

# THE *June 2007* STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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# Salvation in the Day of the Lord

*And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

Acts 2:21

**P**entecost!

The words of this text were spoken by the apostle Peter in the very first sermon that he preached after the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The signs of the Spirit, the sound as of a rushing mighty wind, the cloven tongues like as of fire, and the speaking in tongues, had manifested themselves. As a result, a multitude had gathered at the scene. Peter then explains in this first sermon that what had just taken place was a fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures. The words of our text are a quotation from the Old Testament prophecy of Joel.

To the multitude that had come together Peter further explains that

in the outpouring of the Spirit they may see the beginning of the day of the Lord (v. 20). However, it is also the very last day, the day of the end of all things, as is evident from the language that speaks of wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath, blood, fire, smoke, and the darkening of the sun and of the moon.

The Old Testament prophets viewed this all as one, for from their prophetic perspective they could not see the long period between the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the final return of the Lord. The day of the Lord, then, is the entire new dispensation. It is the day of the Lord because in that day the exalted Christ is Lord and is revealed as Lord. That day begins with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and it is finished in the climax and consummation of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And the gospel of Pentecost is that in that day of the Lord, whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. This, the prophet Joel said, shall surely come

to pass. Peter explains that it is now come to pass and is coming to pass.

Salvation implies deliverance out of some great evil. In the text this salvation is considered from the viewpoint of the great and notable day of the Lord, the day when Christ shall return again, preceded by wonders in heaven above and in the earth beneath. This will be a day that will be entirely of the Lord Jesus Christ. He shall be manifested in all the power and glory that the Father gave Him. Only His will shall be executed. Nothing shall there be of man in that day.

That day will be the day of final reckoning, when the measure of iniquity shall be full and the Lord shall appear as Judge to execute the righteous wrath of God. Thus, Acts 2:21 refers to salvation in that day from the final perdition which that day brings to the ungodly world. The world lies under the guilt, power, and corruption of sin. The gospel says that you and I belong by nature to that world. We are guilty already in Adam, but also because of our actual sins. The gospel fur-

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ther tells us that we must be saved from that guilt of sin. Otherwise, we can only have a part with all the ungodly, who shall be cast into the everlasting desolation of hell.

This salvation must be unto eternal glory, the final glory that shall be ours in the resurrection from the dead. That shall be the perfection of the covenant relation, the perfection of the fellowship of friendship with the ever blessed God in His eternal tabernacle in the new heavens and the new earth in which righteousness shall dwell. This righteousness shall be plain in that day when God glorifies His people and receives them into the blessedness of His everlasting tabernacle. This righteousness is such that it makes us worthy to enter that exceeding great glory; and it must be such as to make us able to enter into that glory. Those who enter into eternal glory must be clothed with a holiness whereby they are fit to be in heaven before the face of the Holy One. Salvation in the day of the Lord implies such righteousness.

What a salvation that is! It is to be snatched away from this world and to escape its judgment. It means to be delivered from the sin and guilt of this world. It means to be made partakers of all the blessings of the new and glorious and heavenly kingdom of God. Perfect righteousness and holiness will be ours.

This text rightly informs us that this salvation can be obtained only *in the name of the Lord*. The name of the Lord, of course, is the same thing as the Lord Himself. To call upon the name of the Lord is the same thing as to call upon the Lord, for the name of the Lord is the Lord revealed. The Lord Himself is invisible, but He becomes manifest and makes Himself known in His name. The name Lord refers to Jehovah, our unchangeable, faithful God. Thus God reveals Himself centrally as the God of our salvation in Jesus, who is Jehovah Salvation. In our

Lord Jesus Christ, God makes Himself known as the One who saves His people from their sins. To say that there is salvation in the name of the Lord is the same as to say that there is salvation in Christ (Acts 4:12).

The reason for this is that in Christ there is righteousness. In Him there is the righteousness that delivers us from all our guilt and that makes us worthy of eternal and heavenly glory. This is possible since Christ is the Son of God in the flesh, who entered into our deepest woe, death, and punishment. His death was sufficient to blot out all our sins and to merit eternal life in the glory of the new heavens and the new earth for all His own for whom He died.

There is salvation in Christ also because He has the power to deliver. Christ was raised from the dead and exalted to the position of highest authority and power over all things. He has received the quickening Spirit by which, through irresistible grace, He makes us like unto Himself. The gospel of Pentecost is, therefore, that in the name of the Lord there is salvation.

The recipients of this salvation are set forth in the text. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." To call upon the name of the Lord means to pray to God in Christ, seeking salvation in His name. It is to acknowledge our sin and misery, and thus to acknowledge that we are hopelessly lost, impotent to save ourselves. We further acknowledge that all our righteousness, and all our hope, is only in that name. To call upon the name of the Lord, therefore, is an act of faith. It implies that we put all our confidence in God as He has revealed Himself as the God of our complete salvation in Jesus Christ.


Whoso can thus call on the name of the Lord *shall be saved*. That is absolutely certain. There is no exception to the rule. No matter what death and destruction

there may be in that day of the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, and though the power of Satan be great, *you shall be saved*. Not one of the redeemed shall be lost, for all who call upon the name of the Lord belong to the body that is the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.

Only they, no others. Not they who despise His name, nor they who blaspheme His name. Not they who seek the world and walk in the way of the world. They have no part in this rich promise of salvation in the day of the Lord.

How is it that they who call upon the name of the Lord are saved? Certainly not because their calling on Him is a condition unto salvation. There are no conditions to salvation: it is absolutely free and unconditional. Nor are they saved because their calling upon the name of the Lord is a good work that accomplishes their righteousness unto salvation. Impossible, for our righteousness is entirely in that name of the Lord.

All our salvation, from beginning to end, is in the name of the Lord. Even our calling upon His name is of Him. This is evident from Joel 2:32 in the words immediately following the words quoted in our text. "For in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call." Thus we see that God is always first. Our calling upon the name of the Lord is itself the fruit of His gracious calling. It is itself His saving work. They who call upon the name of the Lord have been given to Christ, engrafted into Him by a living faith. And by that faith, which is the gift of God, they call upon His name.

There is no other way to lay hold upon this rich promise of salvation in the day of the Lord than to call upon His name. O what a rich blessing the Spirit that was poured out on Pentecost is to us. To God be the glory, world without end! 

# Supervising Preaching... Edifying Congregations

**I**n the less hectic consistory meetings of summer, elders who do not include a regular discussion of preaching on their agenda ought to consider adding it.

For it is rare that a young preacher becomes a good preacher without help and advice from his elders. Rarer that an old preacher becomes a better preacher without their assistance.

The church needs good preachers. Every preacher wants to be a better preacher.

By “good preacher” is merely meant a preacher whose labors God is pleased to make a rich means of grace. He may serve without fanfare. He may not have outstanding gifts. His ministry may not be noticed by many outside his congregation. But his preaching edifies. And the faithful flock is happy with it because they observe that they and their families are edified. At a steady pace they are built up in faith in Jesus Christ, love for the Lord and the neighbor, and hope for the coming Savior.

Once more: it is rare that a man becomes a good preacher without the assistance of faithful elders who are called to supervise the preaching.

Here and there a man becomes a good preacher by dint of hard work, heartfelt pleas to the Supervisor of preachers to bless his work, and probably some well-placed advice from his helpmeet. But this—growth apart from the elders—is not as it should be. And he could

be a better preacher, perhaps even a great preacher (God forbid we mean this in any other way than in God’s eyes, certainly not for the praise of men), if he also has sage and regular counsel from the elders’ seat—the men who know the sheep.

This is the way it should be. Regular counsel from the elders. To the pastor. Regarding the preaching.

The elders’ calling to supervise the minister and the ministry is broad. It embraces the minister’s walk—is it an example of godliness? It includes his doctrine—is it truth? It also includes whether his preaching is as edifying as it ought to be.

The *Church Order* of the PRC (Article 23) calls the elders to “take heed that the ministers...faithfully discharge their office....” The Form for Ordination of Ministers of God’s Word details what that discharge is. And the Questions for Church Visitation ask whether the minister works “faithfully” in the preaching, whether his preaching is such that the congregation is “built up through his preaching,” and whether the minister is “devoted as much as possible to the exercise of his office.”

The late Professor Homer Hoeksema once said that, in addi-

tion to elders guarding against false doctrine, “there is obviously another aspect of the preaching which...falls in the province of the elders’ supervision.” He was referring to the “area in which the elders and their minister may labor together in a spirit of brotherly love toward the improvement of the preaching of the Word.” Passionately, he concluded: “Elders who fail to do this are not faithful to their calling.”

In the glad consciousness that the calling of my *own* supervisors is strikingly similar, I urge upon all elders (with that “spirit of brotherly love”): be zealous in this great work of supervising the preaching, for the greater edification of the congregations.

Although there are different ways in which the supervision could take place, one suggestion may be that:

1) At the meeting after that at

which the last family visitation reports are received, the elders include an agenda item: “discussion of the preaching.” Probably the clerk gathers up and organizes any comments about the preaching from the elders’ written reports of family visitation.

2) A half hour or so is reserved for a calm, brotherly discussion of the preaching, both with re-

*It is rare that a man becomes a good preacher without the assistance of faithful elders who are called to supervise the preaching.*



gard to its strengths and areas that could be improved. The minister may be encouraged, especially the younger man, even though there may be room for much improvement. The elders analyze the comments. Are the judgments of the members misguided? Do they have merit?

3) In this process, it is important that the elders be more than funnels for the comments of the members. Their calling is to analyze the comments and make their own judgments. It is not helpful for the minister simply to hear what the members think. He needs to hear what the elders think. For this reason, it may be helpful at times for the elders to have discussions in the absence of the minister, so that they can come to a consensus before they express their judgments to the minister. Usually, though, this is not necessary, and a cordial discussion of the elders' advice is sufficient.

4) If there are few or no reports on the preaching from the family visits, the elders themselves should now give the minister their own evaluation. Let each of the men speak. In love for the minister and greater love for the congregation, they should give careful thought about what will best help the minister to build up the saints and honor Jesus Christ in his preaching.

5) These discussions could take place twice per year. (Most congregations conduct family visitation at two times during the year.) This would give time for the minister to embrace the advice of the elders, and for the elders to judge the improvements that are made.



