

# THE *May 15, 2007* STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Volume 83 ◆ Number 16

# Walk As David Thy Father Walked

*"And if thou wilt walk before me as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments...."*

I Kings 9:4

**P**arents are admonished to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). Teach them and train them in such a way that they hear and heed the Lord Jesus Christ. At the same time, parents (and especially fathers) are admonished to accompany the instruction they give to their children with a walk (a manner of life) that is consistent with their instruction. They are to exemplify their instruction. They are to be examples to their children. God admonished

Solomon to heed the example of David!



Solomon had just completed the construction and dedication of the temple. The dedication had concluded with a lengthy dedicatory prayer by Solomon (I Kings 8:22-61). This was followed by a planned week-long feast, which was extended another week because the number of the sacrifices was so large (II Chron. 7:7). The feast ended with the people returning to their homes "joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the LORD had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people" (I Kings 8:66).

Then God appears to Solomon (9:2) and responds to the requests that Solomon made in his dedicatory prayer. First, God promises to "put my name" in the temple (v. 3), as Solomon had asked (8:27-30). To Solomon's request that God set His eyes over this house (8:29), God gave more than Solomon had

asked, saying that not only His eyes but also His heart would be there (9:3).

Our text is God's answer to Solomon's request in 8:25 for the fulfillment of God's promise that there always be a successor of David on the throne. This promise God had first given to David when He told David that he was not allowed to build the temple. After denying David this privilege, God promised to "set up thy seed after thee," and "thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever" (II Sam. 7:12, 16). As David's life was about to end, he expressed the fervent hope that "the LORD may continue his word which he spake concerning me" (I Kings 2:4). Now Solomon asks God to keep that promise.

God states His answer to Solomon in a form that appears to make God's promise dependent or conditioned on Solomon's obedience. "If thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked,...then I

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will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever" (vv. 4, 5). Three things must be clear if we are to understand that our text does *not* make this promise of God conditional.

First, God's promises are always unconditional! God is faithful and His promises are sure (II Sam. 23:5; Is. 55:3; Rom. 4:16; II Tim. 2:19)—also this promise to establish the throne of David over Israel forever. God's promises do not depend on man to be fulfilled. God's promises are dependent only on His eternal counsel and His sovereign control. Therefore, we may be assured that they will always be fulfilled! The point to be remembered is that God's promises are often not fulfilled in the way we expect. But they are always fulfilled. In this specific case, God's promise to David that his son would sit upon his throne forever is fulfilled in *the* Son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ, who sits enthroned on high in might to reign, and His kingdom is not an earthly kingdom, but a spiritual and heavenly one.

Second, notice carefully the language God used when He made the promise to David in II Samuel 7. God stated that if David's son would "commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men" (v. 14b). But God continues, "But my mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul,...and thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever" (vv. 15, 16). The same kind of language is used in Psalm 89:33, 34. God promised to chasten David's son upon disobedience, but He would still keep His promise—only in a different way than expected, namely, in Jesus Christ, the Son of David. This is the way we are to understand what God tells Solomon now in I Kings 9:4-9.

Third, let us realize that God expresses Himself as He does in

our text for two reasons. One, God is reinforcing His commands, stating in a powerful way the obligations that flow from God's promises. God makes it clear to Solomon that it is His commands that determine human responsibility, not His determinative counsel, nor His sovereign, providential control, nor His wonderful promises. And, two, God expresses Himself this way to show that the realization of His promises can be experienced only in the way of humble obedience. For example, God has forgiven all the sins of His children, but they experience this forgiveness only in the way of humble obedience. God gives only and always grace to His people, but His people experience this grace only in the way of humble obedience.

So Solomon is to know that his God-given calling is to walk before God as David his father walked.



David walked before God. He lived his life conscious that God's eyes were on him. This does not mean that David did not sin. Scripture records some of David's lamentable falls into sin. In addition, David, like every one of the elect, needed forgiveness always for his sins and his sinfulness. To walk before God does not require sinlessness. Rather it requires godly sorrow and trust in promised forgiveness, a striving against the weakness of our faith and the evil lusts of our flesh, an earnest desire to fight against unbelief and to live according to all of God's commandments. This is what it is to walk before God.

Our text speaks of a specific way in which David walked before God: "in integrity of heart, and in uprightness." "Integrity of heart" is to be most sincere, without a mask, in the sense of being open

and not deceitful. It is a readiness to admit sins of omission and commission, sins of weakness, secret faults and presumptuous sins (as David did in Psalm 19:12, 13). And it is a striving to obey God in every detail of life. "Uprightness" is to be morally straight, a striving always to do what is just, right, and true. These two concepts are often placed together (Job 1:1; Ps. 25:21; 37:37).

David did not use traitorous and unrighteous means to gain the crown of Israel from Saul, nor did he use such methods to keep the throne from Absalom. He strove to be guided consciously by the principles of honor to God in all his actions. While guilty of many sins and failings in

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his life, David never fell into idolatry or other kinds of apostasy. He was devoted to the worship of his God. His integrity and uprightness were evidenced in his desire to do all that God had commanded, keeping God's "statutes and judgments." One "keeps" God's commands by observing, watching, giving heed to them. David walked before God by striving to be aware that God had prescribed what he must do (a statute), and that God will execute judgment on everything he does, good and evil (judgment). This is the way that David walked.



