America may have escaped hurricanes and flooding unscathed, that was not the story in other parts of the world. Not only did typhoons strike China and the Philippines, but a particularly powerful, destructive cyclone struck Bangladesh a few months ago with flooding and loss of life numbering in the tens of thousands. The dead were buried in massive common graves. Homeless, hungry citizens are still crying for relief.

And shall we mention Sudan and Ethiopia and the ongoing drought and famine there? Pictures of the starving are enough to make one weep. As well, the AIDS epidemic runs unchecked.

Closer to home, the fires that burned for weeks in the hills and mountains of Southern California, hundreds of square miles and thousands of homes destroyed. Just ask those in Redlands how close to home this disaster came. The smoke of the burning hung over the valley for weeks. And if anything speaks of the end of all things, it is fire and the smell of smoke.

The horsemen continue to run.

All this present suffering and death and despair—all reminders that there is no deliverance from God's judgments and wrath and His sting of death except by faith in Christ and the covering of the blood of the Lamb.

Now add to the above calamities the growing concern and debate over the whole issue of global warming, of climate change. If anything marked the year 2007, it was that this debate began to heat up and has been thrust to the fore. Response to this issue is going to have bearing on who comes into power in coming elections, and how long they stay.

That the climate is undergoing a change at present is indisputable. To what extent man and man's greed and abuse of nature and its resources have contributed and are contributing to the changes is an

issue of no little debate, of course. And over against that position is the contention that what we are experiencing is simply one of those natural cycles through which the earth's climate passes every few hundred years.

And, no, for all its reputation for boldness, the *SB* does not intend to settle this particular issue.

But no one can dispute the evidence of a present global warming trend. The difference between the winters in West Michigan in the 1960s and those of more recent vintage is not imaginary. And the breaking up of the polar icecaps and ice shelves gives evidence too plain to ignore.

But, ultimately, the debate over what is the primary source of the present climate changes (man's excesses vs. nature's natural cycle) is a moot point. The crucial question is not who or what is at fault. The crucial question is what such a change portends as long as it lasts.

As to the basic reason for killing floods and droughts and famines, there can be no question. It has to do with man's rebellion, man's fall into sin, and the resulting curse on creation, a creation that, while it sustains life, also works death. God in judgment intended it to be so.

To what extent greedy, consumer-driven man has aggravated the present climate changes we leave to the so-called experts. The reality is, there has been a change of weather patterns. Severe droughts grip areas unfamiliar with such, and excess of rain and flooding has fallen on others. To what extent this is going to affect food supply to be harvested from the good earth and from the seas remains to be seen. But if these present trends continue, such could have catastrophic effect on us and the world. There is no force on earth that will foment unrest, upheaval, and rebellion as will a shortage in food supply. Having energy in excess means nothing if the Lord determines to withhold the rain,

and the ground turns to dust. Then who will save us and give us food? The politicians already are sounding the alarm bells, and declaring, "Look to me and my party. It is I. We are your last, best hope."

Oh yes, the horsemen are running and their going determines the course of history as it goes.

But (and this is the Christian hope as we face the future) these horsemen with their judgments do not run wild, that is, arbitrarily and out of control. There is One who is directing and controlling them, namely, the One authorized to open the book of seven seals, the ascended Lord Christ (Rev. 5 and 6). Awful though these judgments and calamities may be, they are serving a purpose, namely, the purpose of the One who opens the seals. And in the New Testament age that great purpose is the salvation of the church, of that people chosen from every nation and tongue and to be gathered before the world collapses like a condemned building under the judgment of God.

In that knowledge we have hope and endure many things.

But more than that, amongst the running of the horsemen, one runs supreme, the white horse and his rider. And he represents the gospel and its proclamation worldwide. That he rides forth at the breaking of the first seal (Rev. 6:2) is most significant. The other three, dreadful in their consequences on the earth, run subservient to him, which is to say, the gospel's spread and triumphs and the church's survival. It is the gospel that goes forth conquering and to conquer. It goes forth as a direct assault on Satan's kingdom and power, bringing down Satan's kingdom-rule in the hearts of a countless throng, setting them free.

In 2007, despite all kinds of opposition and threats from its haters, the gospel has continued its free and powerful course through the nations of men, demolishing Satan's rule and deception where

the Spirit has been pleased to work. The church is still being gathered, and in that we rejoice.

If nothing else, the running of the judgments of God through the earth serve to underscore the urgency of hearkening to the call of the gospel to repent and believe lest one perish in this world and the world to come.

But more than that, the running of these other three horsemen have served to prevent the premature establishment of Antichrist's kingdom in all its power and venom, which kingdom with its malice will effectively stifle the spread of Christ's gospel and destroy the witness of His true and faithful church.

If you doubt that, read your Reformation history, and consider why it was that Charles V, for all his malice towards the Reformation in its fledgling stage, was powerless to strangle and silence it while yet in the nest. The reason? The Red Horse. The Muslim Turks stood at the gates of Vienna and other vital cities, threatening the whole of Western Europe. Charles V was preoccupied with other matters, unable to focus fully on the 'heretics' of the Reformation. He needed the armed support of the very princes who were protecting these Reformers, if his Holy Roman Empire was going to survive.

This is but one instance of how

the running of 'the three' have served the white horse and the gospel in its survival and spread.

But further, contradictory though it first may sound, the running of the horsemen, of the judgments of God as they intensify, serves at last to bring to a head the appearance of Antichrist and his kingdom. There comes a point when the reaction of modern man against all these disturbances of his comforts and threats against the security in life becomes so great that he will give up his freedoms (for a time) in exchange for promised security and that elusive peace. At that time the human race will no longer put up with any witness of the truth that declares that the calamities they have been experiencing are the judgments of God. "Repent or perish, indeed!" And then comes the great tribulation. The running of the horsemen and what their testimony is (as put into perspective by the gospel itself) will serve to foment a spirit that will seek to silence that Word with vigor. "Crucify it (and them)! We can endure these disturbers of our peace no more."

The running of the horsemen portend that coming day too.

Looking ahead in 2008, the US political elections slated for the end of this year loom large. It is all too likely that new rulers will be cho-

sen, politicians of a party whose animosity towards all things Christian and our right to full freedom of speech is a matter of record. Laws that will severely curtail our religious freedoms, intending to muzzle and silence the true witness of the gospel, might be coming sooner than we like to think.

2008 may well be a 'watershed' year in these great issues. It is what the coming elections are all about. Not the economy, not farm subsidies, not the war in Iraq, but freedom of speech, and, in particular, the faithful Christian witness and speech. One faces the year with some apprehension.

But, little flock, take heart. All of time and history is the "Year of our Lord." That was true of 2007, and that will be true of 2008 as well. Time and history, with all of their events, are under our Lord Christ's control. He has His own timetable. He is, according to promise, coming with all due haste. The Four Horsemen do not walk, they run! And they run with the salvation and victory of Christ's righteous cause and church in mind.

The One who rides the White Horse always goes forth "conquering and to conquer." And the victory is not only His, but also all those who love His appearing.

Maranatha! Even so He comes.



Special Article

Prof. David Engelsma

The Covenant Doctrine of the "Fathers of the Secession" (3)

Controversy over the Covenant

In 1861, two ministers, K.J. Pieters and J.R. Kreulen, introduced a new doctrine of the covenant into the Christian Separated [Dutch: "Afgescheidene"] Reformed Church—the denomination

formed in the Netherlands by the Secession of 1834. This doctrine was a radical departure from the doctrine of the covenant of the "fathers of the Secession." The fundamental feature of the covenant doctrine of Pieters and Kreulen was its denial that the covenant of grace

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Previous article in this series: December 1, 2007, p. 102.

with believers and their children has its source in, and is governed by, God's eternal decree of election. Therefore, this doctrine of the covenant extended the (saving) covenant grace of God in Jesus Christ to all the baptized children of believers without exception. God on His part is gracious to all the children alike with what the two ministers called "objective" grace.

According to the two Secession ministers, this covenant grace is not irresistible, or efficacious, but conditional. It depends for its efficacy upon the faith of the children, as does the covenant promise by which covenant grace is extended to all the children. Many children, therefore, lose the grace of the covenant (which once was theirs), fall away from the covenant Christ (to whom they were once united), and perish everlastingly (although once they were heirs of eternal life).

Although the two ministers denied the charges, their covenant doctrine taught that covenant salvation is by works, covenant grace is resistible, and covenant saints can fall away from grace.

Implied was that the reason why some children are saved, abide in the covenant, and finally inherit eternal life is not the grace of the covenant, or the promise of God, but their own performance of the stipulated condition.

In the person of Simon Van Velzen (Hendrik de Cock was dead by this time), the "fathers of the Secession" defended their and the churches' covenant doctrine, and condemned the novel view of Pieters and Kreulen. The doctrine of the covenant of Rev. Pieters and Rev. Kreulen, wrote Prof. Van Velzen, is "in conflict with all our godly fathers, in conflict with the confession of the church, and in conflict with the Holy Scripture."¹

Covenant and Election

Writing in the January 20, 1865 issue of the magazine of the Secession churches, *De Bazuin*, Van Velzen grounded the covenant of

grace in an eternal "covenant of redemption" between the Father and the Son. Van Velzen's understanding of the source in eternity of the covenant of grace is not now our concern. What is important is Van Velzen's insistence that there is in eternity "a covenant between Jehovah and the Lord Jesus...concerning the elect" and that this eternal covenant is the "origin" and "ground" of the covenant of grace in history. Since the covenant of grace originates in this eternal covenant, the covenant of grace is with the elect and with the elect only.