The minister should encourage the process. And the elders should adopt his suggestion without hesitation.

The elders might have reservations. They may see risks. But the elders may have all confidence that

they are able to help the minister, for the blessing of the sheep.

The elders may hesitate because the minister has been trained in theology, in preaching, in interpreting Scripture. What do elders have to offer? Much, in every way. They are men of God who know the needs of the flock and have a sense of what a good Reformed sermon is. They have heard more than a couple. If the minister is wise, he will help them articulate what concerns they may have. They might not say, "your sermons are not art homilies." But when they say, "you need to de-

velop the one, main idea of the text," that is what they mean. Nor does it take training in hermeneutics to see that a minister must not make a spiritual point out of every word in a historical narrative. Elders may have confidence.

Greater reluctance may arise from the anticipated reaction of the minister. He balks. He knows best. He is seminary-trained. He bristles when sermon discussion is proposed. But the elders must go forward as the God-appointed supervisors of the preaching. For the good of the minister, they may not allow his resistance to prevail.

There is the possibility that an over-zealous elder does not reckon with ministers' varying gifts, personalities, styles, or with the reality that growth is gradual. But the other elders can help the whole keep balance. "In the multitude of counselors there is safety."

We ministers *want* the elders' advice about the preaching.

The more the elders advise the minister, the less he will be inclined to get into bad habits. Their regular supervision is preventative. Nipping in the bud little weak-

nesses or faults will keep them from becoming big weaknesses. To change the figure: little tumors come out easily. Removing large ones creates risks. Pretty soon they are inoperable.

But we ministers want supervision because this leads to *positive* growth and development in the

service of the Lord. There are ministers who can look back on their ministry with thankfulness to the elder or elders who spurred them on to better work, more careful exegesis, clearer applications to the specific needs of the congregation, and more. Because the elders were willing to

speak, and were encouraged to speak, the gospel ministry was blessed to the greater benefit of the congregation.

There are other ministers who, when they look back, wish this had taken place.



There is one other benefit of regular discussion of the preaching. Those members who have criticisms of the sermons (are they pejoratively called "critics"?) are helped. These members must not be let loose on the minister. The instruction of Matthew 18 does not apply here. This is the public preaching of the gospel. Instead, the elders deal with this sometimes unpleasant matter by taking strong leadership and giving good instruction.

First, these members are assured that the elders are very interested in the members' judgments. Elders want to listen closely to the opinions of God's people. According to the Heidelberg Catechism, all the believers are prophets, with the ability to speak as well as make judgments about the church's teaching elder.

*Because the elders were willing to speak, and were encouraged to speak, the gospel ministry was blessed to the greater benefit of the congregation.*

Second, the members are assured that the elders discuss the preaching regularly. This will be a help to the members who have concerns: the elders are alert to their responsibility. They take supervision of preaching seriously. They do not merely respond to problems.

Third, the members are reminded that opinions vary among members in the congregation. One member may believe the preaching needs more application; another less. One supposes there is not sufficient comfort; another insufficient warning. The concerned member must know that the elders are called to make the judgment, and so inform the minister.

Fourth, the members may be confident that the elders will fol-


low up on their concern. If necessary, the elders may appoint a committee to visit them. Wisdom will move the elders to let the member know their conclusions.

Supervise preaching. Edify the congregations.



Growth. Development. Of the young. Of the old. There is room for growth in young and old. Those of us tempted to forget that would do well to heed Luther's striking advice:

Therefore, I again implore all Christians, especially pastors and preachers, not to be doctors too quickly and to imagine they know everything.... But let ministers daily pursue their studies with diligence and constantly busy

themselves with them. Moreover, let them with all care and diligence beware of the infectious poison of this imagined security and conceited overestimation: rather let them steadily keep on reading, teaching, studying, pondering, and meditating. Nor let them cease until they have discovered and are sure that they have taught the devil to death and have become more learned than God Himself and all His saints. 



*(To be continued. It remains to ask what the elders should watch for in the sermons. And whether a minister might be well-served by an older minister-mentor who would listen to his sermons and give some direction to him in the first years of his ministry.)*

## All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

### ■ "Christian Gays" Assert Themselves

Considerable attention has been given in press accounts to a "Christian gay-rights" group called "Soulforce," which has been visiting Christian college campuses across the country. Recently they have appeared in the Grand Rapids, MI area and visited the campuses of Cornerstone University and Calvin College. As reported in the *Grand Rapids Press*, April 28, 2007, Cornerstone University refused them permission to appear on campus. When they nevertheless came on campus, two were arrested by the police. Some also came to the scheduled chapel service, which was then cancelled because of the disruption.

This group was welcomed later at Calvin College. The same *Press* reported:

The old saying to love the sinner, but hate the sin, is not going over very well with the next generation of Christians.

"If you're seeing the sinner as sin, that's hard to do," said Calvin College senior Christie Van Tongeren, 21.

She and about 200 other students, plus about 100 faculty members, filled the Commons Lecture Hall this week to engage in a dialogue with members of Soulforce, a gay-rights organization that tours Christian colleges, trying to effect change.

They were a little late to change Justin Westbrook's mind. The 22-year-old Calvin senior dropped his hard line against gays last October. That's when Calvin invited author David Myers to speak to students. He wrote the book, "What God Has Joined Together: The Christian Case for Gay Marriage."

The visit by Soulforce was the second punch that knocked out Westbrook's old view. "They helped put a human face on the issue," he said.

"They have very eloquent and truthful things to say to us," said Kaitlyn Bohlin, 22, a senior.

Calvin officials welcomed Soulforce after four months of preparation, including a sexuality series, prayer services and meditations.

They asked local churches to pray for them as they tackled an important but difficult topic, said Shirley Hoogstra, vice president for Student Life at the college.

That all of this attention has been having its desired effect is likewise indicated in the paper's report:

"Unlike the college I don't distinguish between practicing and being gay. I don't think that's wrong." (said) Mele, 20 and a junior.

"I disagree, but respectfully," said Joel Meredith, 18, and a freshman. "I would draw a distinction between the orientation and the practice. But I can't bring judgment on them."

Nineteen-year-old Luke Thayer, a former student, also listened in on the Commons lecture.

"I came out on Calvin's campus. I came in (to college) a

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

straight, Christian, Republican man and left a gay, Democratic, agnostic man."

Thayer said he felt supported by his teachers but students who would support him privately began to ignore him in public. "We were always very conscious about my orientation," he said.

The *Grand Rapids Press*, April 29, 2007, contains the additional report of a proposed play produced by a Calvin College professor to present the challenges faced by "gay Christians":

...Stephanie Sandberg, a theater professor at Calvin College, has been working on "Seven Passages: The Stories of Gay Christians" since 2004.

"I've known several gay students at Calvin, and I saw them going through a lot of stress," Sandberg said. "They are under a lot of pressure both psychologically and spiritually."

Based on interviews with students, Sandberg wrote a 10-minute play a few years ago for Actors' annual Living on the Edge series of new plays. Managing director Fred Sebulske and other committee members encouraged her to expand the work to a full-length play.

Since then, Sandberg has compiled more than 100 interviews with gay Christians. In addition, she has talked to theologians and researched the issue. The result is an ethnography similar to "The Exonerated" or "The Laramie Project."

"It's a theater of testimony giving voice to the voiceless," Sandberg said. "The focus is on the stories of gay Christians, but we don't want it to be one-sided. The idea is to get a dialogue going."

The title refers to seven passages in the Bible that are used to condemn homosexuality. Scripture will be used to offer a respectful balance, she said....

It does not take much imagination to recognize the attempt to reach young people with the at-

tempt to change one mind at a time. Eventually, likely in a relatively short time, the churches will then come to accept the conclusions of some of the students quoted above.

#### ■ Hebrews 11:37-40

**W**orld magazine recently printed the following in connection with a brutal persecution in Turkey. More abbreviated accounts appeared in the secular press. We often pray for those persecuted for righteousness' sake. But we seldom are aware of specific instances. Therefore the following report is of concern not only, but becomes the motive for more earnest prayer for such as are persecuted for Jesus' sake.

**Turkey:** Christian leaders vow to continue despite brutal killings of three Turkish believers

Jill Nelson

The day began like any other. On his way out the door, 35-year-old Turkish native Necati Aydin, a pastor and father of two, kissed his wife goodbye and departed for a morning Bible study. In another part of Malatya, Turkey—known for its apricots—46-year-old German missionary and father of three Tilman Geske said his morning farewells. Ugur Uksel, a 32-year-old Muslim convert to Christianity like Aydin, was the third man joining the group for the study at the church office, which doubled as a Christian publishing company.

What unfolded between the hours of 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. on April 18 could add another chapter to Foxe's Book of Martyrs. As the three men joined together for Bible study, a dozen assailants tied them to chairs, then brutally interrogated and tortured them for two hours about their church activities.... Their throats were slit when police arrived. Copies of a letter found in the pockets of the killers gave a glimpse into the motives behind the atrocity: "We did it for our country. They are trying to take our country away, take our religion away."

A more detailed account and history of the event was sent to Rev. Angus Stewart from one of his contacts in Turkey. It is a gruesome and sad account of the suffering some Christians must endure today because of their faith. An e-mail copy of the complete report from one in Turkey acquainted with the terrible event can be obtained by e-mailing: [pastor@cprc.co.uk](mailto:pastor@cprc.co.uk)

That article concludes movingly:

The Church in Turkey responded in a way that honored God as hundreds of believers and dozens of pastors flew in as fast as they could to stand by the small church of Malatya and encourage the believers, take care of legal issues, and represent Christians to the media.

When Susanne Geske expressed her wish to bury her husband in Malatya, the Governor tried to stop it, and when he realized he could not stop it, a rumor was spread that "it is a sin to dig a grave for a Christian." In the end, in an undertaking that should be remembered in Christian history forever, the men from the church in Adana (near Tarsus), grabbed shovels and dug a grave for their slain brother in an untended hundred year old Armenian graveyard.

Ugur was buried by his family in an Alevi Muslim ceremony in his hometown of Elazığ, his believing fiancée watching from the shadows as his family and friends refused to accept in death the faith Ugur had so long professed and died for.