God calls Solomon to walk "as David thy father walked." David set a good example for Solomon. Parents always set an example for their children. Older members of the church always are examples to the younger members. Sometimes the example is not to be followed (Ezek. 20:18; Jer. 9:14; Amos 2:4). Jehoshaphat was commended for walking in the ways of David (II Chron. 17:3), and Uzziah learned well from Amaziah (II Chron. 26:4).


Paul set himself up as an example to the elders of Ephesus (Acts 20:35). At least three times he told the Corinthian saints to follow him (I Cor. 4:16; 7:7; 11:1), and twice he told the Philippians to do so (Phil. 3:17; 4:9). He admonished his spiritual sons, Timothy and Titus, that they were to be examples (I Tim. 4:12; Tit. 2:7). Our Lord Jesus told His disciples to "learn of me" (Matt. 11:29 and John 13:15). Paul often set Jesus up as an example (II Cor. 10:1; Eph. 5:2; Phil. 2:5; Col. 3:13; Heb. 12:2, 3).

Parents are to teach their chil-

dren with instruction, but they must always remember that often the most important instruction is the example they give in their life. When the sins of parents are visited upon their children, then it is because the children follow the example of their parents. On the other hand, Timothy had the godly example of unfeigned (sincere and undisguised) faith in his grandmother and mother.

We can teach and instruct our children with many words concerning the truth and commands of Scripture. But the loudness of our example can drown out our many

words if our example contradicts what we say. Remember that a good example is not sinlessness (an impossibility), but integrity of heart and uprightness of walk (a humble confession and a constant striving to obey all of God's commands). Such a walk before God supports and affirms what Scripture says.

Let us not adopt the foolish saying: Do what I say and not what I do. Rather let our children know that we are honest about ourselves (integrity) and our constant need for the grace of God in Christ Jesus! 

Editorial

Prof. Barry Gritters

## PRC Synod 2007 Trinity-Hudsonville

**S**ix-year-old Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI, is the home church of this year's seminary graduate. She will be hosting the 2007 gathering of the Protestant Reformed synod. In the heart of old Hudsonville, Trinity's sanctuary sits kitty-corner from the sanctuary of the old Hudsonville PRC that dates back to the early history of Hudsonville (Vos, DeJong, Kok, Veldman, Hanko). There, twenty delegates from Classis East and Classis West will make decisions about the churches' work, including missions, seminary training, matters that could not be finished in the classes...and much more.

The members of the PRC must be informed of the work of the churches. The summary provided here can be a start. By it, parents can inform their children of denominational activity. On a Sabbath afternoon, fathers and brothers can discuss and inform others

of this most important work. What is an overture? There are three in this year's synod—two of them propose changes to the *Church Order*. What is a protest? A minister objects to a decision of last year's synod.

Other questions the church member can ask: Who does mission work, the local congregation, or the synod, or both? How is a man appointed to the denominational committee to oversee the seminary? What does a small congregation do that cannot afford to pay her pastor? And these: Where are we doing mission work? Will a PRC missionary be working in South Dakota again—after all these years? Will Sioux Falls be a mission work or a newly established congregation? Why? Does the seminary train non-PRC members? Who?

There are dozens of important and interesting matters for the instruction of the members regarding Christ's work in the

PRC. Let every member be informed of and understand the labors that he himself engages in by virtue of his being part of the denomination.



**Monday, June 11, 7 P.M.**

The President of last year's synod, Rev. R. VanOverloop, will preach the pre-synodical sermon. The churches' conviction is that the Word must direct them in all their work. Let those who can, come.

**Tuesday, June 12, 8:30 A.M.**

On Tuesday morning (if we may guess what synod's work may be each day), last year's President will open with devotions, read the credentials from each classis, and declare Synod 2007 to be properly constituted. The delegates will elect officers—President, Vice-President, First Clerk, and Second Clerk. The

new president will read the important "Public Declaration of Agreement with the Forms of Unity," during which all the men stand. Then he will appoint a committee to divide the business of synod into five relatively equal portions and to assign four men (and a seminary professor as advisor) for each portion to present synod with "pre-advice." They formulate this advice in the evenings, sometimes late into the evenings. For example, one committee will look at the overtures to add to a couple articles of the *Church Order*, and give recommendation to synod to adopt or reject the overture. Synod is well served by careful work of these advisory committees.

The President will ask for a motion to adopt the TSC-proposed examination schedule for Mr. Nathan Langerak, the graduate from seminary this year. He will assign some delegates to critique Mr. Langerak's sermon; others his translations and explanations of Scripture from both Testaments.

Tuesday late morning Synod will hear the sermon of seminarian Langerak. The afternoon provides time for the advisory committees to start. Wednesday morning the men will buckle down for the long haul of the student examination.