The covenant of grace and our covenant relation with God in Christ have their origin and their ground in this covenant of redemption between God and Christ. From this proceeds the beginning, continuance, and end of the salvation of men. Before one existed, before the gospel was preached to him, it was already decreed and arranged in this covenant when he would be born, when and by what means he would be delivered [from sin], how much grace, comfort, and holiness, how much and what kind of strife and cross he would have in this life—all of this was decreed and comes to each one from this covenant. The elect have then, on the one hand, to do nothing and let the Lord work.... By the power of this covenant, the Lord Jesus is the one who carries out the salvation of the elect.²

Although Van Velzen did not mention Pieters and Kreulen, there can be no doubt that he was opposing the covenant doctrine they had introduced four years earlier in the book *Infant Baptism*. Van Velzen was defending the orthodox doctrine, that eternal election, which was reflected in, and virtually identical with, the eternal "covenant of redemption," is the source and ground of the covenant of grace. Van Velzen was earnestly contending that the covenant of grace with believers and their children is governed by election.

Here a matchless love reveals itself, which surpasses all understanding. In this covenant [of redemption in eternity], to be known and thought of; to be given by the Father to the Son; to be written by the Son in His book; to be an object of the eternal, mutual delight between the Father and Christ to save you—that is blessedness! that is a wonder! Here was no foreseen faith, no good works, by which the parties were moved to think of certain persons in this covenant. Here was no necessity, no constraint, but only eternal love and sovereignty. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3).³

Baptism as a (Certain) Seal

In the same issue of the magazine, Van Velzen condemned Pieters and Kreulen—his colleagues in the ministry in the churches of the Secession—by name. Van Velzen used his editorial prerogative to give a running criticism of an article by K.J. Pieters on infant baptism and the covenant. In one of his long editorial comments, Van Velzen expanded the scope of his criticism to include the book that Pieters had written with J.R. Kreulen four years earlier, *Infant Baptism*. Because of their insistence that Baptism is a sign and seal of God's grace and salvation for all the baptized children alike, Pieters and Kreulen were forced drastically to weaken the significance of Baptism. They had written that in the baptism of infants Christ merely testifies that all the children "can find in Me a

1. Simon Van Velzen, quoted in E. Smilde, *Een Eeuw van Strijd over Verbond en Doop* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1946), 45. This and all other quotations of Dutch writings in this article are my translations.

2. Simon Van Velzen, "Het Verbond der Verlossing," *De Bazuin*, 20 Januarij 1865. The magazine is not paginated.

3. Ibid. Van Velzen mistakenly gave the reference as Jer. 33:3.

rich righteousness, salvation, and honor in the way of faith."

Van Velzen responded:

"Can find...in the way of faith?"! Merely this? The believer says more, much more. As certainly as our children have been washed with water, they have the forgiveness of sins, for to them is promised redemption from sins by the blood of Christ, no less than to the adults (Heid. Cat., Q. 74).... Therefore they ought to receive the sign and the sacrament of that which Christ has done for them (Bel. Conf., Art. 34).⁴

Those who deny that election governs the covenant are forced to view the baptism of infants as an uncertain sign of what the Savior is willing to let the children do ("find in Me a rich righteousness," etc.), rather than as the sure sign of what Christ has done and will do for the children, namely, shed His blood for them, forgive their sins, and sanctify them unto life eternal.

Turning his attention back to Pieters' article in *De Bazuin*, Van Velzen answered Pieters' charge that those who maintain that the true covenant children are the elect children of believers strip the sacrament of its meaning in the case of the other children who are baptized. Without naming him, Pieters directed this charge against Van Velzen, editor of the magazine in which he made the charge. Pieters wrote: "Most administrations of Baptism happen to those who are no members of the covenant [by election, on the view of Van Velzen—DJE]. What then does Baptism signify and seal regarding them? Must not the answer to this question be, 'Nothing, absolutely nothing?'"

Van Velzen's answer was brief, and conclusive:

What Baptism signifies and seals to those who are no members of the covenant? It is the same in this case as with the Lord's Sup-

per. "The ungodly indeed receives the Sacrament to his condemnation, but he doth not receive the truth of the Sacrament" (Bel. Conf., Art. 35).⁵

A "Common and Powerless Grace"

Striking to the very heart of the error of Pieters' conditional covenant with all the baptized children alike, Van Velzen charged that Pieters' covenant doctrine made the covenant promise of God false and ineffectual. In the words of the apostle in Romans 9:6, in Pieters' doctrine "the word of God hath taken none effect." For Pieters taught that God promises the forgiveness of sins and eternal life to all the baptized children without exception. Regardless of this promise, however, many of the children perish, unforgiven and damned.

Van Velzen contended for a true and effectual promise—a promise that *saves*, a promise that God not only makes, but also *keeps*.

If God gives them this promise, a promise that is not empty and useless, then He will not impute their sins to them, then they have forgiveness with Him, and they are partakers in "the strongest sense of the word" [Pieters had suggested understanding the grace promised to all the children in a strange, obscure, weak sense—DJE] of saving grace.⁶

Closely related to Van Velzen's objection to the false and impotent promise of Pieters' conditional covenant was Van Velzen's condemnation of Pieters' doctrine of covenant grace. Pieters taught that God is gracious to every child at Baptism. Because this covenant grace is conditional, it fails to save many of the children. Covenant grace can be lost. Covenant children can very really fall away from the grace of God in Jesus Christ once bestowed upon them. In what was a damning indictment of the new doctrine of the covenant in the

churches of the Secession, Van Velzen condemned it as a doctrine of a "common and powerless grace."⁷ The indictment was damning because the doctrine of common, resistible grace was the heart of the Arminian heresy condemned by the Canons of Dordt, official and beloved creed of the Christian Separated Reformed Church.

The "father of the Secession" saw clearly the implications of Pieters and Kreulen's doctrine of a gracious, conditional covenant promise of salvation to all the children alike. At the conclusion of Pieters' series on Baptism and the covenant in *De Bazuin*, Van Velzen summed up Pieters' doctrine this way:

In Baptism, the forgiveness of sins is promised to the entire visible church, to all the members of the visible church without distinction, to children and adults, head for head. In the promise, the benefits of salvation are given to each and every one of them. But the promise of forgiveness and of the other benefits is not saving.

Van Velzen added this ominous prophecy:

It is easy to perceive that this opinion must have great influence on the preaching and that by necessary logical consequence the idea of the covenant of redemption, election and reprobation, limited atonement, and such truths [the doctrines of grace as confessed in the Canons of Dordt—DJE] must undergo enormous change.⁸

Van Velzen's prophecy has been fulfilled in all the Reformed churches that have embraced Pieters and Kreulen's doctrine of a conditional covenant of grace with all the children alike. The preaching does not magnify the sovereign grace of God in the salvation of the covenant children. It proclaims a grace for all the children alike that does not save, but merely makes salvation possible. Refusing to find

the source and ground of the covenant of grace in election, it necessarily finds the source of the covenant in a will of God for the salvation of all, and the ground in the faith and obedience of the children.

That these churches are well aware of their apostasy from the Reformed and biblical truth of sovereign grace is evident from their readiness to strike out against the preaching of sovereign grace in the covenant with the slander, "hyper-Calvinism!"

The prophecy of the "father of the Secession" is fulfilled with a vengeance today in the theology and preaching of the federal [cov-

enant] vision. The men of the federal vision openly teach justification by faith and works and the doctrine of universal, resistible, losable grace—in the covenant.

Their heresy is the necessary development of the doctrine of a conditional covenant.

A doctrine of the covenant that cuts the covenant loose from God's election.

The covenant doctrine of K.J. Pieters and J.R. Kreulen.

Emphatically, not the doctrine of the covenant of the "fathers of the Secession" of 1834.

... to be continued. 

4. Van Velzen, commenting on K.J. Pieters' article, "*Eenige Opmerkingen over de 69e vr. en antw. van den Katechismus*," *De Bazuin*, 20 Januarij 1865.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Van Velzen, commenting on Pieters' article, "*Eenige Opmerkingen over de 69e vr. en antw. van den Katechismus*," *De Bazuin*, 12 Mei 1865 ("eene algemeene en krachtelooze genade").

8. Van Velzen, commenting on Pieters' article, "*Eenige Opmerkingen over de 69e vr. en antw. van den Katechismus*," *De Bazuin*, 19 Mei 1865.

Search the Scriptures

Rev. Ronald Hanko

The Prophecy of Malachi

Covenant Faithfulness and Unfaithfulness (19)

The Conclusion, Chapter 4:4-6 (continued)

5. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

6. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

That the coming of Elijah in these last verses of Malachi is a reference to John the Baptist and his work as forerunner of the Messiah is beyond doubt in light of Jesus' words in Matthew 11:14: "And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to

come." In Matthew 17:12 Jesus says the same: "But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them"—to which Scripture adds, "Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist" (v. 13).

It may seem strange, however, that the prophecy ends with a reference to John as God's messenger and not to the great Messenger of the covenant Himself. Nevertheless there is good reason for this ending.

We should understand that John was Elijah, not because he was some reincarnation of Elijah the prophet, but because he came "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17) and because he preached the same message of judgment and repentance as Elijah.