Necati's funeral took place in his hometown of Izmir, the city where he came to faith. The darkness does not understand the light. Though the churches expressed their forgiveness for the event, Christians were not to be trusted. Before they would load the coffin onto the plane from Malatya, it went through two separate x-ray exams to make sure it was not loaded with explosives. This is not a usual procedure for Muslim coffins.



Necati's funeral was a beautiful event. Like a glimpse of heaven, thousands of Turkish Christians and missionaries came to show their love for Christ, and their honor for this man chosen to die for Christ. Necati's wife Shemsa told the world, "His death was full of meaning, because he died for Christ and he lived for Christ.... Necati was a gift from God. I feel honored that he was in my life, I feel crowned with honor. I want to be worthy of that honor."

Boldly the believers took their stand at Necati's funeral, facing the risks of being seen publicly and likewise becoming targets. As expected, the anti-terror police attended and videotaped everyone attending the funeral for their future use. The service took place outside at Buca Baptist church, and he was buried in a small Christian graveyard in the outskirts of Izmir.

Two assistant Governors of Izmir were there solemnly watching the event from the front row. Dozens of news agencies were there documenting the events with live news and photographs. Who knows the impact the funeral had on those watching? This is the beginning of their story as well. Pray for them.

In an act that hit front pages in the largest newspapers in Turkey, Susanne Geske in a television interview expressed her forgiveness. She did not want revenge, she told reporters. "Oh God, forgive them for they know not what they do," she said, wholeheartedly agreeing with the words of Christ on Calvary (Luke 23:34).

In a country where blood-for-blood revenge is as normal as breathing, many many reports have come to the attention of the church of how this comment of Susanne Geske has changed lives. One columnist wrote of her comment, "She said in one sentence what 1000 missionaries in 1000 years could never do."


The missionaries in Malatya will most likely move out, as their families and children have become publicly identified as targets to the hostile city. The remaining 10 believers are in hiding. What will happen to this church, this light in the darkness? Most likely it will go underground. Pray for wisdom, that Turkish brothers from other cities will go to lead the leaderless church. Should we not be concerned for that great city of Malatya, a city that does not know what it is doing? (Jonah 4:11).

When our Pastor Fikret Bocek

went with a brother to give a statement to the Security Directorate on Monday they were ushered into the Anti-Terror Department. On the wall was a huge chart covering the whole wall listing all the terrorist cells in Izmir, categorized. In one prominent column were listed all the evangelical churches in Izmir. The darkness does not understand the light. "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also" (Acts 17:6).

Please pray for the Church in Turkey. "Don't pray against persecution, pray for perseverance," urges Pastor Fikret Bocek.

The Church is better having lost our brothers; the fruit in our lives, the renewed faith, the burning desire to spread the gospel to quench more darkness in Malatya...all these are not to be regretted. Pray that we stand strong against external opposition and especially pray that we stand strong against internal struggles with sin, our true debilitating weakness.

This we know. Christ Jesus was there when our brothers were giving their lives for Him. He was there, like He was when Stephen was being stoned in the sight of Saul of Tarsus. 

*Taking Heed to the Doctrine*

*Rev. Steven Key*

## *The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper (1)*

**H**aving considered the sacrament of baptism, we now give our attention to the second of the two sacraments instituted by Christ in the New Testament. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper follows from and is closely related to the sacrament of baptism.

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Baptism signifies our incorporation into the covenant of God. In baptism God gives us a sign and seal that He has taken us through Christ's cleansing blood into His own covenant life and fellowship. And, to quote our Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 27, "since (infants), as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and church of God; and since redemption from sin by the blood of Christ, and the

Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult; they must therefore by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, be also admitted into the Christian church, and be distinguished from the children of unbelievers as was done in the old covenant or testament by circumcision, instead of which baptism is instituted in the new covenant." The key Scripture references here, as also in our Bap-



tism Form, are Genesis 17:7 and Acts 2:39.

But baptism is only the beginning of the life that God gives us in Christ. That life must also come to expression and fruition within the fellowship of Christ's body. If there is no faith, that is impossible. For if there is no faith, there is no spiritual life. But where there is faith, where there is newness of life in Christ, the person who once was baptized comes to experience the fellowship of Christ, and in firm conviction desires to express his or her gratitude to God also in fellowship with Christ's body.

Accordingly God has given to us a second sacrament, one which serves to establish us as consciously partaking of Christ's benefits within His covenant. That is the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is the sacrament of continued nourishment. Therefore it must be administered repeatedly, and that to conscious believers who are able to discern the meaning and significance of that spiritual sign and seal.

The Lord's Supper signifies our active participation in the covenant. By our partaking of the Lord's Supper, we exercise deliberate communion with Christ and with His people. We do so as conscious partakers of Christ and all His benefits. And so our celebration of the Lord's Supper also expresses our gratitude to God for our life in His covenant of grace.

The sacrament of baptism is necessarily first. That is the sign and seal of our being taken into God's covenant and the fellowship of His church in Christ. The Lord's Supper follows as the sign of being fed and nourished within that covenant and as an expression of our unity with Christ's body.

### **Its Institution**

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ Himself. The Lord's Supper, as is

baptism, is a holy ordinance of Christ to be administered and observed by His church.

The Heidelberg Catechism, in its extensive treatment of this sacrament in Lord's Day 28 through 30, points out that Christ instituted this supper when He met with His disciples in the upper room on the night in which He would be betrayed by Judas Iscariot.

Christ instituted the Lord's Supper on the evening when He partook of the last Passover with His disciples. We read of it in Matthew 26:17-29.

There in the upper room, after observing the Old Testament ordinance of the Passover, Jesus took from that feast two elements that were on the table before Him, the bread and the wine, and constituted them a new ordinance, a holy sacrament.

So we read in Mark 14:22-24: "And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat, this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many."

He did this, take note, after telling His disciples that the time had come that He would be betrayed. He did this setting before them vividly the truth that His blood would now be shed for the washing away of their sins. "*This is my blood...which is shed for many.*" So Christ pointed to Himself as the fulfillment of the Passover lamb.

### **The Passover and the Lord's Supper**

While it is evident that there is a connection between the Lord's Supper and the Old Testament Passover, there are also some clear distinctions between the two.

The Passover was the commemoration of a significant historical event.

When Israel was held in bondage in Egypt, God sent Moses to lead them out of that land of their oppression.

Pharaoh, the wicked ruler of Egypt, would not let God's people go. And even though God gave Pharaoh signs and sent plagues upon Egypt, Pharaoh's heart was hard. He refused to release the children of Israel from their bondage and continued to persecute the people of God.

So Jehovah came to Moses and said, "Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether" (Ex. 11:1). He explained that He was going to walk through the land of Egypt and kill all the firstborn of man and beast. Their iniquity would bring death upon them, the expression of God's fierce wrath.

But Israel must understand that they are no better than the Egyptians. God could not spare them either, except for one thing. They must be distinguished from the Egyptians. They must be marked out as different. And that mark of distinction would be sovereignly determined by God.

So the Lord continued to instruct Moses that on the evening of that night when God would walk through the land to execute His righteous judgment, those who are His must take a lamb, a lamb without blemish, and kill it and take of the blood and spread it upon the two side posts and the upper door post of the houses where they would also eat. They were also to eat of that lamb, with unleavened bread, not leaving any left over, eating with haste, with loins girded, shoes on their feet, and a staff in their hands.

That lamb of which they would eat, and more particularly the blood of that lamb sprinkled upon the door posts, would be the sign, the mark of distinction, that separated them from the ungodly and

prevented them from being themselves the objects of God's fierce execution of judgment.

The distinction between Israel and Egypt lay only in the blood.

That was God's sovereign distinction. "And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt" (Ex. 12:13).

By the blood Jehovah God delivers His people.

So He also calls them to observe this wonderful deliverance by a feast of commemoration. "And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever" (Ex. 12:14). And when the young children would ask, "What does this mean?" then the father would recount the history of Israel's deliverance from the bondage of Egypt by the wonder work of God's sovereign, particular grace. The Passover was a feast of commemoration.

But the Passover feast was also a type. It not only looked back, but it looked ahead.

The blood that was spread upon the door posts was a sign of the blood of God's Lamb, Jesus Christ.

As we are taught in the opening verses of Exodus 20, Egypt was

the house of bondage, a type of the bondage of sin. The deliverance of the children of Israel out of Egypt was a picture of our own deliverance out of the bondage of sin and death and our entrance into God's heavenly tabernacle. That deliverance is ours only through the blood of the Lamb of God.

Every time the faithful children of Israel celebrated the Passover, therefore, they looked back to that wondrous night of their deliverance. But they also looked ahead to the day when their typical deliverance would enter upon its spiritual fulfillment. Also this ordinance of God belonged to the schoolmaster that pointed Israel to Christ (Gal. 3:24).

Now in the New Testament age of the fulfillment Christ has given us the Lord's Supper, by which we partake of the salvation that is ours in Him.

In the Lord's Supper we are called to the table of the covenant, where Christ Himself is the fulfillment of the relationship that God has established with His church out of His own sovereign good pleasure. We have no lamb any longer at the feast table of the Lord. Christ observed with His disciples the *last* Passover.

With His eyes fixed on Calvary and the work that He came to perform, He instituted this sacrament as a sign and seal of the fulfillment that is in Him.

Now Christ has shed His blood.

We don't have a mere symbol any longer, a lamb.


We have *the Lamb*.

We have His body, His blood, as signified in the elements of the bread and wine.

We have this blessed sacrament as a church. Here also there is a marked difference between the Old Testament Passover and the present institution of the Lord's Supper.

In the Old Testament the Passover was celebrated in the homes. They were family affairs.

But Christ has instituted the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for the church, to be administered by the church and celebrated in the midst of the congregation. The apostles were commanded by Christ, "*This do in remembrance of me.*" They were given that command as representatives of the church. These same apostles Jesus sent forth with the divine commission to make disciples, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20).

So the apostle addresses the church at Corinth in I Corinthians 11:26, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." 

*Understanding the Times*

*Mr. Cal Kalsbeek*

## *Issachar vs. the Scribes, Revisited (3)*

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*"And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were*

*two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment."*

I Chronicles 12:32

**W**e used to say power comes from the barrel of a gun. Now it comes from the lens of the video camera.”<sup>1</sup> We also used to say, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” Now in many instances it would be more accurate to say, “A picture is worth a thousand deceptions.”