#### ***Wednesday, June 13***

If the seminary student's written exams prove acceptable to synod, the oral examinations take place. With the seminarian front and center, Prof. Engelsma, the teacher of dogmatics, will begin three and one half hours of examination in all the areas of doctrine, asking the student to explain, defend, and prove from Scripture, the Reformed faith. Then three other professors and one pastor will examine the brother in Church History (Prof. Dykstra), Church Polity (Prof. Gritters), Old Testament History (Prof. Engelsma), New Testament

History (Prof. Cammenga), and Practical matters (usually one of the senior minister-delegates to synod). The examination takes most of the day, and continues into Thursday. Everyone who has opportunity to visit synod would be profited by observing some of the student examinations. Visitors will hear a good confession of the Reformed faith. They will also become aware of what a Protestant Reformed minister must know.

But the student(s) is usually too weary to continue oral examinations all afternoon. Wisely, synod dismisses the brother(s) and takes up some of her other business, for example:

*Contact Committee:* The sister relationship of the PRC with the Evangelical Reformed Churches in Singapore (ERCS) has been severed because of what the PRC judges to be an unbiblical position on divorce and remarriage. The ERCS has decided to disband as a denomination, effective at the end of June. The Contact Committee reports that they have not yet sent a delegation to visit Singapore, but hope that in the near future a visit can be made to determine the future of the PRC relations with some in Singapore. Synod must decide what instructions, if any, to give to the Contact Committee.

The CC communicates with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia (EPCA). The EPCA expresses appreciation for the PRC's training of their student, Dr. David Torlach, for the ministry, and for the support provided him and his family.

The CC proposes to synod to establish sister-church relationship with the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland. The newly organized congregation seeks the fellowship of the PRC in America, and the benefits of oversight of one another's faith and life. The CC also recommends financial support for the

church and regular offerings for their building fund.

Largely through the Internet, the CC has begun communications with believers and churches worldwide. Details can be found in the agenda for synod, but mention can be made of Germany (a visit to Geissen is proposed for this summer), the Netherlands, Uzbekistan, Croatia, and Russia.

But this will not all be finished on Wednesday.

#### ***Thursday, June 14***

Thursday, synod will resume the examination of the student. By mid-afternoon, synod will be ready, if the Lord is willing, to declare him a candidate for the ministry of the Word and sacraments in the PRC, eligible for call on a certain date, about six weeks hence. Family and friends assemble with the delegates to praise God, from whom these blessings flow, and congratulate the candidate.

Then, Thursday may include discussion of the work of domestic missions. The second advisory committee (Committee II) is usually assigned that major block of synod's work. The two elders, two ministers, and professor-advisor must recommend whether synod should approve the work of the home missionaries in Pittsburgh and Spokane, and the purchase of a sanctuary and parsonage in Pittsburgh. Southwest PRC, calling church for Pittsburgh missions, reports having approved a proposal from the seminary faculty to have second-year seminarian Cory Griess spend the summer assisting Missionary Bruinsma, as part of the seminarian's training for the ministry. Also significant for synod's deliberations will be the Domestic Mission Committee's proposal to begin a new work in Sioux Falls, SD, where three PRCs in the vicinity asked the Domestic Mission Committee to be involved. "Heritage Protestant Reformed Fellowship," under the sponsorship of

Edgerton, MN, PRC, is meeting weekly. Candidate Clayton Spronk leads the services and engages in evangelism with the members of the fellowship, mostly members of Doon and Hull PRCs. The Domestic Mission Committee recommends to synod to call a third home missionary, who would begin his work in Sioux Falls; to appoint Edgerton PRC as calling church; and to adopt a budget of \$107,500 for the work.

The DMC proposes a minor change in synod's constitution for Domestic Missions, to allow for the DMC, rather than the calling church, to formulate a gross list for the calling of a missionary.

Will synod meet some evenings in order to try to finish by the week's end? Often school graduations conflict with the evening meetings. Can Thursday handle the report of Classis East—usually fairly routine? This year Classis East makes an overture to synod. Synod 2006 instructed Classis East to encourage the small congregation in Wyckoff, NJ, to disband. Classis East did so. Wyckoff PRC disbanded. But Classis East disagreed with Synod 2006's grounds, and overtures Synod 2007 to rescind four of them. Synod will entertain a protest of the same decision by the Rev. Martin VanderWal. Rev. VanderWal believes the decision itself "should be overturned." The matter is significant, and involves the difficult question: "What factors dictate when a small congregation should disband?"

The material of Classis West includes a request from Edgerton, MN, PRC for special financial help. There are also overtures from Rev. Douglas Kuiper to amend the *Church Order* in two places. Rev. Kuiper suggests that synod establish procedure for all the churches to follow in the discipline of baptized members, and in the readmitting of mature baptized members who were "erased," and append these procedures to the Church Or-

der articles 76 and 78. Modifying the *Church Order* is no insignificant matter. Careful study must be made of the history. Are the amendments necessary? Classis West has examined the overtures and recommends approval. That Rev. Kuiper's cover letter to synod indicates he was presenting three overtures, but that only two appear in synod's agenda, may indicate that classis convinced him to withdraw one. That is the Reformed way: From consistory to classis to synod.

#### *Friday, June 15*

Especially by this time, the men may be wondering whether synod can wrap things up before the weekend. With the examination of a student taking so much time, that does not usually happen. Work is done with an eye on the clock, but not at the expense of patient deliberation.