From that perspective, all the prophets of the Old Testament were "Elijah" and all prepared the way of the Lord. John was only the last and greatest of them all. Even the ministers of the Word in the New Testament bear a certain resemblance to Elijah and stand in his place when they preach that same message and point to Christ as the one who fulfills all the promises of God.

But why does God speak of this messenger (and of all who stand with him as messengers and preparers of the way) and not of the great Messenger Himself, especially here at the end of the prophecy? There are two reasons. First, because those who heeded God's messengers in the persons of John and Malachi and the prophets would also heed the Messenger of the covenant Himself, and those who did not heed the lesser mes-

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Previous article in this series: September 1, 2007, p. 472.

sengers would not heed the greater either. As Jesus said later to the Scribes and Pharisees, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

Second, the fact of the matter is that it is through such messengers that the Messenger Himself speaks. They do not just speak about Him, but He speaks through them, so that to hear and heed them is to hear and heed Christ. For that reason, too, those who would not hear John, or any of those others who stood in the long line of prophets of which John was the last and greatest, would not hear Christ. Nor today will those who refuse to hear God's messengers hear Christ, though they may piously protest otherwise.

To Israel God is saying that they must give heed, not only to John who had not yet appeared on the scene of history and would not appear for 400 years, but also to Malachi and to the other prophets who had gone before him, who were part of that long line of prophets. To us He is saying that we too must give heed to those who come in the spirit and power of Elijah and who bring his message of repentance and judgment, and that in repenting we must "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

Along with verse 4, this passage very strikingly sets before the people Moses and Elijah, the two who appeared to Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. They appeared there and are mentioned here for the same reason. They represent the whole Old Testament, the law and the prophets, all of which testified of Christ. That testimony is the principal message of the prophets, including Malachi in the Old Testament. Search the Scriptures, Jesus said to the Jews, for they are they which testify of me. In the New Testament the testimony is also of Christ, but of Him as the fulfillment of all the prom-

ises and as the one who is coming again. In the Old Testament that testimony kept the church looking for the coming of Christ and the fulfillment of the promises in Him. In the New Testament it keeps us "looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of the Lord," the day when He shall come again.

Testifying of the coming of Christ, therefore, the law and prophets prepared the way of the Lord. Moses did that by setting before the people the demands of the law, which would become a "schoolmaster to lead them to Christ." Elijah and the prophets did that by calling the people to repentance in view of the coming day of wrath, and their spirit lives on in all those who preach the law and the prophets, pointing to Christ as the one in whom alone salvation is to be found. As Moore says:

Indeed, to every regenerated soul there is essentially this coming of Elijah, this summons, "Repent, for the day is coming!" And as the faithful minister of Christ goes forth, it must ever be in the same spirit, calling on men to repent, and pointing to the lurid flashings of the *dies irae*, which, when once perceived by the startled eye of the soul, will lead it to flee to the only refuge from this wrath to come.¹

We should note, though, that this sending of Elijah, fulfilled over the whole course of history in the testimony of the law and the prophets, in Malachi, in John, and in every preacher, is not for the purpose of giving men a chance to repent, but to *work* repentance in the hearts of God's elect—to *turn* the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers. The language is the language of sovereign grace and a wonderful testimony to the fact that the gospel preached through the ages is indeed the "power of God unto salvation."

Verse 6, then, describes the

fruit of "Elijah's" work through the ages. It is the good fruit of repentance and conversion. Though expressed in language that may seem strange to us, this is clear from the quotation of the passage in Luke 1:16, 17. There the second phrase is interpreted by the angel Gabriel to mean "the disobedient to the wisdom of the just." The idea must therefore be this, that by the preaching of repentance the hearts of the pious and faithful fathers of Israel would live once again in their children and the children would be restored to the piety of their fathers.

That piety of the fathers Malachi had referred to repeatedly (1:2; 2:5, 6; 3:4). It would live again, and does live again not only in the hearts of their Jewish children but in the heart of every spiritual child of Abraham, that is, in the hearts of all those who are children of Abraham by faith (Gal. 3:29).

That fruit would be produced by Elijah's message, whether preached by Elijah himself or by those who followed him. The message produced that fruit in the Old Testament because it was the Spirit of Christ who spoke through the prophets (I Pet. 1:11). It produces that fruit in the New Testament because Christ Himself speaks through the preaching (John 10:27; Eph. 2:17).

That promise of good fruit was God's encouragement to Malachi in a time when it seemed as though no one listened or gave heed. It would be an encouragement to John when he was "a voice crying in the wilderness." It is an encouragement to everyone who brings the Word of God in times of apostasy, coldness, and wickedness.

The encouragement is the promise that salvation is God's work and that therefore His people will surely be saved. That promise of God through Malachi had really been given to Elijah many years before when God assured him in his despondency that He had reserved in Israel seven thou-

sand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. It is given in the New Testament language when the Word of God assures us that even today there is a remnant according to the election of grace (Rom. 11:5).

All this is reinforced by the threat of God's curse. On Israel as a nation that curse came when they were cut off and destroyed and the gospel was sent to the Gentiles. But just as the Word of God concerning the conversion of many continues to be fulfilled throughout the New Testament, so does this threat of curse still hang over the heads of all who do not repent: "Be not high-minded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed, lest he also spare not thee" (Rom. 11:20, 21).

With these words, Malachi's prophecy and the whole Old Testament ends. And what an ending! As Pusey says:

After the glad tidings, Malachi, and the Old Testament in him, ends with words of awe, telling us of the consequence of the final hardening of the heart; the eternal severance, when the unending end of the everlasting Gospel itself shall be accomplished, and its last grain gathered

into the garner of the Lord. The Jews, who would be wiser than the prophet, repeat the previous verse, because Malachi closes so awfully. The Maker of the heart of man knew better than the hearts which He had made, and taught their authors to end the books of Isaiah and Ecclesiastes (and Malachi) with words of awe, from which man's heart so struggles to escape.²

Or, as Laetsch puts it:

The Masoretes [early Jewish editors of the Old Testament] repeated v. 23 after v. 24, and the LXX [the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament] reversed the order of the last two verses in order to have the last book of the Bible close, not with a curse, but a blessing. That is not the way for unbelief to escape the curse. None but Jesus saves! (Acts 4:12; 10:43.)³

The concluding prayer of Calvin certainly expresses, therefore, what everyone who reads and understands the prophecy of Malachi must feel:

Grant, Almighty God, that as nothing is omitted by thee to help us onward in the course of our

faith, and as our sloth is such that we hardly advance one step though stimulated by thee,—O grant, that we may strive to profit more by the various helps which thou hast provided for us, so that the Law, the Prophets, the voice of John the Baptist, and especially the doctrine of thine only-begotten Son, may more fully awaken us, that we may not only hasten to him, but also proceed constantly in our course, and persevere in it until we shall at length obtain the victory and the crown of our calling, as thou hast promised an eternal inheritance in heaven to all who faint not, but wait for the coming of the Great Redeemer.—Amen.⁴

1. T.V. Moore, *A Commentary on Haggai and Malachi*, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974, p. 176.

2. E.B. Pusey, *The Minor Prophets, A Commentary*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977, vol. II, pp. 503, 504.

3. Theo. Laetsch, *Bible Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970, p. 547.

4. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, trans. John Owen, vol. 5, *Zechariah and Malachi*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950, p. 632.

Translated Treasures

Not Anabaptist but Reformed* (4)

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

II. Superficial Judgment and Rash Accusation

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

Previous article in this series: November 15, 2007, p. 92.

We now turn to chapter four of Rev. Jan Karel Van Baalen's pamphlet.¹

We can pass by the third chapter in silence except for this one observation: Rev. Van Baalen surely could have gathered his facts and material a bit better and could have studied a bit more thoroughly. That is the first requirement, and

that the brother has not done. Rev. Van Baalen constructs his view of the theology of these brethren out of a single paragraph from the hand of Rev. H. Danhof and a few

1. *The Denial of Common Grace: Reformed or Anabaptistic? (De Loochening der Gemeene Gratie: Gereformeed of Doopersch?).* —Ed.

fragments from the pen of Rev. H. Hoeksema. But the weakness of this method comes to light even more in chapter four, where Van Baalen makes his accusation and presents his objections to our view. We will now briefly follow him and demonstrate how hastily and superficially the brother has written.

Rev. Van Baalen begins this chapter by devoting a few pages to Rev. Hoeksema's dispute with Dr. R. Janssen in the *Banner*. We will not get into that, but not because we could not. Rev. Van Baalen, who so loosely accuses us of transgressing Christian morals, is himself guilty of the same by penning this and other accusations without really knowing the issue or having thoroughly examined it. But getting into that would divert us too far from our subject. If Rev. Van Baalen wants to defend Dr. Janssen, let him try. But a few sidelong remarks are of no use to us here.

Really then, it is not until page 36 of his pamphlet that Rev. Van Baalen finally arrives at his subject and presents his objections concerning our view.

The very first criticism is that we have taken the dangerous path of rationalism. We make ourselves guilty of the dreadful error of rationalism. Certainly, according to Rev. Van Baalen, there is no evil intent involved here—we do this in our ignorance—but nevertheless the sad fact is that our pamphlet fosters that error.

We do not say that Rev. Hoeksema intentionally makes himself guilty of this dreadful error. Rather, we believe just the opposite. Therefore, we endeavor to show him the dangerous path on which he finds himself.