At least when using *written* news media reports, the discerning Christian has something concrete to consider and even evaluate (using the “essential eight” as discussed in our last two articles) if necessary. With the television news media however, it is an entirely different situation, one that puts the observer at a distinct disadvantage. The rapidity with which the images are presented leaves the viewer in a daze and with little or no time for thoughtful evaluation. Not only that, the fact that “I saw it with my own eyes!” leaves a lasting “seeing-is-believing” impression. Furthermore, television’s potential for deception is so great that if it is one’s only source for news, he might very well be better off news-less. This article will demonstrate why the undersigned believes this to be the case.

### “If it Bleeds, it Leads”

The time-worn cliché, “if it bleeds, it leads,” is more truth than fiction, and it illustrates a significant problem with television news. Television is a visual medium. Therefore what will catch the attention of the eye is of utmost importance to the producers, and will often govern what events make the evening news and what do not. For example, if a new polar bear exhibit is brought to the local zoo on the same day the city commission votes on a city tax increase, very likely the polar bear exhibit will get the primary television news coverage that evening, while the more important tax issue will not. It’s all about pictures and which ones will generate the interest of the most viewers.

The result is a distortion concerning what is important, and sometimes a lack of balance in what is presented in the news. The current happenings in Iraq certainly demonstrate this. Bombs, smoke, fires, and blood attract viewer attention. It ought not be surprising, then, to find events featuring these dominating the news. Complaints are often heard, “Violence isn’t the only story in Iraq, but if we are to prevail, we will

have to begin presenting a more compelling picture of the progress being made there.”<sup>2</sup> But who in our entertainment-crazy country wants to see pictures of schools being built and potable water systems being installed? And then there are the ratings. NBC will not compete with CBS by showing Iraqi citizens living a peaceful life while CBS is showing images of Sadaam Hussein being brought to the gallows. The problem here isn’t necessarily a bias (although that may be the case), the problem is with the medium. The medium itself is not conducive to balanced and in-depth reporting.

### A Medium Conducive to Propaganda

While television as a medium often hinders balanced reporting, it also easily can be used for propaganda purposes. Let’s see how this is done by means of a few examples.

Example #1: Three days after the pictures of American soldiers torturing prisoners at Abu Ghraib were shown on “60 Minutes,” the *Daily Mirror* in London published some photos of British soldiers abusing an Iraqi prisoner. These pictures, in concert with those of Abu Ghraib, enflamed the Arab world and were an effective recruiting poster for al Qaeda. “But, as it turns out, the British photographs had been staged. The pictures weren’t taken in Iraq but in

Great Britain, where they were presumably contrived to foment outrage at Britain’s involvement in Iraq.”<sup>3</sup>

Example #2: On May 12, 2004 the *Boston Globe* published some graphic photographs of what were supposed to be American soldiers sexually abusing Iraqi women. These pictures appeared on numerous Islamic websites and served as a useful propaganda tool for Islamic extremists. It was later

discovered that the photographs were lifted from some pornographic websites in the United States and Hungary.<sup>4</sup>

Example #3: Video coverage of an alleged Israeli-Palestinian incident in the Gaza Strip portrays a Palestinian child shot and dying in his father’s arms. Soon after the TV coverage of this supposed event, violence erupted throughout the world justified by the claim that it was revenge for the boy’s death. Osama bin Laden even warned President Bush in a public message not to forget Mohammed al-Dura (the boy who died). However, there are numerous facts in the case that indicate that the scene was staged and that the boy did not even die. “The local hospital did not report that a dead boy was brought in at 1 P.M. that day...the father’s T-shirt remains white... after he was supposedly shot in the arm and hand and after his son, shot in the belly, fell stomach down in his lap. Additionally, video taken shortly after the shooting

*Television  
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balanced  
reporting....*

1. Mortimer B. Zuckerman, “The Tyranny of Imagery,” *U.S. News & World Report* 30 October, 2006:96.

2. Mortimer B. Zuckerman, “Why TV Holds Us Hostage,” *U.S. News & World Report* 28 February, 2005:76.

3. Vicki Goldberg, “Seeing Isn’t Believing,” *Reader’s Digest* September, 2004:143.

4. Goldberg, 144.



shows no blood at all at the site, but the next day bright red blood suddenly appeared there. Tapes of the scene raise even more doubts: A voice cries out more than once, 'The boy is dead!' before the child has even been hit."<sup>5</sup>

Example #4: In 2006 numerous photographs were shown on TV that had been taken by Reuter's photographer, Adnan Hajj. These pictures included dead children killed in an Israeli bombing in Lebanon, others of some smoke from supposed Israeli bombs, and still others of a grieving father carrying his dead daughter to the hospital. All of which later were proved to be made-up stuff, in fact it was later discovered that the dead girl had been killed in a swingset accident. Concerning these fraudulent pictures syndicated columnist Michelle Malkin remarked, "Reuters can kill a few pictures, but it does not kill persistent doubts about the American media's ability to cover this war through anything but a distorted lens."<sup>6</sup>

No doubt civilians do get hurt and even die in the process of conflicts such as this. Nevertheless it ought to be obvious how easy it can be with today's technology to "doctor-up" these events for television news broadcasts to serve propaganda purposes.

#### **Words of Concern about Television News from Those in the Know**

An old television "insider," Malcolm Muggeridge, who worked for the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) when television was still in its infancy, had some interesting things to say about television news and its vulnerability to abuse. In his book *Christ and the Media*, published in 1977, he wrote about television in general: "Working in television, as I have, over a long period of time, I've seen it grow, I've watched how it's operated, and the effect it has on people; on their values, how they look at life, and I see

it as a great danger."<sup>7</sup> About TV news specifically Muggeridge writes, "It's very nearly impossible to tell the truth in television.... If you set up a camera and take a film, that is not considered to be anybody's views; that is reality, and of course, it is much more fantasy than the words."<sup>8</sup>

Another old television "insider," this one of a more secular bent, Edward R. Murrow, had this to say in a 1958 speech:

Our history will be what we make it. And if there are any historians...they will there find recorded in black and white, or color, evidence of decadence, escapism and insulation from the realities of the world in which we live.... I am frightened by the imbalance, the constant striving to reach the largest possible audience for everything.... I would like television to produce some itching pills rather than this endless outpouring of tranquilizers.... We have currently a built-in allergy to unpleasant or disturbing information.... This instrument (television) can teach, it can illuminate; yes, and it can even inspire. But it can do so only to the extent that humans are determined to use it to those ends.<sup>9</sup>

Things have changed very little since 1958. The television news media continue to strive for the largest audience, sometimes at the expense of accurate and balanced reporting. The "built-in allergy to unpleasant or disturbing information" certainly is no less potent today than it was back then. Murrow's hope for television news to teach and illuminate has largely gone unfulfilled. It is more likely to be used as a propaganda tool. And it would appear that today's terrorists benefit the most.

(They)...understand how images

amplify their message. They know that horror and drama are magnets for media attention, so they manufacture moments of horror and drama. Instead of simply killing their victims in cold blood, they behead them on camera and post the video on a friendly website. A handful of depraved men with video cameras, perhaps better than anyone, can make leaders with the strongest armies in the world back off. Osama bin Laden's terrorists understand this. Bin Laden's deputy, Ayman al Zawahiri, was explicit in his message to the former al Qaeda leader in Iraq, Abu Musab Zarqawi: In the war against the West, media are half the battle.<sup>10</sup>

#### **The Cost of Freedom?**

The West needs to realize that there is a price to pay for the freedom of the press that we enjoy, and this is one of them. But the price is high. According to Dennis Prager, who writes in *The Schwarz Report*, the television news is one reason world opinion "...is constantly upset with America and Israel, two of the most decent countries on earth, yet silent about the world's cruellest countries." Prager explains:


It is difficult to overstate the damage done to the world by television news. Even when not driven by political bias—an exceedingly rare occurrence globally—television news presents a thoroughly distorted picture of the world. Because it is almost entirely dependent upon pictures, TV news is only capable of showing human suffering in, or caused by, free countries. So

even if the BBC or CNN were interested in showing the suffering of millions of Sudanese blacks or North Koreans—and they are not interested in so doing—they cannot do it because reporters cannot visit Sudan or North Korea and video freely. Likewise, China's decimation and annexation of Ti-

*It is difficult  
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news.*

bet, one of the oldest ongoing civilizations, never made it to television.<sup>11</sup>

Yes indeed, a picture is worth a thousand words, but does it tell the truth? And if it does, does it tell the whole truth? Because the power for deception is so great, modern-day Issachar would do well to consider questions such as

these when viewing television news. 

5. Goldberg, 145-146.

6. Michelle Malkin, "The Reuterization of War Journalism," *The Washington Times* 21 August, 2006.

7. Malcolm Muggeridge, *Christ and the Media* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1977) 96.

8. Muggeridge, 106.

9. Raymond Blanton, "The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test," *Christian Renewal* 22 November, 2006:18.

10. Mortimer B. Zuckerman, "The Tyranny of Imagery," *U.S. News & World Report* 30 October, 2006:96.

11. Dennis Prager, "World Opinion and Evil," *The Schwarz Report* September, 2006:1-2.

## Special Article

Prof. David Engelsma

# The Covenant of Sovereign Grace (8) or The Decisive Influence of the Reformation Gospel upon the Orthodox Doctrine of the Covenant in the Netherlands

## Covenant and Election in Romans 9 (cont.)

**T**he conditionality of the covenant promise, and therefore the inherent weakness of the covenant promise, is not the solution to the covenant problem that the apostle gives in Romans 9. This is the solution offered today by the majority of Reformed and Presbyterian churches and theologians. This is the solution offered with a vengeance by the proponents of the covenant doctrine known as the federal vision. In their covenant doctrine, they revise Romans 9:6. Reflecting

on the unbelief and damnation of some baptized children of godly parents, the men of the federal vision explain: "The word of God has taken none effect in all these children, for the word of God's covenant promise is conditional."

The solution given by Paul in Romans 9—*inspired* Romans 9—is radically different: "not as though the word of God hath taken none effect" (v. 6)! Not as though the covenant promise, "I will be the God of your seed," failed! Not as though the covenant promise failed with regard to even one child included in the seed to whom and about whom God made the promise! Not as though the covenant promise failed specifically in the case of Esau! Not as though a gracious promise to all the children without exception failed in the case of many because they did not perform the condition upon which the gracious promise depended!