Yet to be deliberated on is the work of *foreign* missions, and the labors in the newly organized congregation in the Philippines. With Missionary Spriensma's acceptance of a call to a local congregation, Doon is busy calling another missionary for the work. The new congregation in the Philippines is active in church extension. One of the members also aspires to the ministry, and is seeking admission to the PRC Theological School. The FMC recommends hearty thanks to Missionary Spriensma and his family for their work in the Philippines.

The Theological School Committee reports on the status of the current students, the work of each professor, and the receipt of significant bequests. The TSC proposes a budget. Most significantly, the committee reports that five new students have applied for admission for the upcoming school year. Synod must approve their admission. Four PRC students, and one from the Philippines. How good! The Lord gives laborers! Many of them! In the next four years, there-

fore, *nine* new men may be graduated for labor in the PRC. Let us ask the Lord of the harvest to show us the work He calls us to do before He comes!

Prof. David Engelsma has been asked by the TSC, and has consented, to delay his request for emeritation until Synod 2008. The TSC and Prof. Engelsma's colleagues desire him to continue to use his gifts (and continued health) for the benefit of the seminary and the development of theology through his writing for one more year, full time. This would also allow Prof. R. Cammenga, who is replacing Prof. Engelsma, another year for the transition to the full load of teaching, and for finishing his Th.M. work. The churches may be thankful for this willingness of the brother who, though he has been laid low by three significant surgeries in the past few years, continues to labor with vigor.

#### *Friday evening, June 15?*

And who may forget other labors to be examined, to which men devote much of their lives in obedience to Jesus Christ? The work of Rev. Haak and the radio broadcast of the Reformed Witness Hour. The Stated Clerk's report. There are yet reports from the Emeritus Committee (minister's retirement), the Seminary Student Aid Committee, the Catechism Book Committees, the material of each classis, and the whole budget for 2008. The delegates also must elect men to take up new terms on the denominational committees.

Can Synod finish by Friday bed-time? You may be sure the men will try.

You may be more certain the men will pray for wisdom to do justice to the work. It's the Lord's work. Pray for them.

Pre-synodical worship service. Trinity PRC. Hudsonville. June 11. 7 P.M.

Let us fill Trinity's sanctuary. And balcony. 

### Ominous Signs of Coming Assault on Canadian Churches

This year Canada observes the twenty-fifth anniversary of its adoption of the "Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms." This document has a nice sounding title, but it provides the sincere child of God and the faithful churches in Canada little reason to celebrate. For, rather than protecting religious freedoms, the Charter repeatedly and increasingly has been used by courts and human rights commissions to infringe upon our religious liberties and to create "rights" and privileges for certain special interest groups.

Recently a perceptive journalist detected what may well develop into a serious attack upon conservative Christian churches and other religions as well. This attack would appeal to the Charter's requirements for inclusion and equality. Deborah Gyapong reports in *Canadian Catholic News*, January 31, 2007, warning churches to remain vigilant:

A prominent Canadian public intellectual has set off alarm bells for suggesting the Catholic Church and other religions that don't comply with so-called Canadian values should lose their charitable tax status. Daniel Cere, who heads the McGill University Institute for the Study of Marriage, Law and Culture, sees "troubling features" in the "growing conversation about religious freedom" in Canada, especially in an article in the Fall 2006 edition of the *Literary Review of Canada* by Janice Gross Stein, a political scientist who directs the University of Toronto's Munk Centre for International Affairs.

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*Rev. DeVries is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Wingham, Ontario, Canada.*

Entitled "Living Better Multiculturally," and headlined "Whose values should prevail?" the essay raised a series of questions about multiculturalism and religious freedom, when religions have values that go against what Stein described as Canadian values or Charter values. Focusing on equality for women, she wrote mostly about her own conservative Jewish synagogue and her efforts to change its traditional attitudes towards women. She questioned whether religions like her own should get charitable tax breaks.

"If religious institutions are able to raise funds more easily because governments give a tax benefit to those who contribute, are religious practices against women a matter only for religious law, as is currently the case under Canadian law, which protects freedom of religion, or should the values of the Charter and of human rights commissions across Canada have some application when religious institutions are officially recognized and advantaged in fundraising?" she wrote. "Does it matter that the Catholic Church, which has special entitlements given to it by the state and benefits from its charitable tax status, refuses to ordain women as priests?" she asked. "That's new," Cere said. Five years ago, any mention of charitable status would have been a taboo topic, but now a mainstream public intellectual is talking about using the courts, the "weapon of rights" to pressure religions to conform to so-called Canadian values....

...Constitutional lawyer Peter Lauwers said Stein's article reveals her as a "convergence liberal." "Convergence liberalism says that pluralism is an accident that is going to be erased by the flow of time," he said, describing a "brave new world in the future where we all think the same...."

...The Stein article, Lauwers said, is advocating the abrogation of freedom of religion as we understand it. "Freedom of religion

is about creating social space in which religious bodies can be themselves." "The role of the state is not to impose its views about religion on anybody," he said, noting religious issues are to be worked out within the community of faith.