Brother Van Baalen has good intentions, and we can appreciate that. He is concerned about us and wants to correct erring brethren. That becomes evident here as well as in the ever-repeated call to repentance and confession of guilt. We appreciate

these good intentions in the brother. However, if one wants to correct erring brethren by way of a pamphlet instead of speaking and corresponding with those brethren; if one should take the very public way of issuing forth at the top of his voice the call to repentance to two erring brethren, then he should be doubly certain of his objection. And the brother was not. He has viewed us wrongly. He has judged superficially. He has accused rashly.

So it is, first of all, with the accusation of rationalism. If the brother had just thought about it, he would never have written that severe accusation. Let the reader judge.

Rationalism is, in short, the school of thought that places the principle of reason above the Holy Scriptures. If there is anything in Scripture that is not in line with reason or comprehended by reason, then rationalism either rejects or contorts that portion of Holy Scripture. What had we written? This: "Now it must be said that such an attitude of God is simply inconceivable in the light of Scripture and our Reformed doctrine." Rev. Van Baalen responds thus: "Right there you have it. Pure rationalism" (p. 37). But let the reader judge. Do we place reason above the Scriptures there? Or do we contort the Scriptures in one way or another? For us, "in the light of Scripture" means to say, "if you let your thinking be controlled by the light of Scripture." Here you have just the opposite of rationalism, which says, "in the light of reason this or that in Scripture is inconceivable." We maintained that "in the light of Scripture this or that position is inconceivable." No further argument is necessary here. Even Rev. Van Baalen will realize this. He called for repentance unnecessarily here.

But we have also maintained that God cannot show any grace outside of Christ. Is this rationalism then? Absolutely not. In fact, this too means exactly the same as "in the light of Scripture." It sim-

ply means to say that something is not in agreement with the scriptural understanding of God and must be rejected. The Scriptures maintain that God is absolutely righteous and holy. And because He is absolutely righteous, grace, mercy, goodness, etc. always reside with God as an inviolable right. And therefore, it can certainly be said that something is inconceivable because it is in conflict with our understanding of God, without thereby falling into rationalism, as long as our understanding of God is derived from Scripture. This explanation will suffice. Rev. Van Baalen will certainly understand and realize that he has publicly and rashly written dreadful accusations here.

We do not understand the argument that now follows (we refer to the argument concerning our notion of the decrees of God that starts on page 37). That is, we think we understand what the brother writes here, but it is beyond our comprehension why he writes it. What stands out the most here is that Rev. Van Baalen's perception of us has been much too simple. To be sure, we were not surprised when he felt obliged to write that we could still profitably study Bosma's work on the Reformed faith.² Anyone who holds to such a view as Rev. Van Baalen thinks we hold would perhaps do better to begin with Borstius.³ For the brother writes without any warrant that we know of only one decree of God, and that is the decree of election. He does not give any proof for this, and yet he states:

And unfortunately we must now go further and express our firm conviction that the theology of Rev. Hoeksema runs along 'the single track' of election and reprobation. And it is not any better with Rev. Danhof. He also knows of only one decree of God, as appears in his pamphlet *The Idea of the Covenant of Grace*. And that is the decree of election.

Now we repeat that it is beyond us how anyone writing a pamphlet could present such things in the light of day. Do you truly think, brother, that we are as foolish as you present it here? Then demonstrate once that we ever wrote anything resembling this. As for us, we will demonstrate to you that we have written just the opposite. Just listen.

In the first place, there is the most general notion of God's Counsel with respect to all things in its all-encompassing sense. You can call this Counsel of God His decree, purpose, will, plan, counsel, hidden will or will of decree as long as you keep before your attention that, in the general sense of the word, the Counsel of God is all-encompassing. In this Counsel of God, however, we distinguish between the Counsel of God's Providence and the Counsel of Predestination. It is not true that these are two different Counsels or decrees of God. On the contrary, they are one, and they stand in close connection with each other. But we distinguish them as elements in the one Counsel of God (*The Banner*, April 8, 1920).

Therefore, it may also be said here that Rev. Van Baalen has cried "fire" too soon, accused of rationalism too carelessly, and worried about his brethren needlessly. He could have left much in the pen if he had but read our articles, or if he had at least first fully gathered his material before and prior to setting himself to writing against two brethren. Therefore, we also believe, brother Van Baalen, that you can once again profitably read what these brethren have written in the past.

But it gets even worse. The "single track" gets narrower and narrower. Earlier already Rev. Van Baalen was afraid that Rev. Hoeksema's "mind" went along a "single track." He is now decidedly convinced of it. Not only do the brothers Hoeksema and Danhof

believe in merely one decree of God, the decree of election, they believe in nothing else. They deny man's responsibility. Just read it on page 38, which so solemnly concludes,

But you who build your theology on merely one of the two truths of Holy Scripture, what principle enables you to rouse the impenitent sinner to repentance?

You see, our brother Rev. Van Baalen teaches that there is yet another line running through Scripture: the line of man's responsibility! And, he maintains, we fail to appreciate that line. We have no eye for it. We move along one little line.

Now, first of all, we wish to point out our genuine fear that brother Van Baalen's two lines deviate from the Reformed faith. We doubt that he stands correctly on this point concerning election. His entire reasoning does not make a very favorable impression on us, at least not from a Reformed viewpoint. And we especially fear the worst about Van Baalen when we see him quoting the text, "Who will have all men to be saved" [I Timothy 2:4]. That, writes Van Baalen, is God's revealed will. Thus, according to Van Baalen, God's hidden will is that all men are not saved, but according to God's revealed will we say, "Who will have all men to be saved." Look, brother, this is how we draw out the two lines [of your theology], which you have certainly not done. And the explanation that you give to the quoted text, as seen from the quotation itself, is certainly not Reformed. Already in Calvin's day, brother, people quoted this text as an objection to election. And although you do not do that, you still explain the text in the same way as all Arminians, namely, that "all men" there must be understood as everyone head for head. Calvin pointed out, however, that this can never be the idea. In the first place,

because the context clearly shows that the Apostle has his eye on "all classes" of men, and not on all men head for head. And secondly, because in that case this text would be in conflict with the clear doctrine of election; and that cannot be (*Institutes* III.24.16). And therefore it is definitely incorrect to declare that on the one hand God desires that some be preserved and others go lost, and on the other hand that God also desires that all men be saved. In this way you obscure the pure doctrine of election in a manner that really causes the simple believer to become very confused. We do believe in two lines, brother, but we are also convinced that you do not draw them correctly. The accusation that we do not believe in man's responsibility or do not do justice to it is simply pulled out of the sky, as may become evident from the following, which was written by our hand:

Up till now we have strictly maintained the all-encompassing character of God's decrees on the one hand and the moral freedom and responsibility of man on the other hand.

We have firmly refused to diminish the power and sovereignty of God or to grant that man is in any way able to destroy the Counsel of God. To do this would deal the death-blow to our Reformed doctrine. God is and remains absolutely sovereign. His Counsel has never been destroyed, nor changed, nor led aside by any deed of men or devils. All of history, evil included, is an unfold-

2. Rev. M. J. Bosma, *Onderwijzing in De Gereformeerde Geloofsleer* (*Exposition of Reformed Doctrine*). —Ed.

3. Jacob Borstius wrote simple catechism books for little children widely used in the Netherlands, such as *Eenige korte Vragen, Voor de kleyne Kinderen* (*Simple Short Questions for the Little Children*) and *Catechismus, Voorgesteld in korte Vragen en Antwoorden* (*Catechism, Set Forth in Short Questions and Answers*). —Ed.


ing of the Counsel of the Almighty.

On the other hand, we have just as emphatically maintained the responsibility of man. The accusation of determinism, sometimes brought against our Reformed confessions, we have cast far from us. Man is a creature that acts freely. What he does, he does consciously and willingly. He is and remains free in the formal sense of the word.

And although these two lines of God's Counsel on the one hand and man's moral freedom and responsibility on the other might run parallel insofar as our eye can see, and as McCosh⁴ expresses it in his *The Divine Government*, we will still hold fast to both of these truths on the basis of Scripture without compromise or surrender. It may be freely granted that we are dealing with a mystery here. The question how God maintains

His irresistible Counsel over against His moral creatures; how it is possible for God to cooperate with these moral-rational beings so that His Counsel is worked out and their responsibility still maintained, might ultimately put us in a dilemma. But this does not mean that now we simply abandon one of the two horns of the dilemma and delude ourselves into believing that we have the truth in only one of the horns. We must emphatically hold fast to both (*The Banner*, June 17, 1920).

We could quote more, but this language is clear enough. And it is language that Rev. Van Baalen could also have read, and which he should have read before he proceeded to the writing of a brochure in which he ascribed to us all kinds of errors which are not ours. The brother will certainly want to re-

joice at the fact that he has made himself worried about us needlessly. He will certainly also feel the need to be ashamed for his superficial piece of work, which is not at all grounded on the necessary study of the sources. And as an honorable man he will certainly want to take back publicly what he wrote about us and admit that he has been grievously mistaken with respect to us. 

4. James McCosh (1811-1894) was a Presbyterian preacher from Scotland who was appointed the eleventh president of Princeton. He wrote *The Method of Divine Government, Physical and Moral* (1850) over against rationalism's rejection of God's control of all.