## Two Kinds of Children

The apostle's solution to the covenant problem—a pressing problem because the truth of the word of God is at stake and with it the veracity of the promising God—is a clear, sharp distinction between physical offspring of father Abraham who are truly "Israel" and physical offspring of Abraham who are only "of Israel": "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (v. 6).

There are offspring of Abraham who are mere physical progeny of the patriarch, for example, Esau. They are the "seed of Abraham" in the sense that they are of his body begotten, sharing his blood. But this does not make them those children of Abraham to whom God referred when He promised Abraham, "I will be the God of your children." "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children" (v. 7). "They which

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are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God" (v. 8).

In distinction from those offspring of Abraham who are only descended from him by physical generation, there is another, distinct group of people descended from Abraham. The apostle calls them the "children of the promise" (v. 8). To them, in distinction from the others, the covenant promise, "I will be the God of you and of your seed," referred. To them, in distinction from the others, God gave the covenant promise, "I will be your God." In them, in distinction from the others, the covenant promise worked (for the covenant promise is not empty words, but spiritual power and reality), making them God's covenant people by the gift of faith.

Only these "children of the promise are counted for the seed" (v. 8). When God promised to be the God and Savior of Abraham and Abraham's seed, in Genesis 17:7, God "counted," or "reckoned," only some of Abraham's offspring as the seed. He never regarded all of Abraham's physical descendants as the seed concerning whom and to whom He made His covenant promise. God had in mind only some of Abraham's physical offspring, "the children of the promise." Therefore, only these *are* the (true, spiritual) children of Abraham and the children of God. Those whom God counts for the seed *are* the seed. The others, those who are merely "the children of the flesh," are not counted by God for the covenant seed of Abraham.

Accordingly, the covenant promise to believing parents, "I will be the God of you and of your children (and grandchildren) after you," does not count all the physical descendants of this couple as their true, spiritual, and therefore real children. But the covenant promise makes distinction among

the physical offspring. The promise refers, not to all the physical offspring without exception, but to some only. Only these children of the promise are counted by God as the believers' seed.

### The Discriminating Promise

The apostle proves that the covenant promise makes distinction among the physical descendants of believing parents and that it is the promise that makes a child a covenant child from several clear examples in the Old Testament. Whereas Abraham had a number of physical offspring (Ishmael and the children of Keturah) in addition to Isaac, God made plain to Abraham, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (v. 7). The covenant promise referred, not to all Abraham's physical offspring without exception, but to Isaac. Not all the physical offspring of Abraham, but Isaac was the seed of Genesis 17:7 (not, of course, apart from Christ, who is *the* seed of Abraham, according to Galatians 3:16). The child produced by the power of the promise was Abraham's seed, and he only: "This is the word of promise, 'At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son'" (v. 9).

Likewise, God's word of promise distinguished Jacob as the covenant child of Isaac and Rebecca, rather than his twin brother, Esau: "'The elder shall serve the younger.' As it is written, 'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated'" (vv. 12, 13).

It was the company of these children of the promise among Abraham's descendants who were God's "Israel" throughout the time of the Old Testament, no matter that they were usually the minority of Israelites, indeed the "very small remnant" (Is. 1:9). The rest, although the large majority, were merely "of Israel" (v. 6). "Israel"

was God's covenant people; those who were merely "of Israel" were in the sphere of the covenant. Or, to use the distinction often made in the Reformed tradition, God made His covenant with "Israel"; those who were merely "of Israel" were under the administration of the covenant.

God's covenant promise, the "word of God" of verse 6, did not fail, even though multitudes of Abraham's physical descendants perished in unbelief and disobedience. For the promising God never had all the physical offspring of Abraham in mind. The promise was discriminating: "In Isaac shall thy seed be called," and "The elder shall serve the younger." God counted the covenant seed, exclusive object of the promise, as those who are Christ's (Gal. 3:29). God's covenant promise took effect in every one of those on behalf of whom and to whom God made the promise: They believed, were justified, obeyed, repented when they sinned, persevered to the end, and inherited eternal life.

### "Jacob Have I Loved"

The great question then is, who or what accounts for the distinction between being "Israel" and being merely "of Israel," between being "children of the flesh" and "children of the promise"? That is, who or what governs the covenant—its gracious promise, its gracious basis in the death of Christ, its gracious blessings, and its gracious salvation?

To this question, emphatically to *this* question, concerning the source and governing of the *covenant* promise and *covenant* salvation, the answer of the apostle in Romans 9—*inspired* Romans 9—is election, not the performance or non-performance of a condition by the children. The answer of the apostle is election as eternal, unchangeable decree, not some fickle decision of God in time according as He sees children doing good or evil. God made the covenant

*The covenant promise makes distinction among the physical offspring.*



promise to Jacob, in distinction from Esau, because He loved Jacob, in distinction from Esau, before the children were born or had done any good or evil (vv. 10-13). Some of Abraham's offspring were children of the promise, in distinction from the others, because "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy" (v. 15).

Indeed, the others, who were also physical offspring of Abraham, were excluded from the covenant of grace and its gracious salvation on the basis of the death of Christ, by God's eternal decree of reprobation: "and whom he will he hardeneth" (v. 18).

That the apostle is indeed teaching that election governs the covenant is proved by the objection to his doctrine, "Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?" (v. 19) To a doctrine of the covenant that teaches that all the children alike are the objects of God's gracious promise, that all alike are in the covenant by divine grace, but that continuing in the covenant and being saved depend upon the works of the children, no one ever objects with the words, "Why doth he yet find fault?"

To this objection, the apostle does not reply, as do the defenders of the conditional covenant (which is to say, most of Reformed Christendom in our day) and especially the men of the federal vision, "My dear objector, you completely misunderstand my teaching. God does not determine which of the children of believers are included among His covenant people and which are not. God's gracious promise does not discriminate, certainly not among children of believers. The covenant of grace is not closely related to election; much less is it governed by election. Everything depends on the child, don't you see? If he fulfills the condition, he stays in the covenant and is saved. If he refuses to fulfill the condition, he falls out of the covenant and perishes. Your objection concerning the covenant, 'Why doth he yet find fault?' makes no sense."

This is a popular reply in Reformed and Presbyterian circles to the indignant objection to the apostle's covenant doctrine in Romans 9. It sends the objector away pacified. It also sends him away believing that the word of God has indeed taken none effect in the case of many children of believing par-

ents and that covenant salvation is indeed of him who wills and runs (see v. 16).

What is the response of the apostle?

"Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" (vv. 20, 21)

Scripture teaches that the gospel of salvation by grace alone applies to the covenant. In the covenant, salvation is of God who shows mercy—*sovereign, discriminating* mercy (v. 16).

The gospel of Holy Scripture proclaims that election governs the covenant.

For this reason, the Reformed churches in the Netherlands, early on, established in their official, binding documents, particularly the "Form for the Administration of Baptism" and the Canons of Dordt, that election governs the covenant.

In this doctrine, the Reformed churches in the Netherlands were guided by John Calvin.

... to be continued. 

*When Thou Sittest in Thine House*

*Abraham Kuyper*

## With Contentment (1)

### Home Happiness

**G**o thy way," so says the Preacher (Eccl. 9:7), "eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works."

*Reprinted from When Thou Sittest In Thine House, by Abraham Kuyper, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan. 1929. Used by permission of Eerdmans Publishing Co.*

And this he says not once, but every time comes back to it again. "For a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat and to drink, and to be merry; for that shall abide with him of his labor all the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun" (8:15).

Many a pious man who is spiritually disposed takes offense at this utterance, among Moderns as well as among Orthodox, even though, from reverence for the Scriptures, many Orthodox people would not

openly confess it.

What Jesus said: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and *all these things* shall be added unto you," addresses the heart that seeks God; but not so this interpretation of life, which is sensual at heart, and which ends in eating and drinking.

And, of course, if this were the sense and the purport of what the Preacher says, every child of God would have to oppose the Preacher, and the whole book would have to be put out of Scripture.

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But such is not the sense of the Preacher.

He has in view something altogether different, something that real Christians of all lands can so well understand.

He had a knowledge of men, and his look went deep into the human heart. He saw with others, and experienced with himself, that our heart does not incline to esteem properly what our portion in life is, the lot appointed to us, the talent entrusted to us, but continually stretches out the hand after what is more and higher and less ordinary.

He had observed what endless treasures of life's happiness that had been given of God to the children of men were thereby lost. And against this willful destruction of one's own happiness of life, he enters his protest, admonishing everyone that he should take pleasure in the ordinary, everyday life and have an eye for the treasure of life's happiness that that ordinary life contains.

Always to be at home, never to have any change, just ordinary living is what every growing youth, and every young woman, oh so easily looks down upon from the heights.

There is nothing to it, it bores, it makes one dull and doting.

No, this tameness of existence must be ended. What we want must be sought outside. In what is uncommon. In what is *extra*. In what is not of everyday recurrence.

Such is the call that is abroad. Till the booty found in the uncommon disappoints more bitterly than the common. And in the end, weary of life, one has no more pleasure either in the everyday concerns nor in what is uncommon.

One had bread and wanted pastry. And the end is that both pastry and bread nauseate.

And against this altogether unhealthy interpretation of life the Preacher raises objection, and points out that the real nerve of our happiness in life must be sought in

what is common, in the ordinary, in things of everyday recurrence, in home-life, and that it is against the ordinance of God, and misappreciation of His love in everyday life, when the bread-crumbs of domesticity vex us.

And therefore he says:

"Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which God has given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity; for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labor which thou takest under the sun. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

And to this, all who understand aright the tie of *nature* and *grace* still respond with a whole-hearted *Amen*.

... to be concluded. 

*Go Ye Into All the World*

*Rev. Thomas Miersma*

## *Laboring in the Consciousness of God's Sovereignty in Missions (2)* *The Lord Directs the Work*

**W**hen our Lord went preaching and teaching in Galilee and performing wonders, He was fulfilling His Father's will and His own calling. Jesus labored in the consciousness, not only that He was sent, as we saw last time, but also that He was directed in the work

by the will of the Father. We read, for example, in Luke 4:43, 44, "And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent. And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee." This direction of the Father's will shaped not only the general direction of our Lord's work, as in the cities of Galilee, but also the specific path of His feet.