Lauwers said Stein "crossed the line" in advocating the power of the state to force change on religious bodies. "The state is no longer being neutral but coercing religious bodies." He warned convergence liberals might also want to see the power of the state used against those religions that advocated traditional marriage or opposed abortion and euthanasia....

Ted Byfield, a bold columnist on religious issues, commends reporter Gyapong and comments on her article in *The Calgary Sun*, February 11, 2007. He explains how this attack will likely unfold:

From her account, the following scenario becomes probable. The human rights movement is now preparing a direct attack on its toughest and most unyielding enemy, notably the conservative Christian churches who have stubbornly opposed the two greatest human rights "achievements" of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century: The legal acceptance of abortion on demand, and the public acceptance of sodomy as an "alternative lifestyle." The rights crusaders will now insist, says Gyapong, that Canadian churches either stop preaching against abortion and the gay life and conform to the principles read into the Charter by the Supreme Court, or forfeit their long-established recognition as charities under the tax laws, and be deprived of their exemption from property taxes....

...Thus the line of attack becomes clear. Some woman with adequate academic credentials can be expected to apply to a Catholic bishop for ordination to the priesthood. Since the Catholic Church in Canada could not unilaterally

begin ordaining even if it wanted to, she will be refused. She will then take her case to the Supreme Court, most of whose judges were specifically chosen for their known support of liberal causes. So the court will order the church to ordain her and the church will have no choice but to refuse. This refusal will provide grounds for a suit against the church as a renegade institution defying Canadian law. That in turn will provide grounds to cancel its charitable status and remove its property tax exemption.

Further cases will then follow against Protestant churches that insist on basing their teachings on the Bible rather than on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Any church that yielded to such coercion would, of course, lose all spiritual credibility, as Professor Stein well knows. If, on the other hand, it defies the court, it will lose much financial viability. In other words, the ideological left has figured a way to deliver a grave blow to its most-determined enemies.

If this scenario plays out in the years immediately ahead, you have to wonder if the authors of this initiative really understand the devastation they would be causing, not to the churches but to the country. Canada in effect would be classifying those Christian churches that put the Bible before the Charter as undesirable institutions in this country, purveyors of an alien and contemptible teaching, that do not see the undeniable right of a woman to put to death her unborn child, or the inherent beauty of sodomy....

The obvious question is what, if anything, can be done to avert or withstand such an attack? Harry Antonides provides an answer in an article entitled, "Multiculturalism: The New Trojan Horse," which appeared in the March 14, 2007 issue of *Christian Renewal*. He suggests that we should see this as a historic opportunity; we should not just resignedly wait for the axe to drop. We

should prepare for a carefully thought-out strategic "counter-offensive":

I suggest that our times call for extraordinary measures, and we should be thinking of the kind of public address to the Canadian government and people in which the best Christian apologists compose a clearly-written and substantive declaration of the Christian faith for our times.

We should be thinking of the sort of public summation contained in Augustine's *City of God* (A.D. 426), John Calvin's address to the king of France in 1536, and the Barman Declaration of 1934 (German churches' rejection of Nazi ideology). All of these historic documents had in common a rejection of the then prominent paganism and a rearticulation of the Christian faith and its relevance for those times.

They were written in times of great turmoil and impending civilizational upheavals. We now live in such times, and they call for a similar kind of response.

Who will take on such an assignment? How do we break through the existing barriers and divisions within the Christian community itself? By not concentrating on them, but by building on the sort of cooperative alliances that have quietly been built among a variety of Christian leaders and institutions in this country.

The three things required to bring the participants in this project together are an unapologetic commitment to the historic Christian faith, insight into the spiritual/moral conditions of our culture, and a desire to serve the well-being of our nation at this critical juncture.

The envisioned declaration/-address to the government and citizens of Canada needs to be of high quality, depth, and eloquence, so that even its critics will want to read it.


It should contain the following: (1) A robust articulation of biblical religion; (2) An in-depth analysis of the secular forces now shaping our culture; (3) An introduction into the relevance of bib-

lical teachings for the right ordering of a free and open society.

Finally, the tone of this public document must not be one of anger and revenge, but one of love and servant-hood. It must reflect the truth that Christ did not come to condemn the world but to save it (John 3:17).

Brother Antonides deems it necessary to "break through the existing barriers and divisions within the Christian community" in order to compose "a clearly-written and substantive declaration of the Christian faith for our times." In this instance the end certainly does not justify the means. Making use of a false ecumenism for the sake of combating a potential blow to religious freedom in Canada is certainly not legitimate.

Besides, how substantive could such a declaration be? I believe he is sorely mistaken when he suggests that this cooperative effort by the Christian community would result in a "robust articulation of biblical religion." Certainly the large mainline Canadian churches, but also many other evangelical and even "Reformed" churches, have already compromised or completely capitulated on many moral issues as well as doctrinal truths.