Signs of the Times

Rev. Rodney Kleyn

Signs of the Times in the Church

Several years ago—around eight—there was much “to do” in Reformed writing and circles on the topic of the second coming of Christ. As Y2K approached, there was among the population in general a nervousness. In many Christian circles there was much misunderstanding and fear, and along with this came a torrent of erroneous teaching concerning the second coming of Christ and the end of the world. And we Reformed people responded in our writing, teaching, and witnessing by presenting the

biblical teaching on the timing of Christ's coming, the signs thereof, the nature of Christ's kingdom, and so on.

But lately, for some reason, we seem to have very little to say about these things. Maybe it was overkill, too much on one topic in such a short time, and we assume now that the Reformed reader understands all these teachings and is watching and ready for the coming of Christ. But could it be, too, that Reformed readers heard that the coming of Christ is not imminent, that He is not coming tomorrow, or next week, or even next year, and so they have adopted a “laid back” approach to the second coming of Christ—“We have time, no need to be too concerned about these things.”

And if that is the case, then are we not guilty, as teachers, of not warning about and watching for the signs? And would not that make our people guilty also of not watching and praying in preparation for the coming of Christ? Life in our world can be very comfortable. The problems of this world can seem quite distant from us, while her luxuries and pleasures are quite accessible, and the result can be that we are swept along with a tide of worldly cares and materialism, that we lose our spiritual sensitivity, become less and less aware of the development of sin, become numbed to the wickedness of our age, and the day of the Lord, or our day of meeting Him, creeps up on us unawares.

“Therefore let us not sleep, as

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do others; but let us watch and be sober" (I Thess. 5:6).

We must watch for the signs of the coming of Christ.

The signs to which we should be especially alert are the signs in the church and the signs among the nations, the signs of apostasy, of ecclesiastical union, and of the development of the antichristian kingdom. The believer ought to be watching for these things, reading the press, listening to the news, and watching what is going on in this world in view of the end and the final coming of Christ.

With these things in mind, I quote the following clear and alarming news pieces.

From www.christiantoday.com (October 31, 2007), under the heading "UN Head Reaffirms 'strong' collaboration with World Council of Churches," we have the following:

The United Nations and the World Council of Churches (WCC) have reaffirmed their commitment to collaborate at a meeting between the general secretaries of both organizations held on 29 October at the UN headquarters in New York.

"As the UN faces the 21st century highlighting the interrelatedness of development, security and human rights, the WCC strongly believes multilateralism is the only way to respond to the challenges of today," said WCC general secretary Samuel Kobia at the meeting.

He went on to assure UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon of the WCC's commitment to the principles and purposes of the UN, while Ban expressed "deep appreciation for the work of the WCC", saying that the council was a key member of the UN constituency, given its worldwide church representation, the common objectives and the "significant contribution made by the WCC in the areas of democracy and human rights".

"It was a good and constructive first meeting as both leaders expressed their desire to continue

strong and close collaboration," said Rev. Christopher Ferguson, WCC representative to the United Nations in New York.

The meeting took place at the beginning of the WCC's United Nations Advocacy Week taking place 29 October - 2 November at the Church Center to the UN in New York.

Kobia thanked Ban for the participation of several UN officials who are contributing to the week-long discussions attended by some 80 church leaders, policy and advocacy officers of churches and ecumenical organizations from all over the world.

In view of the conviction that "religion has a big, positive role to play in the search for global peace and harmony", the WCC general secretary announced the council's intention to propose that the UN declare a "Decade of Inter-religious Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace".

The proposal would be submitted to the UN together with an international consultative group in the course of the coming year.

A meeting like this demonstrates, on the one hand, the commitment of world church leaders to the purposes of the United Nations in establishing world peace with one world order and, on the other hand, the desire of world leaders to include religious leaders, and especially "Christian" religious leaders, in their efforts. And these are clear steps towards the establishment of the kingdom of Antichrist, which will bring together the nations of the world, with the help of the apostate church, under the godless government of the man of sin.

Meanwhile, the WCC is working hard to promote union between different denominational groups. Again, from www.christiantoday.com (October 20, 2007), under the heading "WCC and Pentecostals Continue Ecumenical Dialogue in Switzerland," we read:

A second round of dialogue between World Council of Churches

(WCC) members and Pentecostals was inaugurated last week in Baar, Switzerland.

A group of seventeen Protestant, Orthodox and Pentecostal Christians met to re-launch the work begun by the first Joint Consultative Group between the WCC and Pentecostals from 2000 to 2005.

In reflecting on the importance of the meeting, Cecil M. Robeck Jr., professor of church history and ecumenics at Fuller Theological Seminary, who returns as the Pentecostal co-moderator of the group, said "this meeting has given us a very good start on the next five years of our work together".

Jennifer S. Leath, African Methodist Episcopal Church (USA), who serves as the WCC co-moderator of the group, said she hopes that it will "continue to grow in mutual understanding and will not shy away from difficult questions or challenges for unity".

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Finnish Pentecostal Mission, presented an overview of Pentecostal bilateral dialogues with the Roman Catholic Church, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and conversations with the Lutheran World Federation. He stressed how this work has "laid the foundation for continuing Pentecostal involvement in the struggle for the unity of the Church of Christ".

Harold D. Hunter, International Pentecostal Holiness Church, led a conversation on the "ecclesial gift of charisms".

Marina Kolovopoulou, Church of Greece, and Cephas Omenyo, Presbyterian Church of Ghana, led a conversation on the "ecclesial gift of sacraments". Both topics had been recommended for further discussion by the first group.

The group will meet again in October 2008.

There are two things in this article that are noteworthy. First, we note the broad church representation included in these discussions, either directly or indirectly. From Roman Catholic, to Pentecostal, to Lutheran, to the World Alliance of

Reformed Churches, there is interest in these meetings. American evangelicalism is represented by a Pentecostal professor from Fuller Theological Seminary. Second, of interest are the topics under discussion—charismatic gifts and the sacraments—which indicate a move toward Roman Catholicism and a justification of Pentecostalism.

Meanwhile, under the name “Reformed,” there are also massive ecumenical developments. From www.christianpost.com (October 23, 2007), under the title “Historic Reformed Church Merger Unites 80 Million Christians,” we read:

The World Alliance of Reformed Churches agreed Monday to unite with the Reformed Ecumenical Council to create a new global Reformed body representing more than 80 million Reformed Christians worldwide.

Leaders made the historic decision while attending the WARC’s executive committee meeting in Trinidad and Tobago after two days of in-depth discussions on the many aspects of the proposed merger.

“This is truly, truly [an] important moment,” said WARC president Clifton Kirkpatrick after the vote was taken, according to a WARC report. The global church head invited participants of the meeting to join together in singing the doxology after the vote.

His counterpart, REC president Douwe Visser, also recognized the significance of the time saying it was a “great moment.”

“I hope we can combine the efforts of these two organizations and have an even broader outreach than WARC and REC have at the moment,” Visser said.

“I have a feeling this new body will be the voice of the Reformed world,” he added.

In March, REC’s executive committee approved the idea of a new Reformed body tentatively called the World Reformed Communion. However, WARC on Monday requested more time to consider alternative names for the group.


WARC is a worldwide fellowship of 75 million Reformed Christians in 214 churches in 107 countries. REC represents 12 million Reformed Christians in 39 churches in 25 countries. Twenty-

seven of REC’s churches are also WARC members.

“This is a historic moment. The Reformed family has demonstrated that we have the ability to engage together in a united fellowship and overcome division and for this we are thankful to God,” WARC general secretary Setri Nyomi said.

A WARC survey of member churches found that 41 churches [denominations, RK] supported the merger, while 6 churches raised some questions. None of the WARC churches who responded to the survey expressed opposition to the decision.

The new Reformed body intends to invite movements, agencies and theological institutions of the Reformed movement to become affiliates of the group.

All these are events that ought to prompt the true Reformed believer to remain alert to the signs of the coming of Christ. They clearly point to the coming together of organized religion, including Reformed Christians very close to us (the CRC is part of the REC), in support of the coming earthly reign of the Antichrist. 

Origins of the PRC

Rev. Andy Lanning

Henry Danhof (1)

An Introduction

The name *Henry Danhof* is familiar to the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC). Whenever the history of the PRC is told, Danhof’s name has a prominent place at the beginning of that history. Danhof, along with Revs. Herman Hoeksema and George Ophoff, was a minister in the Chris-

tian Reformed Church (CRC) in the early 1900s. Along with Hoeksema and Ophoff, Danhof held that the Three Points of Common Grace, adopted by the Synod of 1924, were false doctrine. Danhof, along with Hoeksema and Ophoff, was deposed by a classis of the CRC. Danhof, Hoeksema, and Ophoff banded together in what would become known as the Protestant Reformed Churches. All the way through the beginning history of the PRC, Danhof’s name is inter-

twined with those of Hoeksema and Ophoff. The Protestant Reformed Churches recognize the name *Henry Danhof*.

But the history of Henry Danhof is another thing. With it, the PRC are not so familiar. There are good reasons for this. The main reason is that Danhof himself was never Protestant Reformed. Although he banded together with Hoeksema and Ophoff immediately after being deposed from the CRC, he left what would become

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the PRC before they were ever officially organized as a denomination. Rev. Danhof and his congregation in Kalamazoo, Michigan, struck out on their own as an independent congregation and remained such for many years. Their history became a different history from that of the PRC. Therefore, although Danhof's name is prominent at the beginning of PRC history, it does not appear in their subsequent history.