We find our Savior, on the way to the cross, directing His path through Jericho. He has come for a reason, along that particular path, to go to the house of Zacchaeus.

Jesus says to Zacchaeus, when He summons him to come down from the tree, "make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house" (Luke 19:5). Jesus says, "I must abide," or it is *necessary* that I remain at thy house. Bringing salvation to Zacchaeus and his house was the will of God in Jesus' work. The only purpose in Jericho? No, for He must also open the eyes of blind Bartimaeus. For the same reason we find Him waiting until after Lazarus' death before going to Bethany to raise him from the dead.

*Rev. Miersma is western home missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches.*

*Previous article in this series: April 15, 2007, p. 329.*

This consciousness that the Lord directs the work of preaching, evangelism, and missions is important. The Word of God is to be proclaimed generally or promiscuously “to whom God out of His good pleasure sends the gospel” (Canons II, Art. 5). The preaching of the Word is to be general to all who will hear, but it is so, as sent and directed of the Lord. This is explicit in the commission to Peter to go to the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:19-20). This is plain from the direction of Paul’s labors also. We read, “Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not” (Acts 16:6, 7). The Lord directed the work also negatively by forbidding them at that time from preaching in certain areas. The apostle did not set his own agenda or determine the direction of his labors. The Lord directed the work.

That the Lord directs the work is fundamental to sound evangelism and mission work. We are besieged today with a plethora of mission methods and techniques in the Christian community around us. Underlying much of this exercise in the latest mission fad is the false notion that missions, local evangelism, and outreach are somehow in the hand of man. While it is true that God uses means, specifically the means of preaching and the word, witness, and testimony of God’s people to draw men under it, so that faith comes by hearing (Rom. 10), nevertheless it is not in man’s hand to save souls or to direct the work. We do not decide where we will plant a church. We do not decide who will

come and when and where. God is the Lord of missions, not man, and He requires us to labor constantly in that consciousness.

Jesus said, as the Lord of the church and Lord also of missions and evangelism, that He is the One “...that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth” (Rev. 3:7). Our evangelism committees perhaps could sometimes better spend their time in prayer to the Lord of the harvest than in discussions about the latest pamphlet. Books, pamphlets, tapes, and lectures, advertising, and all the tools we use are profitable only if the Lord bless them and direct them. It is not only the case that God says of His Word, “it shall not return unto me void,” so that our labor in the Word is never vain, but He also says, “but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (Is. 55:11). This is both positive and negative in character, for the Word both gathers the elect and hardens in sin the reprobate unto judgment.

In this consciousness of the Lord’s direction of the work we look to the Lord not only to direct the work generally but also specifically. In connection with this, the Macedonian call, as we speak of it (Acts 16:9), is instructive. That call did not come to the churches gathered in Jerusalem at the Jerusalem council in Acts 15. The churches in common had the calling of the Lord to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). That call did not come to the church in Antioch, though the Spirit had called Paul to labor in missions and sent him to the work (Acts 13:1-3.). That call to “come over and help us” (Acts 16:9) came to active missionaries, Paul and Silas, on the mission field, doing the work of

missions and seeking the Lord’s direction in their work. It was a means to direct the active labor in the way the Lord would have it go. When that call came they were led by the Lord from Troas to northern Greece and to Philippi. But in that also, the Lord continued to direct the work specifically, for while they preached by the river in a city where there was no synagogue, to those who gathered there, and specifically the women (Acts 16:13), it was Lydia “whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul” (Acts 16:14). Others heard the Word, but their hearts were not opened of the Lord. God directed His Word to that place for the express purpose that it should come to Lydia.

The circumstances of God’s sending the earthquake (Acts 16:26) while Paul and Silas were in prison, and His bringing the Philippian jailer to his knees asking “What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30), set before us the same overall sovereign direction of God in the gathering of His church and His elect personally. The Lord still sends that same call and direction, not by the extraordinary means of visions, but by opening contacts and opportunities to preach or teach, by sending individuals seeking help and information, by calls, letters, and e-mails with questions from individuals and groups. The Lord still directs the work, determines where that labor will be and who shall be gathered into it. For it is grounded in sovereign election.

In the light of this direction of the Lord and His sovereign will, there is another element that we must note. The fruit is always the Lord’s and serves His glory. We are inclined, perhaps, to become caught up in techniques or in numbers or results. Missions and evangelism, also the witness of believers, are not to be conceived of as sales figures in a business. Jesus, having preached over the cities of Galilee, upbraids the cities in which

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His mighty works had been done. Was His work a failure because of a limited fruit? He tells us it was not; rather, His Father's will was done, according to His sovereign direction, and that will of God was not according to human reasoning. "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight" (Matt. 11:25, 26). God's will and sovereign direction in the work in Galilee were done according to His counsel and purpose. That purpose was not dependent on numbers saved. Sometimes in Acts we see multitudes are gathered, such as 3,000 on Pentecost; at other times it is only one, like the Ethiopian eunuch. Numbers are the least important thing about mission work.

God works in His sovereign direction often plainly contrary to human reasoning and expectation. Not the wise and prudent are called, but babes. The apostle Paul speaks of the same thing in I Corinthians 1:26-29. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence."

God in His sovereign direction of the salvation and gathering of His people through the work of missions gathers and saves His people according to His own wisdom. Those whom we might think

will come, or ought to come, do not come. Rather, others, of whom we had no expectation, are drawn by Him and gathered by the Word. The Lord often turns our human expectations upside down. This is also something that is experienced on the mission field and in evangelism work. But this sovereignty of God in His direction also makes much that is written about mission technique or results-oriented human reasoning about effective evangelism to be the foolishness of men. Modern evangelicalism, which is Pelagian and Arminian to the core, is full of the vain boasting of men in this respect. God works not after the wisdom of men, and that also, as the apostle says, "That no flesh should glory in his presence" (I Cor. 1:29).

Jesus sets this sovereign direction before us in another way in the miracle of the draught of fishes. When He calls His disciples to be fishers of men, He sets before them His power to gather His church, and by the miracle of the draught of fishes He sets before them also

the multitude of the harvest in the abundance of fishes caught in the net. The point of the miracle that Jesus works at the beginning of His ministry, and also a second time after His resurrection, is rather clear. The preaching of the gospel is like the casting of the net, and the multitude of fishes the blessing and power of the Lord who gathers His church abundantly. What is noteworthy is also this element: that the disciples, as recorded in Luke, had been fishing all night and had caught nothing. They had used all the wisdom, skill, and resources of experienced fishermen. They had gone in the logical way at night and let their nets down deep. The last thing to be expected is that they would catch anything at all, now, in bright sunlight and in the shallows. It is

the Lord who directs them to cast the net, which from a human point of view was at the wrong time and in the wrong place. Peter's doubtfulness of the enterprise is echoed in his words. We read in Luke 5:4-6, "Now when he (Jesus) had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake."

That awesome wonder was intended to teach us, first of all, to depend upon the direction of the Lord in all such outreach and endeavors in mission work and evangelism. The Lord has His time, place, and occasions when we are to let down the net of the gospel, when opportunities are given us to speak a word of witness in season that bears fruit. He directs who are gathered, and when, and where.


This is also an assurance and promise to us as we labor in the gospel, do the work of evangelism, and seek to leave a witness with others. Our calling is to preach and confess our faith and confirm it with a godly walk. We are to sow the seed. It depends on the Lord to give the increase. Exactly because He has promised us that it will bear the fruit He intends, we may rest content with the way He leads us. The Lord calls us to work in faithfulness, by preaching and confession of our faith, but it is ultimately in the Lord's hands. He is the real power and strength in the work of missions. He directs it and makes it fruitful. For us as Reformed believers, this means that we do not become caught up in the current fads of those who trust in men and forsake the means of grace, which God has ordained and Christ has commanded us when He told us to go and preach the gospel. He commanded us to preach,

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mission work.*

just preach! To depart from that way is to forsake His sovereign direction, nor will God bless it.

We are to labor, therefore,

prayerfully and in the consciousness of His sovereign direction in every aspect of the work of missions and evangelism. We do so also with the knowledge that it is

His grace and power that blesses our labors and that His is also the glory, "That no flesh should glory in his presence" (I Cor. 1:29). 

## Ministering to the Saints

Rev. Douglas Kuiper

# Deacons' Meetings (2) A View from the Observers' Gallery (cont.)

**I**n our last article, supposing that we were allowed to observe a meeting of the deacons, we saw them open with prayer, count the offerings from the last month's collections, and read the minutes of the previous meeting.

Then we took a break with them, as they enjoyed coffee and dessert, and visited the restroom. Now the men enter the room again, roll up their sleeves and shuffle papers, giving the impression that the actual work is about to begin, and that it might take several hours.

The president calls the men to order.

Still on the agenda are reports of committees, reading correspondence that has been received, and other matters.



The second part of the meeting begins with a review of the work that has been done in the last month.

The treasurer gives the Benevolent Fund report for the last month. The fund began with a balance of almost \$14,000; collections brought

in almost \$1,300; disbursements were almost \$2,500; the ending total is under \$13,000.

Thirteen thousand dollars is a lot of money. But with the economy slowing down, the two ongoing benevolent cases, and one father in the congregation having lost his job in the last month, it could be gone quickly. Discussing this, the deacons commit themselves again both to give to the poor in accordance with their true needs, and to investigate these needs carefully so that no money is given away needlessly.

Committees of two deacons have been assigned to various "cases" in the church. These committees now give their reports.

(The reader must know that any correlation between what I now write, and any real diaconal case to which he thinks I am referring, is coincidental; I am not basing what I write on my knowledge of any real, particular case.)

One has no report—they were unable to meet with the individual in the past month. They assure the rest of the deacons that they will continue trying to set up a meeting.