A clear, bold, biblical (Reformed) testimony to the powers that be and the Canadian populace that a church might submit must necessarily set forth the principles of Scripture regarding such issues as marriage, divorce, remarriage, abortion, homosexuality, capital punishment, euthanasia, gambling, unionism, discipline of children, and others. Sad to say, but little sympathy would be evoked from government or populace. Few politicians in Parliament show strong moral or spiritual conviction. And recent surveys estimate that only 35 percent of Canadians attend a religious service at least once a month. Clearly such a testimony would be a cry in the wilderness. And it may well itself be condemned as "hate literature." 

# Wind


**W**ith the sound of a rushing mighty wind from heaven, they were all filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:2-3). Fitting that on Pentecost the ascended Jesus poured out His personal Spirit into the hearts of His people as a powerful wind. Wind is an agent God uses to accomplish His good pleasure. No human being can direct from where it comes or to where it goes—it blows where it listeth (John 3:8). But God creates the wind (Amos 4:13) and brings it forth from His treasures (Ps. 135:7). He gathers the wind in His fists (Prov. 30:4). The stormy wind fulfills His word (Ps. 148:8). At His command, it raises waves upon the sea (Ps. 107:25), and in the spring, wind causes frozen waters to flow (Ps. 147:18). Therefore to the question asked of Jesus, What manner of man is this that even the wind obeys him?, we respond, “He is truly God!” (Mark 4:41).

Wind is a powerful agent of God that always accomplishes His will. Mighty angels must hold the four winds of the earth. With those four winds, God brings to the earth heat (Luke 12:55), drives away rain (Prov. 25:23), brings relief (Exod. 10:19), and storms (Ezek. 27:26). With a strong east wind, He brought seven years famine and locusts upon the Egyptians, and divided the Red Sea so Israel escaped on dry ground (Gen. 41:27; Exod. 10:13, 14:21). With another wind, he swept the locusts away and brought those watery walls thundering down on Pharaoh’s host (Exod. 15:10). With an east wind He showed He could provide enough flesh to feed Israel, but preferred to give them manna (Ps. 78:26). And by a west wind He once brought an end to three long years of famine in Israel (I Kings 18:45).

Wind is symbolic of God’s certain judgment upon the wicked. The ungodly are like chaff driven before the wind (Ps. 1:4). He that troubles his house inherits the wind (Prov. 11:29). They that sow the wind shall reap the whirlwind (Hos. 8:7), and the whirlwind shall scatter them (Is. 41:16). The hearts of the wicked are like trees blown in the wind (Is. 7:2). He whose faith wavers is like a wave of the sea driven by the wind (James

1:6), often tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14). And Jesus, the great stone made without hands, not only smashes to pieces the ungodly kingdom of man, but sweeps it away with His wind (Dan. 2:35; Rev. 6:13).

Wind is a personal agent of God. This explains why Scripture virtually identifies wind with angels. When the four winds of earth are unleashed at Christ’s command, the angels themselves are said to go forth slaying men and hurting earth and sea (Rev. 7:1-3; 9:13-15). When our Lord flies upon the wings of the wind, He rides upon an angel, His ministers of flaming fire (II Sam. 22:11; Ps. 104:3-4). Thus, when the wicked are driven as chaff before the wind, Jesus, the Angel of the Lord Himself, pursues them (Ps. 35:5). Wind is also a life-giving agent of God. Scripture even uses the same word for wind, and a person’s breath or spirit. Wind is the blast of God’s nostrils (Exod. 15:8). Thus, He made all things by the breath of His mouth (Ps. 33:6); He sends forth His Spirit and they are created (Ps. 104:30). And in the hand of God is the breath of mankind (Job 12:10), into whose nostrils He breathed life (Gen. 2:7).

Certainly fitting, then, that the ascended Lord returns to His church as a powerful wind—the personal Spirit of God given unto Him as the Angel of God. With that wind He must breathe His own new life into a people spiritually dead—so that when we receive that Spirit we receive Jesus personally. Although we pass as the flower before the wind (Ps. 103:16) and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away (Is. 64:6), nevertheless, He says, “Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live” (Ezek. 37:9). No human can direct or control that wind either, but He blows where God sends Him. And assuredly by Him all the elect are gathered from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (Matt. 24:31). Like the wind, He cannot be seen—but the effect is surely known in everyone born of that Spirit (John 3:8). Let us by that wind in our lungs, that life in our soul, that breath in our words, give thanks to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with praise and obedience, who came to us with the sound as of a mighty rushing wind. 

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## The Covenant of Sovereign Grace (7) or The Decisive Influence of the Reformation Gospel upon the Orthodox Doctrine of the Covenant in the Netherlands

**T**he preceding articles in this series have demonstrated that, very early in their history, the Reformed churches in the Netherlands confessed that the covenant of grace is governed by election. Election determines which children of godly parents are the objects of God's covenant grace, so as to be saved in the covenant. Election determines who the (true, spiritual) children of believers are, those to whom God referred when He said to Abraham, "to be a God...to thy seed after thee" (Gen. 17:7) and those whom the Spirit had in mind when He inspired Peter to proclaim on Pentecost, "the promise is...to your children, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39).

Election determines with whom God *establishes* the covenant by the gracious promise. Election determines with whom God *maintains* His covenant, according to the gracious promise. Election determines with whom God *perfects* His covenant in the day of Christ, by the power of the gracious promise.