For another thing, the split between Danhof and the PRC was painful. Danhof was one in doctrine with the PRC; he was one with the PRC in their opposition to the theory of common grace; he was one with the PRC in their conception of God's covenant of grace. From every point of view, he should have remained with the PRC. His energy and abilities would have been a great help to the fledgling denomination. When he left to be on his own, he caused much grief among his own people and in the PRC. Because of that pain, Danhof and the PRC seldom crossed paths again.

But the Protestant Reformed Churches would do well to know something about Henry Danhof's history. And there are good reasons for this.

Most importantly, Danhof's history is instructive. All history is instructive, because it is directed by God. History is not merely a collection of events that happen by chance, but it is the unfolding of God's eternal plan and is directed by His sovereign hand. This view of history is the Reformed churches' confession in Article 13 of the Belgic Confession, *Divine Providence*:

We believe that the same God, after He had created all things, did not forsake them, or give them up to fortune or chance, but that He rules and governs them according to His holy will, so that nothing happens in this world without His appointment....

If this is true of history in general, how much more is it true of church history? Church history is the study of God's work among His people through Jesus Christ. It is the history of His mercy to them in their sins; His chastening of them for their correction; His faithfulness to them in spite of their unfaithfulness. It is the history of the church's response of love and obedience, and sometimes of the church's wicked apostasy that ends in her candlestick being removed in her generations (Rev. 1:20; 2:5).

These themes and more can be found in the history of Henry Danhof and the churches of which he was pastor. The history of Henry Danhof is instructive.

Another reason the PRC would do well to know Danhof's history is that the doctrine he taught was profound. Danhof lived at a time when the CRC was facing tremendous battles over key doctrines. Harry Bultema, another CRC minister of the day, was teaching dispensational premillennialism. Danhof took up his pen to oppose that false doctrine, and he became one of Bultema's chief critics. Danhof was also instrumental in defending Scripture against the higher-critical views of Ralph Janssen, professor at the Calvin Theological School. Danhof was part of the synodical committee that investigated Janssen's views and recommended his removal from the seminary. Danhof also played a major role in the well-known common grace controversy. Here is where the PRC know the most about Danhof. With Herman Hoeksema and George Ophoff, he defended the truth of God's sovereign, particular grace.

Henry Danhof was interested in applying the doctrine he taught. The church in the world must always apply the doctrine of Scripture to her daily life. This is true also of the doctrine of the antithesis. The antithesis is the spiritual separation between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, be-

tween light and darkness, between Christ and Belial. The battle to live the antithesis was pressing in Danhof's day. The battle took the form of questions about the American culture. Many of the people in the CRC were either themselves immigrants from the Netherlands, or direct descendants of immigrants. The struggle for these Dutch saints was to know how much of the American culture was good, and how much of it was evil. The word used in that day to describe this struggle was "Americanization." The real issue in the struggle was the application of the antithesis. What did it mean for Dutch immigrants to walk as children of the light amidst the darkness of the world in the American setting? Rev. Danhof did his part to defend the antithesis in his congregations as he took a stand on which elements of the culture were useful—Daylight Savings Time and the automobile—and which were evil—the labor union and the theory of evolution.

One especially intriguing doctrine that Danhof taught was that of the covenant. Along with Herman Hoeksema, Danhof disagreed with the popular idea of the day that the covenant was essentially a contract between God and man. In a powerful speech delivered in 1919, Danhof laid out the idea that the covenant is not essentially a contract, but a relationship of friendship and fellowship between God and His people. Furthermore, Danhof grounded the idea of the covenant as friendship in the life of the triune God Himself. God's life is covenant life, and it is into that life that God takes His people. Danhof went on to apply this covenant doctrine to the antithesis. Because God's people live as His friends, while the ungodly live outside of His friendship, there can be no spiritual cooperation between the church and the world.

The Protestant Reformed church member will find himself at home in Danhof's theology. For

the most part, Danhof's doctrine was the doctrine the PRC believe and teach today. This makes knowledge of Danhof's history valuable.


A bonus of knowing Danhof's history is that it is fascinating, and even entertaining. It is true that we do not study church history to be entertained. Because it is the record of God's sovereign dealings with His blood-bought church, the study of church history demands a certain carefulness and soberness in our approach to it. A frivolous, superficial approach to the history of Christ's church fails to recognize God's hand in that history and fails to honor God with the reverence that is due Him.

But this is not to say that church history must be lifeless and uninteresting. Church history is the record of God's dealings with His church, which is made up of His people. Present in those people were all of the weaknesses that belong to sinners, as well as the strengths that belong to God's saints. We recognize our struggles in theirs. We smile as we see ourselves reflected in them—or we wince. This makes for fascinating reading.

But especially is church history fascinating when we see it in the light of God's Word. Then it is not merely the history of people who were like us, but the history of God's work among His people. Events that would be captivating in themselves become even more so when we see them to be the unfolding of God's eternal counsel. Conflicts that would be gripping on their own become even more so when we see them to be the battle of the ages between the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. In fact, it is only when we see church history in the light of God's Word and counsel that it becomes significant. Stories that may be gripping or captivating on their own finally have meaning when interpreted in the light of God's revelation.

So it is with the history of Henry Danhof. It is a fascinating history, and a significant history, when God's Word illuminates it.

So, what is the history of Henry Danhof? He was an orphan; he was a shepherd; he was a garbage-man; he was a Christian Reformed minister. He was expelled from the CRC, not once, but twice in his

life—once while an active minister, once after he had retired. His denominational affiliations through his life included the Christian Reformed Church, the Protestant Christian Reformed Churches, an independent church, back to the Christian Reformed Church, and then back again to an independent church. His boldness in the pulpit knew no bounds. On one occasion, the elders of his church told him that his sermons needed a stronger emphasis on repentance. Danhof responded by proclaiming at the beginning of his next sermon, "REPENT, Repent, REPENT! Will that be enough, brothers?" His capacity for work knew no bounds, either. Even as an old man with a tumor behind his eye, he continued preaching to the small group that remained with him. Finally, one Sunday morning he collapsed in the pulpit and had to be carried out by men from the congregation. He died a few weeks later. A fascinating history, indeed. And instructive, when viewed in the light of God's Word. It is this history that will be unfolded and explained in following issues, D.V. 

In His Fear

Rev. Daniel Kleyn

Worship in His Fear (9)

Receiving the Preached Word

As Reformed believers, we view the preaching as being, without question, the most important element in worship. It is indispensable as the chief means of grace that produces and strengthens our faith. It is the

precious word of the gospel that saves and comforts our souls. It is the blessed word of Christ Himself that powerfully directs us in thankful obedience to our God.

For this reason, we come to the house of God each Lord's day with a vital interest in hearing what is preached. Our desire and purpose is to listen well. We realize that we do not receive nourishment from the preaching simply by being in church. God uses means,

and the means He is pleased to use is that we listen well to and receive properly the word that is preached.

One way in which we are instructed concerning proper listening is through the example of the Bereans. The Scriptures tell us that when Paul preached the gospel to them, "they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

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That the Bereans “received the word with all readiness of mind” indicates, first of all, that they were eager to hear the preached word. You can be sure they were in church whenever the apostle Paul preached. They did not try to find a reason or excuse to stay home. They were there every time. They did not want to miss even one sermon. They were eager to hear Christ speak to them.

This is true of all true believers. Nothing easily keeps God’s people from being in the Lord’s house twice each Sunday. We come with an eagerness to hear what Christ has to say to us. We are excited at the prospect of the word being preached. We are so hungry spiritually that we can hardly wait for the sermon to begin.

This precludes going to church simply because it is expected of us. Nor may we go to see if we can find errors in the preaching. Nor may we watch the clock in eager anticipation of the “Amen” at the end. Such thoughts and actions betray an attitude of disinterest and disdain for the word.



Another aspect of receiving the word as the Bereans did is to accept what is preached. That the Bereans received the word means that as Paul proclaimed the gospel to them, they embraced it with believing hearts. This does not mean (as we will see shortly) that they blindly accepted it, but the point is they did indeed embrace it with “readiness of mind.”

And so do the children of God today. We come to the house of God with a heart that is open to receiving the word of Christ. We need that word, for we have again faced spiritual battles, and have experienced falls. Knowing this, Christ has provided us the opportunity to hear His voice and to be comforted by His word of truth. Realizing our need, we come with an earnest de-

sire and hunger for the spiritual nourishment Christ provides.

All of this bears on the matter of listening to what we might consider to be a bad sermon.

Sometimes we view some sermons, or a certain minister’s preaching, that way. We might feel the preaching is too deep; in our opinion it is dry and abstract, having too much doctrine and not enough application. Or else we might consider the sermons to be too shallow. Or too long. Or too difficult to follow. It may happen that a personal dislike of the minister, or of some of his preaching habits, may get in the way of hearing the sermon. It may also happen that we become so accustomed to a preacher that we can just about predict what he is going to say. For some or all of these (and/or other) reasons, we find it very difficult to listen to the word, and feel we are not being edified and fed.

We must not let this happen. We should always listen to the preaching with readiness of mind. We have to forget about our prejudices. We have to put away our negative opinions about a minister or his preaching. Instead of listening in order to find fault, we must listen in order to find food. If a minister would preach heresy, then there is of course reason to reject what is preached. But if the truth is proclaimed, we must eagerly receive it. We must not allow anything to get in the way of receiving spiritual food for our souls.