A second reports on the visit they had made, in which benevolent help was given. This visit was made to a family in which the father works hard to support his family, but because he receives only a

modest wage, and because of high tuition and medical expenses, the family occasionally needs help. Visiting this family is always a joy; it is apparent to the deacons that these parents realize the need to work hard to provide for their needs, and to be good stewards of that which they earn. They are always ready to demonstrate their need to the deacons when asked to do so, and are grateful for the benevolent help they receive. The work of bringing the Scriptures to bear on the family's needs is joyful, because of the godly and receptive spirit of both parents. The body of deacons receives this report, and approves the work this committee has done. (This approval is given by one deacon making a motion to approve the work, a second deacon supporting the motion, all the deacons being given time to discuss the matter, and then voting by voice). While the help given will suffice the family for some time yet, this committee will periodically check with the family to be sure all is well.

The third report is less encouraging. It regards another family, one that is delinquent in its giving to the General Fund. The deacons whose meeting we are observing do not contact families that have not paid every last dollar of the budgeted amount; but they do con-

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

*Previous article in this series: April 1, 2007, p. 297.*

tact families that appear to be making little, if any, effort to contribute to the General Fund. They are aware that this particular family puts in \$10 here, \$20 there, and on rare occasion a \$40 check, but seems to make no effort to pay the full burden of the budget. The question arises—is the family obligated to do that? Consider this, in answer: first, it is our calling to put the kingdom first; and second, the father of this family, as its head, voted in favor of the proposed budget at the last congregational meeting. This delinquency alerts the deacons to the possibility that this family is having financial struggles. Meeting with the family, they find this in fact to be true. They also learned that the family was almost \$2,000 behind on paying its Christian school tuition, and paying little more than the minimum monthly payments on two credit cards.

What makes this report less encouraging, however, is not the financial woes of the family, but the view that both husband and wife expressed, that paying tuition and putting money in the collection plate was what they did with their “leftover” money. The committee of deacons showed this family on the basis of scriptural principles that they must put the causes of the kingdom first (Matt. 6:33); that they would be wise to stop using credit cards altogether, not because they are wrong in principle but because this family is unable to pay off their credit card debt (Prov. 22:7); and that they must be ready to give up some of the things they have come to enjoy (cable TV, two cell phones, eating at restaurants weekly or more often), not because such are wrong in principle, but in order to get their financial position stable. Yet the family still gave the distinct impression that, to them, these “things” were all-important! How to get them to see that man’s life consists not in the abundance of the things that he possesses (Luke 12:15)?

In discussing this report, the

deacons express sympathy toward the family. True, the family “made its own bed,” but the deacons do not carelessly suppose that “they should now lie in it.” The deacons remember that they are called to show *mercy*—to sympathize with those in need. This is exactly what God did to us, when we “made our own bed” by sinning in Adam and by our sins today—God sent Christ, and assures us of His mercy in the way of our repentance! So the deacons are ready to show mercy to this family also, but indeed, it requires the family to see the need to change their ways. The committee is told to visit the family again within the next month, if possible, assuring them that the deacons stand ready to help, so long as the family will use that help to God’s glory—that is, without thinking that the deacons are an easy “out.”

At this point the elder who is present encourages the deacons to give this matter their full attention, and do their work diligently, but assures them that if the parents do not change their attitude or take the principles of Christian stewardship seriously, the elders will be ready also to visit them, on the basis of violations of the fourth and eighth commandments. (Remember that our Heidelberg Catechism, explaining the fourth commandment, requires “that the ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained”; and, explaining the eighth, teaches that God forbids “all covetousness, all abuse and waste of His gifts”).

The final report was made by two deacons who contacted the father who lost his job, to assure him that they stood ready to help if need be. The father was grateful for this assurance, said that his severance pay would help him for the immediate future, and that he would be earnest in seeking new employment.

Turning to matters pertaining to other needs of the saints, the deacons read a report from a committee of three couples in the church

who help organize transportation, meals, and other acts of kindness toward those in the congregation in such need. This committee reports on the work it has done in the recent past, and asks the deacons to advertise the need for transportation of an elderly saint to doctors’ appointments, and running errands such as picking up prescriptions and groceries for that person. This the deacons resolve to do.



The deacons next turn their attention to the work they plan to do in the coming month.

First, the president opens up the church directory, and reads through it family by family. Each deacon is given opportunity, when a family’s name is read, to mention a need of that family, and to suggest a way in which the deacons can help. With most families, nothing is said; with other families and individuals, the deacons already know their needs and are working to meet them. But—here is one family in which a member faces surgery; another, in which a member has been battling chronic health problems. With two other families, comments are made regarding struggles of which the deacons were not all aware. The families have not requested the deacons’ help, nor do the deacons know of an immediate need; but they will be aware that the possibility might arise.

Thinking over the month ahead, and the work that must be done in it, the president reminds the deacons that with the end of the year approaching, the widows, elderly, sick, and shut-ins must all receive a visit again. Committees are appointed to do this work.



Letters that have been received over the course of the last month are now read.

One is received from a diaconate that announces that it has a sizable balance in its benevolence fund, and



is able to help any diaconate that has a low balance. This letter is received for information.

The second is from a diaconate of a smaller church, in which the deacons have ongoing benevolent cases and the congregation is not able sufficiently to keep up with its own benevolent needs. This diaconate is asking other diaconates for help. Notwithstanding the fact that this congregation whose deacons' meeting we are observing has its own benevolent needs, the fact is that it still has a sizable balance, and another congregation has a dire need. A motion is made, supported, and passed, to send a check to the deacons of this sister congregation.

A letter from the deacons of a local congregation affiliated with another Reformed denomination is read, announcing an upcoming conference for deacons, and also reminding the churches in the community of the ongoing needs of the food pantry that this other diaconate runs. This letter is read especially for the information of the deacons. No action is taken.

One letter was received from a Christian college and another from a Christian rehabilitation home, asking to take collections for their cause. The president of the deacons rules that these letters should be treated at the council meeting, rather than the deacons' meeting, since the council as a whole decides the collection schedule. (In other diaconates, the deacons might discuss these requests, and make recommendations to bring to the next council meeting).



The deacons turn their attention to the needs of individual saints outside the congregation.

We noted in our last article that the congregation in which these deacons serve has the oversight of one of the denominational mission fields, located a considerable distance from this congregation. The council—the meeting of elders and

deacons together—is the body that supervises the work of this field. But at the last council meeting, the missionary informed the council of a benevolent need on the field, and the council directed the deacons to investigate the matter and come with a recommendation. The deacons discuss this mandate from the council for a while; then they appoint a committee to investigate the matter more carefully, in conjunction with the missionary.

In the community lives a divorced woman trying to raise two children without seeing a penny of the child support that the children's father owes her. She attends no church, but is not shy about asking one of the churches in the community for a "little help" now and then. Recently she left a request on the church's answering machine, which was referred to the deacons. The deacons discuss this. Have they a responsibility to help her? Not all are agreed that they do, but several are emphatic that at the least they should investigate the need, seeing Christians are called to do good unto all men (Gal. 6:10a). How best to help her? That, too, is not easily answered. Two deacons volunteer to meet with her, to investigate the matter more thoroughly. Although these deacons realize the need to do this, the president specifically mandates them to teach the lady about the misery of sin, and her need for Jesus Christ. Any help that might be given her must be given in the name of Christ. And it will either constitute for her a true blessing (if she is a child of God), or it will leave her without excuse (if she is not). She must hear this.



The clock reads 10:25 P.M., and the agenda is nearly finished.

The president asks each deacon whether he has any new matters to bring to the deacons' attention. Only one matter is brought up. "The letter we received from the Reformed congregation down the

road mentioned that they are having a deacons' conference. That reminds me that it has been over six years since the deacons of Hudsonville, in the fall of 2000, had a deacons' conference. Perhaps we should organize another one." The men briefly discuss the concept, find it agreeable, but do not act officially on it. But the seed has been planted.

The clerk, having recorded the "script minutes" of the meeting (those that he jotted down during the meeting itself), is asked to read them. He does so, and the men are given opportunity to modify or correct anything in them. They are then approved.

A motion is made, supported, and passed to adjourn. (I think that most motions that are made at consistory and deacons meetings pass; some fail, but not many. But here is one motion that you *know* will never fail. In fact, I've never experienced it to pass with anything less than unanimous support. By 10:30, we all want our beds!)

Because the deacons take turns closing their meeting in prayer, the clerk indicates whose turn it is tonight, and that deacon prays. Like the prayer with which the meeting opened, this one is no mere formality. The deacons are conscious that the decisions they made must be blessed of God; that the committees assigned to do tasks in the next month need God's blessing to do the work well; and that the members of the congregation need God's blessing to receive the deacons rightly. This consciousness is reflected in the closing prayer. Petition is made again for grace to perform their work in the right spirit and with the right attitude—humbly, cheerfully, lovingly, sacrificially, Christlike in every way.

The deacons rise up, tired for the evening, but prepared again for the real work they must do in the next month, as the ministers of Christ's mercy.



So ends a fairly representative deacons' meeting. Certainly some of the items on the agenda do not come up every month, or for every diaconate. At the same time, other matters come up that one could

never have imagined. Perhaps there is no "representative" meeting.

But by considering what happens in such a meeting, saints in Reformed churches may better un-

derstand that the deacons truly do have the care of the poor and needy in mind, and do busy themselves in that care.

Pray for your deacons, the next time you know they are meeting.



## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Evangelism Activities

**T**he Evangelism Committee of First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI recently printed a brochure containing information about their church and what they believe. It was hoped that greeters and others in their congregation would give these brochures to visitors and any others who may be interested.

Members of the Evangelism Committee of the Randolph, WI PRC encouraged members of their congregation to invite family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers to their church on Friday evening, April 27, to hear their pastor, Rev. D. Kuiper, present a timely lecture entitled, "Isn't Sunday the Lord's Day?"

Rev. Kuiper was also recently asked to address the Young People's Group of Living Hope Church, introducing them to the beliefs and practices that the PRC hold dear. All the young people of Randolph were welcomed to come along.

### Denomination Activities

**A**ll the ladies from the area churches were invited to attend the Spring Ladies' League Meeting held at the Hull, Iowa PRC on April 17. Rev. G. VanBaren gave a speech entitled, "It's Grace!" based on Ephesians 2. An offering was taken for the Domestic Mission Committee's work in Sioux Falls.

The annual combined Men's Society meeting of area PR

churches was held on March 29 at the Doon, Iowa PRC. The topic for discussion was taken from I Corinthians 13, and the men from the Edgerton, MN PRC provided the after-recess topic.