Governed by election, the covenant of *grace* is a covenant of *sovereign* grace (which is a tautology).

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The Reformed churches in the Netherlands confessed that election governs the covenant in the "[Reformed] Form for the Administration of Baptism," which dates as early as 1574, and in the Canons of Dordt (1618/1619).

Confessing that the covenant is governed by election, the Reformed churches also confessed, whether explicitly or implicitly (and the Canons of Dordt make it explicit), that the covenant is unconditional—as unconditional as the eternal decree upon which it depends and by which it is ruled.

The confession of the unconditional covenant does not deny demands in the covenant, or the necessity of faith as the means of covenant membership, or the urgency of obedience to the law of God as the only way of covenant life and blessedness, or the reality of the dreadful curse of the covenant upon those who take God's covenant in their mouth, but refuse to walk with God.

But by the unconditionality of the covenant is meant that the grace, promise, and salvation of the covenant do not depend upon the work or worthiness of the member of the covenant, whether his faith, or his obedience, or his faithfulness. Covenant grace does not depend upon the member's work for the establishment of the covenant, for the continuance of the covenant,

or for the perfection of the covenant.

*The grace of the covenant towards humans, particularly children of godly parents, is not wider than the grace of the eternal decree of election.*

*The grace of the covenant does not depend for its efficacy in a member of the covenant, its continuation with a member of the covenant, or its realization in the everlasting salvation of a member of the covenant upon the member of the covenant himself.*

From its beginning in the uniting of the elect sinner to Christ by regeneration to its perfection in the vision of God at the resurrection of the body, the covenant is a covenant of *grace*. The covenant depends solely upon the grace of God, whose boundless and effectual source is election.

### Applying the Gospel of the Reformation

When they confessed that election governs the covenant, the Reformed churches in the Netherlands were simply applying the gospel recovered by the sixteenth century Reformation to the covenant. The gospel of the Reformation was the message of salvation by grace alone, apart from the works of the sinner. With one voice, the Reformation proclaimed that grace originates from, is directed by, and depends upon the eternal decree of election. The Ref-

ormation denied that either election or salvation is conditioned by any work of the sinner, including his faith. Therefore, the Reformation confessed that the sinner's justification is by faith alone, altogether apart from any work.

It belonged to the Reformation gospel that grace is effectual, or irresistible. Grace is as almighty as the divine will of which it is the expression. The grace that has its source in election always accomplishes the salvation of every human toward whom it is directed and in whom it begins to work. Grace is sovereign.

To apply the gospel of the Reformation to the covenant is to confess that election is the fountain of covenant grace, covenant blessings, and covenant salvation. It is, therefore, to confess a covenant of sovereign grace.

Surely, it is right to apply the gospel of the Reformation to the covenant!

Regardless how one conceives the covenant, whether as a cold contract, or as a vague "arrangement," or as a living, lively bond of fellowship in love, the covenant is a gracious provision of God. It is a gracious provision of God in Jesus Christ, for Christ is head, mediator, and surety of the covenant (Rom. 5:12ff.; Heb. 8:6; 7:22). In the blood of the cross is the covenant established and confirmed (Dan. 9:24-27; Luke 22:20; Heb. 9:11-28). In and by the covenant, God intends to give, and does give, the blessings of salvation that Christ earned by His death. The goal of the covenant—its perfection in the day of Christ—is the resurrection of the body and life everlasting in the new creation. The covenant is the new covenant of grace. It is the new covenant of grace in Christ.

Does not the gospel of the Reformation apply to *covenant* grace, *covenant* blessings, *covenant* salvation, and the *covenant* Christ?

Are the *covenant* Christ, *covenant* grace, and *covenant* salvation

"liberated" from the eternal decree?

And if so, what does account for the *covenant* Christ, *covenant* grace, and *covenant* salvation? Whence do they originate? Upon what do they depend? By what are they governed?

There is only one answer: the will and work of the member of the covenant. The will of the sinner is preferred to the will of God.

This is the answer of all those Reformed churches and theologians today who deny that election governs the covenant, thus refusing to apply the gospel of the Reformation to the covenant. Instead, they apply the "gospel" of the Roman Catholic Church, the "gospel" rejected by the sixteenth century Reformation, to the covenant. That this is indeed the case becomes evident in the crass teaching of justification by works by the theologians of the federal (covenant) vision, whose fundamental fault is their determination to cut the covenant loose from election.

### **Covenant and Election in Romans 9**

The Reformed churches of the Netherlands, in the glorious days now long past, when in their youth they went after God in the "love of [their] espousals" (Jer. 2:2), applied the gospel of the Reformation to the covenant. They applied the gospel of the Reformation to the covenant, because (to speak anachronistically) Scripture does. Scripture teaches that election governs the covenant. Scripture teaches that election governs the covenant in Romans 9. Romans 9 is not so much the chapter—the *inspired* chapter—on predestination as it is the chapter on the close relation of covenant and election. The relation is this: election governs the covenant. Election governs the covenant promise. Election governs covenant grace. Election governs the covenant children. Election governs covenant salvation.