Listening properly to the preaching also involves listening with discernment.

The Bereans did this, for we are told that they “searched the scriptures daily, whether those things (that Paul preached) were so.” They did not simply accept what was preached just because the apostle Paul said it. They compared what he said with what God’s word said. They searched through the Scriptures to make

sure that the preaching agreed with what is taught throughout the whole Bible. In this way they made sure that the preaching was faithful and true. The Bible itself was the standard. The Scriptures determined whether or not the preached word was received.

We too must listen in this way. Something may not be blindly accepted just because the minister said it. We must evaluate the preaching before believing and heeding it.

There are wrong ways of evaluating.

Some judge a sermon on how well it touches on the sins of others in the congregation. If it is sharp in condemning this or that person, then it is a good sermon.

Others judge a sermon either on how doctrinal or on how practical it is. If it meets certain criteria in either regard, then a good word has been spoken.

Others judge a sermon with a very critical ear. They listen in the hope of finding something out of line. If they find it, they will be sure to talk publicly about it, sometimes even criticizing the minister in the presence of their children. They may do this because the word is sharp and steps on their toes. Or else they do it because they do not like the preacher and are hoping to find things that might justify their dislike.

The proper way to listen, however, is to examine the sermon in light of the word of God. We may not judge by our own standards and preconceptions or opinions, but must put the sermon to the test of Scripture.

This may result in the need to speak to the minister concerning something he said. This is necessary first of all to make sure that we did not misunderstand what was said. And if we are convinced that what was said is contrary to the Scriptures, then we seek, humbly and lovingly, to correct. But we must remember in all this to go to the minister, not with our own opinions, but with the word of God.

In testing the sermon with Scripture, our aim must still always be that we might receive the word and thus be spiritually fed. We compare it to the Bible so that we can be sure that it is a word that we can believe and live. If the preached word is not in harmony with the written word, then it must be rejected. But if it is in harmony, we are duty bound to receive it and submit to it as the very words of Christ Himself.

This is something every child of God is qualified to do. We each occupy the office of believer. This means we have been equipped by the Spirit to be students of the Bible. The Spirit enlightens us to His word. The Spirit qualifies us to interpret and understand the Scriptures for ourselves.



If we receive the word with ready minds, convinced that it is the very word of God, then we will also obey and live it. This, too, is an important aspect of receiving the preached word. We must be not only hearers, but also doers of the word.

The word preached is something we must take to ourselves. It is not enough simply to hear it and say, "That's true!" One has to apply it to his or her own life. To

that end, one must pray (as the minister usually does at the end of the sermon) for the Spirit to apply the word. Diligent and eager hearing of a sermon does absolutely no good if it is not also lived.

This takes work.

It does so first of all because the application is not always specifically stated by the minister. Sometimes it is, so that it is obvious what should follow in one's life. Other times, however, serious thought needs to be given to this by the hearers themselves. One may have to spend a considerable amount of time meditating on the word, and/or discussing it with others, in order to determine how specifically it can and ought to be applied.

It also takes hard work because we all have a difficult time applying the word to ourselves. We are very quick and adept at making application to others. It is easy for us to think of someone else who needs to listen and "shape up." But we are not so willing to admit that we ourselves need to submit to whatever is said.


It is especially in this regard that we are inclined to be poor listeners. Proudly and stubbornly we resist the word. Although the truth is preached, we are inclined to say

such things as, "That's just his opinion! That's easy for him to say! I suppose he has to say that, but he can't really expect us to do it!" Or we excuse ourselves from the application by saying: "That's all true, but my circumstances in life mean it's different for me and doesn't really apply!" Because the word of Christ is harsh and sharp, we ignore it. It applies, but we merrily continue on in our sinful ways and make no change in our lives.

We may not pick and choose what we listen to and obey. Let us be not only good hearers, but also good doers of the word.



The Bereans were highly commended; God said they were spiritually noble. May that be His evaluation of us as well, because we are vitally interested in the preaching of His word, receive it enthusiastically, and submit ourselves and our lives to it.

We have the freedom to have the word of God in our homes and hands. May we therefore seek to grow in our knowledge of it in order that we may rightly evaluate and thus properly receive the preaching of the gospel. May the Lord be pleased to use that to nourish our souls unto life eternal. 

Go Ye Into All the World

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

God's Covenant: The Foundation of Missions

Rev. Bruinsma is Eastern Home Missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches, stationed in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Previous article in this series: November 15, 2007, p. 89.

In the last article we defined missions. We also began our treatment of the biblical foundation on which all mission work must be built. If the church is to be zealous in her mission work, she must understand that the Bible

teaches the indispensable need to carry on such work.

We concluded our last article stating that the necessity of missions rests upon the truth of the covenant. There are two means that God employs to continue the

line of His covenant from one generation to the next. One way is through children born to believing parents, and the other way is through mission work—a work that calls those outside of the covenant into the covenant. This truth becomes clear in Genesis 17, when God established His covenant with Abraham. It was not only to Abraham and His children in His generations that the promises of God’s covenant were spoken. God also made it known to Abraham that in him *all the nations of the earth* would come to share in the blessings of His covenant.

This prophecy to Abraham does not alone attest to the truth that the mission calling of the church is directly connected to the establishment of God’s covenant from one generation to the next. Scripture from Old to New instructs us in this truth.

Old Testament Scripture and Missions

The church of the old dispensation did not do mission work. It did not belong to the labor of the church then. But this does not mean that the Old Testament says nothing about missions. The Old Testament speaks in many places of the future gathering of the nations of this world into the church. J. H. Bavinck observes:

Yet, if we investigate the Old Testament more thoroughly, it becomes clear that the future of the nations is a point of greatest concern. It is in itself striking how often the Old Testament discusses the future of these peoples and interests itself in the salvation that will one day be their lot. This indeed cannot be otherwise, for from the first page to the last the Bible has the whole world in view, and its divine plan of salvation is unfolding as pertaining to the whole world.¹

What is more, the many Old Testament references regarding the future gathering in of the heathen na-

tions reveal that this phenomenon is inseparably related to the establishment of God’s covenant in the new dispensation.

To understand this we must make a close examination of Noah’s prophecy concerning his sons in Genesis 9:26, 27: “Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem.” It is clear from this passage that Noah was not referring directly to his sons or even his sons’ sons. Noah’s reference here is to the future generations of his sons. Sometime in the development of the future generations of his sons, Canaan’s children would become servants to Shem’s children. (This happened when under David all the nations of Canaan were subdued under his rule.) Likewise, sometime in the future development of Noah’s sons, Japheth’s children would come to dwell in the tents of Shem’s children, that is to say, Japheth’s children would come to share in the blessing of Shem’s children. Concerning the meaning of this latter prophecy we quote the exegesis of Prof. Homer Hoeksema:

The meaning of this central promise is very plain. The blessedness of Shem is none other than the covenant blessing, for Jehovah is the God of Shem. Jehovah as the I AM, the eternal and unchangeable covenant God, is Shem’s God. This God has taken Shem to be his own. This doxology bespeaks the blessedness of the eternal relation of God’s love to his people and of his being faithful and true in that relation. Jehovah is a God unto Shem.... The covenant line, then, is here prophetically specified as continuing in the line of Shem, so that in the generations of Shem, God will establish his covenant.

Noah’s prophecy regarding Japheth is that God shall enlarge him.... Thereupon Japheth shall dwell in Shem’s tents. He shall become a partaker of Shem’s covenant blessings—not as a mere so-

journer, but as *dwelling* there, that is, sharing fully in the covenant blessings of Shem. The implication is that for a time Japheth will remain outside of the sphere of the covenant and will be left to himself.... But when the great Son of Shem appears and fulfills all things, he widens the tents of Shem and spreads them over the families of Japheth. When Japheth has been enlarged, he also dwells in Shem’s tents, and organically the generations of Japheth enter into God’s covenant and enjoy its blessings. Noah’s prophecy, spoken immediately after the flood, looks through the remainder of the old dispensation to the New Testament gathering of the Gentiles, and ultimately to the final realization of God’s covenant with his people in the perfection of the new creation.²

It becomes clear from Scripture subsequent to this prophecy that God indeed chose to carry on His covenant in the generations of Shem. Out of the generations of Shem God called Abraham and established His covenant specifically with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. From Abraham to the coming of Christ, God’s covenant was gradually limited in its scope to include only the children of Israel (Jacob). Moses reminded the nation of Israel of this special privilege prior to entering into Canaan: “For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.... Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep

1. J. H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1960), p. 11.

2. Homer C. Hoeksema, *Unfolding of Covenant History*, vol. 2 (Grandville, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2001), pp. 51, 52.

his commandments to a thousand generations.”³

It must be remembered, however, that though God had firmly established His covenant with the children of Shem in the line of Abraham, He never stopped reminding His people that in the future Japheth’s children would also come to share in the blessings of the covenant with them. The Psalms are filled with such reminders. We read in Psalm 86:9: “All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name.” Or again in Psalm 22:27: “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.”⁴ These Psalms and others reminded God’s saints in Israel through song that God would later in history gather His people into His covenant from the nations.