Members of the Adult Bible Study of the South Holland, IL PRC hosted a combined meeting for the area churches on April 24 at South Holland. Bible study centered on Daniel 6, which records the history of Daniel and the lion's den.

The Hope PRC in Walker, MI hosted this spring's annual Sunday School Teachers' Mass Meeting on April 26. Rev. C. Haak gave an inspirational message meant to encourage all Sunday School teachers.

### Mission Activities

**I**n mid-April seven men from the Grand Rapids, MI churches traveled to Pittsburgh, PA to assist the Fellowship there with ongoing repair work to their newly purchased church home. They removed the "onion" dome on the church and replaced it with a new steeple. Their crumbling chimney was repaired, a drop ceiling was installed in the fellowship room, and many other smaller items were taken care of. In addition to thanking these men for their efforts, the Pittsburgh Fellowship also stated that through this experience they were able to witness the tremendous blessing that is received in belonging to the communion of the saints.

Rev. M. Dick and Mr. Harlow Kuiper, representatives from our churches' Domestic Mission Committee, were able to visit with the members of the Covenant of Grace

PR Fellowship in Spokane, WA on April 20-22. A picnic at Audubon Park to meet with the men was planned for Saturday, April 21. Opportunity for fellowship was also provided Sunday after the morning worship service at the home of our missionary to Spokane, Rev. T. Miersma. In addition to these informal meetings, the delegates also visited with Rev. Miersma and his family, as well as the Steering Committee. Rev. Dick preached for the Fellowship Sunday evening.

Since our last "News," the third and fourth lectures of the series held at the Wingate Conference Room in Fayetteville, NC and sponsored by the PR Fellowship of Fayetteville have taken place. Rev. W. Bruinsma spoke April 13. His topic for this lecture was, "Is Doctrine Necessary," and Rev. J. Slopsema spoke on April 27 on the subject, "May a Person Judge and Condemn?"

### Minister Activities

**R**ev. Kleyn, pastor of the Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI, declined the call he had been extended to serve as our denomination's next missionary to the Philippines.

Rev. J. Slopsema, pastor of First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI, received the call to serve as the next pastor of the Peace PRC in Lansing, IL.

### Congregation Activities


**T**he Building Committee of the Lynden, WA PRC invited members of their congregation to a "cleanup day" on Saturday, April 21. This was an outdoor work day,

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

which included the planting of 37 trees along the eastern fence line, pruning bushes and trees, weeding and sprucing up of the flower beds, and window washing. Depending on the amount of time and the turnout, scrubbing and painting of the rails could also be done.

The council of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI recently informed their congregation that they have now collected enough funds

through collections to go ahead with the purchase and installation of previously approved narthex acoustical sound panels for their auditorium. The council also reminded the congregation that back in December they approved two projects: the acoustical panels, and a project to remodel the parsonage study, and that beginning in July, collections would begin for that upgrade.

Since Good Friday is a Canadian holiday, all our Canadian congregations were able to hold worship services Good Friday morning. Our congregation in Wingham, Ontario held their service at 10:30 A.M., followed by a short break for refreshments and then a singspiration. Part of that singspiration included the catechism children singing Psalter #47. 

## Announcements

### NOTICE

The Board of the Reformed Heritage Christian School Association of Kalamazoo, Michigan, is inviting applications for an administrator with some teaching responsibilities for the 2007-2008 school year. RHCS is a K-12 Christian school with approximately 60 students. We are in our 15<sup>th</sup> year as an Association of parents of various Reformed denominations. Successful applicants must be committed to the Reformed faith, biblical inerrancy, 6-day creation, male headship, the antithesis between Christianity and the world, and covenantal theology. Interested candidates should send a cover letter and resumé to: Paul VanderBerg, Chairman, Education Committee; Reformed Heritage Christian School, 700 Fletcher Avenue, Kalamazoo, MI 49006. For more information, phone Paul VanderBerg at (269) 327-4452.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of the Doon PRC wish to extend their Christian sympathy to fellow elder Jim Regnerus, and his wife and family, in the death of his father-in-law,

#### MR. EGBERT GRITTERS.

May they find comfort in the words of Psalm 55:22: "Cast thy burdens upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

Rev. David Overway, President  
Jim Hoogendoorn, Clerk

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society extends its sympathy to Mrs. Richard Bloem and family in the death of

#### MR. RICHARD BLOEM.

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

John Buiter, President  
Rod Brunsting, Secretary

### PLEASE NOTE:

The *Standard Bearer*  
is published  
only once per month  
during June, July, and August.

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

In thankfulness to our heavenly Father for covenantal blessings, we rejoice with our parents, grandparents, and great grandparents,

#### WILLIAM and JUDITH BOOTH,

who will celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on June 13, 2007, the Lord willing. We give thanks to our Lord for the years He has given to them and for His covenant faithfulness through their guidance and teaching. "For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).

#### \* Chuck Booth

Josh and Kelly Krikke (Caden)

Lindsey, Charlie

#### \* Jeff and Cathy Booth

Bill

Marc and Sarah DeBoer (Kristen)

Michael, Rachel

Grand Rapids, Michigan

### NOTICE!

Heritage Christian High School in South Holland, IL is seeking applications for a full-time teaching position. All applicants must be members of a Protestant Reformed church. Contact the administrator, Ralph Medema ([ralph.medema@heritagechs.org](mailto:ralph.medema@heritagechs.org)) 708-339-4529 or Ed Stouwie ([ejstouwie@comcast.net](mailto:ejstouwie@comcast.net)) 219-513-9218.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Byron Center PRC express Christian sympathy to the following:

Aric and Rachel Bleyenbergh and family in the death of his father,

#### MR. ARNOLD BLEYENBERG;

Marvin and Marcia Gritters and family in the death of his father,

#### MR. EGBERT GRITTERS;

Heather, Katelynn and Tyce Lubbers, Bernie and Ruth Lubbers, Bruce and Deb Lubbers and family, Ken and Machele Elzinga and family, Ed and Melanie Hekstra and family, Sid and Lisa Miedema and family, Brent and Shari Dommissee and family in the death of her husband, their father, their son, and their brother,

#### MR. BRAD LUBBERS.

May they find comfort in God's Word, "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Rev. R. VanOverloop, President  
Mike Elzinga, Clerk



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## THE STANDARD BEARER

PERIODICAL  
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Michigan

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

As children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of

**CORNELIUS and TRUDA JONKER**, we rejoice as they celebrate 60 years of marriage in the Lord on June 2, 2007. God's grace has been abundant in their lives as they sought to raise their children in a godly home. We see His covenant faithfulness as we, their children, seek to follow the godly example they continue to set in their marriage. Our praise and thanks go to our heavenly Father for the many years He has seen fit to give them. It is our prayer that the Lord will continue to bless them and keep them in His care.

"Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD. The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel" (Psalm 128:4-6).

- \* Donald and Jacque Jonker
- \* Philip and Linda Jonker
- \* John and Darlene Graeser
- \* Eric and Marilyn Ophoff
- \* Bernie and Laurie Kamps
- \* Eugene and Sharon Kamps  
23 grandchildren  
28 great-grandchildren

Grand Rapids, Michigan

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The congregation and council of Hull PRC wish to express their sincere Christian sympathy to Mrs. Egbert Gritters, Mr. and Mrs. Brian Gritters, Mr. and Mrs. Loren Gritters, Mr. and Mrs. David King, and their families following the passing of their husband, father, and grandfather,

#### MR. EGBERT GRITTERS.

May they find their comfort in God's Word found in Romans 8:18, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

Rev. Steven Key, President  
Ike Uittenbogaard, Asst. Clerk

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With thankfulness to God, we join our parents in celebrating 50 years together as husband and wife. On June 11, 1957,

**REV. and MRS. J. KORTERING** pledged their love to each other in Christ. Throughout those fifty years, God has blessed their union so that they experienced much joy as they labored for us in the home as well as for our churches. They are a beautiful example to us (and their many spiritual children in SE Asia) of godly love expressed in marriage. Ephesians 6:24, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

- \* Barry and Lori Gritters  
Curt and Julie (Jaydon)  
Kevin and Audra (Derek, Jared)  
Eric and Alicia  
Dan and fiancée Kara  
VanderMeulen,  
Brad, Lisa
- \* Dennis and Sharon Griess  
Cory and Leal  
Tara  
Justin and fiancée Heidi Gunnink,  
Seth, Derek, Joshua
- \* Bruce and Joann Klamer  
Alyssa, Courtney (in glory),  
Jaycen, Deanna, Zachary, Levi
- \* Leon and Ellen Kamps  
Nick and Amanda  
Caleb, Gena, Jake
- \* Rick and Carol Bos  
Andrew, Kayleigh, Thomas  
Jenison, Michigan

### CALL TO SYNOD!!

Synod 2006 appointed Trinity Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, Michigan the calling church for the 2007 synod.

The consistory hereby notifies our churches that the 2007 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, June 12, 2007 at 8:30 A.M. in the Trinity Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, Michigan.

The Pre-Synodical Service will be held on Monday evening, June 11, at 7:00 P.M. Rev. VanOverloop, president of the 2006 Synod, will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the consistory before the service.

Mr. Robert Drnek, Clerk  
Trinity PRC

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With humble hearts we give thanks to our faithful heavenly Father, who has blessed our family, and especially our parents,

**TIM and LINDA MOWERY**, with 30 years of godly marriage, celebrated on May 26, 2007. It is our prayer that they will continue to experience His love, living their lives in service to Him. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is" (Jeremiah 17:7).

- \* Ryan and Heather Mowery  
Tori, Ian, Trenton
- \* Eric and Heidi Mowery  
Parker, Whitney
- \* B.J. and Sarah Mowery  
Leah, Willem
- \* Alex Mowery and fiancée Amy  
McDonald
- \* Dan and Erin Drnek  
Trista  
West Olive, Michigan

## Reformed Witness Hour

### June 2007

Date	Topic	Text
June 3	"Shining As Lights in the World"	Philippians 2:15
June 10	"Daniel in Babylon"	Daniel 1:8
June 17	"Preserved unto Destruction"	II Peter 3:5-7
June 24	"Mercy upon Dogs"	Matthew 15:21-28