Neither did the prophets allow Israel to forget that there was another way—not directly known to them—that God would gather all peoples of the world into His covenant. Isaiah prophesied of this: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it. And many people shall go and say, come ye, and let us go to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob.”⁵ Neither is Isaiah the only prophet that heralded the grafting of the nations into God’s covenant. Jeremiah did, in Jeremiah 3:17: “They shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.” Ezekiel saw it in his visions; so did Daniel.⁶

The prophet Zechariah was a contemporary of Malachi, and therefore one of the last prophets

to speak before the silence of the inter-testamentary period. In his writings he also plainly proclaims that God would enlarge the scope of His covenant by grafting into His covenant His people out of all the languages and nations of this world. “Thus saith the Lord of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all the languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, we will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you” (Zech. 8:23).

These prophecies were a constant reminder to the Old Testament saints that someday Noah’s prophecy concerning Japheth would come true. Someday Japheth’s children would come to dwell together with the children of Shem and share with them in the blessedness of God’s covenant of love and friendship. The only truth not revealed to them was *how* God was going to gather into His covenant line the nations of this world. They did not fully understand the *means* God was going to use to graft others into the line of the covenant.

Christ and missions

It did not, either, belong to the labor of Christ during His earthly ministry to do mission work. This is why He said to His disciples in the presence of a Canaanitish woman in Matthew 15:24: “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” When Jesus sent out His disciples, and later the seventy, they traveled from city to city in Palestine preaching and teaching. They were not commissioned by Christ to go to the Gentiles.

But this does not mean that Jesus did not see that day coming! Surely He did! He Himself would accomplish the grafting in of the Gentile nations (the seed of Japheth). Once He ascended into the heavens, He would pour out His Spirit on all flesh. Then would begin the great gathering in of the

peoples of this world into God’s covenant. It was because Christ knew this day was coming that He spoke plainly of that day. Having met the centurion in Capernaum, He prophesied in Matthew 8:11: “...many shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.” These words reflect back on Noah’s prophecy concerning Japheth’s seed. The nations would share with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Shem’s seed) in the blessings of the covenant.

Not only did Jesus foretell of that day, but He also spoke of the means God would use to accomplish the gathering in of the nations, that is, the preaching of the gospel. In His prophecy to His disciples concerning the end of time Jesus plainly stated: “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; then shall the end come.” But before this work of preaching the gospel to all nations could be carried out, Christ must first accomplish the salvation of His people. After all, that is the central message of the gospel: Christ crucified. That is the good news that must be published abroad.

It was only after Christ’s death, and even His resurrection, just prior to His ascension, that Christ finally commissioned His church to carry out the task to preach the gospel outside of the bounds of Jewry. This is the great commission of Matthew 28:19, 20 and Mark 16:15, 16: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” In this command of Christ to His church is clearly revealed the second means God uses to gather His people in the new dispensation: missions.


The New Testament and missions

Little needs be said in this article about the teaching of the New Testament regarding missions. We will be referring to New Testament

Scriptures often in the articles that follow. There is one interesting observation out of Acts that can be made about the beginning of mission work in the early church. After Christ commissioned His church to go out and preach the gospel to all nations, it was not as if she jumped on this task with enthusiasm and zeal. This was something new. God did not gather His church in the old dispensation in this manner. It took time for her to get used to the reality that God was now going to include in His covenant other peoples than the Jews. God had to send Peter the vision of the unclean animals, and then send Gentile men to seek him

out to preach to them. Christ by His Spirit led Philip to Samaria to preach to the Samaritans. Christ had to appear to Paul and give Paul personal instruction in his task to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. Slowly the church learned of her new calling. Having learned, however, this calling of the covenant became very much a work of the early church.

This remains the calling of the church today. God uses the work of missions to continue His covenant today as much as He uses the careful nurturing of our children born into the church. If we fail to understand the importance of missions for the church today, if

we see it only as a secondary labor of the church, we do injustice to the truth of God's covenant. We also undermine the power of the preaching (the means of the covenant) that God uses not only to strengthen faith in those who already believe, but also to work faith in the hearts of others incorporating them too into the covenant of God. 

3. Deuteronomy 7:6-9. See also Isaiah 41:8, 9.

4. See also Psalms 2:8; 46:4, 10; 65:2; 66:4; 68:31; 72:8-11; 102:15, 18-22; 145:10.

5. Isaiah 2:2,3. See also Isaiah 18:7; 40:5; 49:6, 22, 23; 54:1-3; 60:1-14.

6. Ezekiel 47:3-5; Daniel 7:13, 14.

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Young People's Activities

The Young People's Society of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI have made plans to assist the elderly members of their congregation during the winter months. Plans call for the young people to clean off any snow that may have accumulated on their vehicles during the worship service, warm the vehicles up, drive them to the church entrance, and then assist the elderly members into their vehicles.

Members of the Young People's Society of the Peace PRC in Lansing, IL invited the young people from neighboring South Holland and Cornerstone PRCs to join them for a get-together around a nice warm bonfire the night of November 17.

The young people from both the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI, and First PRC in Holland, MI made plans this past fall to rake leaves for members of their congregations who were unable to do so.

The Lynden, WA PRC enjoyed an hour of singing and special numbers after their evening wor-

ship service on November 18, sponsored by their Young People's Society.

The young people of our denomination's newest congregation, Calvary PRC in Hull, IA, invited members of their congregation, as well as nearby PRCs, to join them for their first annual Thanksgiving Singspiration on November 18 at their place of worship.

Members of the Michigan PRCs were encouraged to attend this year's annual Young People's Thanksgiving Singspiration on Sunday evening, November 25, at the Hudsonville, MI PRC.

In case you missed it, the Young People's Society and congregation of the Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI have decided to accept the invitation of our churches' Young People's Federation to host the 2009 Young People's Convention.

School Activities

November 19 a promotional supper for the Midwest Society for PR Secondary Education was held in the fellowship hall of the Hull, IA PRC. After supper there was a brief presentation con-

cerning the proposed school and a time for questions. Supper-goers were also reminded to bring suggestions for a possible school name and color. A freewill offering was also taken for the high school. We should also add that the Board was pleased to report that the school society is now only about \$75,000 away from the exciting \$1,200,000 benchmark.

The Student Council of Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, MI again this past holiday season sponsored its Gift Certificate Drive to help those of our area PR churches in West Michigan who have need. To participate, members of the area churches around Covenant could send cash, checks, or gift certificates or gift cards for grocery stores, gas stations, etc. to Covenant, care of the Student Council, and they in turn would send them on to area churches whose deacons would distribute them.

Congregation Activities

Members of churches in West Michigan were invited to attend a Thanksgiving/Christmas concert on Sunday evening, De-

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

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ember 2, presented by the Grace Choral Society of Grace PRC in Standale, MI.

The deacons of the Hudsonville, MI PRC, along with their church's Helping Hand Committee, once again sponsored a food drive between the holidays for distribution to those in need from their congregation. Boxed or canned goods could be left in the church kitchen, while any gift certificates or money could be placed in the collection plate.

Members of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville were also encouraged to participate in their annual Deacons Thanksgiving Gift Certificate/Food Drive. Georgetown members could either drop off food donations in their kitchen, or drop their gift cards, certificates, or money in the collection plate.

The members of the Sr. Adult Bible Study of the Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI sponsored a Gift Card Drive for Southeast's benevolent need. The members of the

Bible Study were looking for gas cards or grocery cards, or they would purchase gift cards with any cash given to the drive. Southeast members could either place any donations in the church kitchen or give it to any deacon.

The council of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada recently informed their congregation that their church Maintenance Committee had plans to install a security gate for their parking lot entrance in order to prevent having their parking lot used by vehicle and truck traffic as a turnaround, a rest stop, or an overnight parking spot.

On November 26, members of the Wingham, Ontario PRC were invited to a presentation, with pictures, by a minister from the Ukraine, sponsored by "Come Over and Help."

Retired members of the Byron Center, MI PRC were invited to enjoy their church's annual Thanksgiving Dinner, November 7, spon-

sored by the children and parents of Byron's Children's Activity Night group.

Minister Activities

Rev. R. Kleyn, pastor of Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI, declined the call extended to him by Calvary PRC in Hull, IA to become their congregation's first pastor.

Rev. A. den Hartog received the call from the Doon, IA PRC to become our denomination's next missionary to the Philippines.

Mission Activities

The Domestic Mission Committee of our denomination has asked AIM (Active in Missions, a committee from First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI) to assist them in producing a DVD about our churches, which could be used to inform groups and missions about our denomination. Four consistories were asked to have part of their Thanksgiving service taped for this project. 

Announcements

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. Resumes may also be e-mailed or sent to Mr. Huizenga at Faith Christian School, 611 N Columbus St., Randolph, WI 53956.

NOTICE!

Eastside Christian School of Grand Rapids, Michigan is seeking applicants for a new administrator to start in the fall of 2008. Inquiries may be made to Dan Monsma, dan@monsmalandscape.com or Erin Windemuller, windemuller@sbcglobal.net.

NOTICE!

With volume 83 of the *Standard Bearer* we have reached the point where another full SB index should be produced. To help us determine the need and approximate number, please contact the RFPA (616.457.5970 or mail@rfpa.org) if you are interested.

Reformed Witness Hour

January 2008

Date	Topic	Text
January 6	"God's Wise Leading of His Church"	Exodus 13:17-22
January 13	"Now No Condemnation"	Romans 8:1
January 20	"Made Free by the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus"	Romans 8:2
January 27	"Fearfully and Wonderfully Made"	Psalms 139:14