Romans 9 is the answer—the *inspired* answer—to the covenant

problem: In light of God's covenant promise to Abraham, that He would be the God of Abraham's seed, how is it to be explained that so many of Abraham's physical offspring perished in unbelief? This is a problem that grieves godly parents and vexes Reformed theologians to this day: In light of God's covenant promise to believing parents, that He will be the God of their children, how is it to be explained that some of the children perish in unbelief?

Having acknowledged the perishing of many Israelites in verses 1-5, the apostle is constrained to deny, in verse 6, that "the word of God hath taken none effect." The "word of God" in verse 6 is the word of covenant promise to father Abraham, "I will be a God to your seed after you" (Gen. 17:7).

The explanation of the perishing of many physical descendants of Abraham, throughout the Old Testament and in the apostle's own day, is not that God's covenant promise "hath taken none effect" (v. 6), that is, that the promise failed. But this certainly would be the explanation if God's covenant promise was the salvation of every one of Abraham's physical offspring. In this case, God made His promise to every physical child of Abraham without exception. He promised Christ, the blessings of salvation, and eternal life to all of them alike. In making the promise to all, God had a gracious attitude toward all of them alike. He sincerely desired their covenant salvation. At their circumcision, He actually established the covenant of grace with them all. The consequent unbelief, wickedness of life, and everlasting damnation of many of them would then represent the failure of the covenant promise. In the language of the Authorized Version, the word of God has "taken none effect" with regard to many children of Abraham. Specifically, it took none effect with regard to Abraham's profane grandson, Esau.

It makes absolutely no difference that one objects that the reason why the promise, made to all alike, has failed is that it was a conditional promise, depending for its efficacy and realization upon the works of the children. Then the promise failed because of the failure of the children to perform the condition. But the fact remains that the promise failed. It did not give what it said it would give. It did not do what it said it would do. Quite literally, the covenant promise of God took no effect. In the rough, but understandable, talk of everyday life, the promise did not deliver the goods. God had said to and about these particular chil-

dren who perish, specifically Esau, "I will be your God, and you will be my people." But to all eternity, He is not their God, and they are not His people. His promise was empty words. It was worse. It was false.

Indeed, recourse to the conditionality of the promise to explain the perishing of many who were once the objects of the gracious covenant promise—as much the objects of the gracious covenant promise as those who are finally saved, according to the defenders of the universal, gracious, but conditional covenant promise—exposes the promise as impotent, utterly

impotent. The promise has no power in itself whatever to realize what it promises. It is merely as strong as the children upon whom the promise depends for its efficacy and realization. Whatever power the promise may have is, in fact, that of the children upon whom the promise depends.

No wonder that the word of God's covenant promise has failed in multitudes of instances!

No wonder that the word of God's covenant promise failed specifically in the case of Esau!

The marvel is that this conditional, inherently powerless promise saves anyone.

... to be continued. 

*Marking the Bulwarks of Zion*

*Prof. Herman Hanko*

## Modern Heresies: Errors in Covenant Theology (3)

### Introduction

**P**rof. William Heyns developed a doctrine of the covenant that is held widely in Reformed circles at the present time. This view is a kind of adaptation of the doctrine of common grace and the well-meant offer of the gospel to the sacrament of baptism and the promises of God made at baptism.

It was Heyns' contention that all children of believers are objectively in the covenant, possess objectively the promises of the covenant, receive grace in baptism to accept or reject the conditions of the covenant, and enter the cov-

enant subjectively as full heirs of the grace of life only upon fulfillment of the conditions.

In Presbyterian circles, Lewis Bevens Schenck has shown in an excellent book that the Presbyterian view of the place of children in the covenant of grace was sound and biblical in early Presbyterianism, especially, though not exclusively, in America (Lewis Bevens Schenck, *The Presbyterian Doctrine of Children in the Covenant: An Historical Study of the Significance of Infant Baptism in the Presbyterian Church in America*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940). It is his contention that a correct view of the place of infants in the covenant was altered significantly by New England theology as set forth primarily by Jonathan Edwards, and was adversely influenced by the New England revivals during the time of Edwards and George Whitefield.

But our chief concern is with the line of Reformed theology.

### Consequences of a Conditional Covenant

This view of a conditional covenant has had serious consequences. I mention a few of the more serious ones here.

It has led to a serious denigration of the importance of the covenant in the life of the church and the people of God. The covenant, if it is a conditional compact or agreement, is not the heart of the great gift of salvation that Scripture claims that it is, but it is only a *means* to that salvation. It is the means by which God gives salvation only to those who accept the provisions of the covenant and fulfill the conditions; but it is not itself salvation.

The covenant of grace is, therefore, as far as its central character is concerned, nothing but a general promise to all who are baptized that, if they fulfill the conditions of the covenant, they will be saved. The covenant is reduced to a con-

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ditional promise, rather than being the essence of salvation itself.

A very serious consequence is that sovereign election, as it stands related to the covenant, is denied. If the covenant consists of a conditional promise to all, election does not control the covenant and does not determine who are in God's covenant and who are not. Those who hold to the view of Prof. Heyns insist that election has nothing to do with the covenant and must not be considered in connection with any discussion of the covenant.

But ultimately no one can deny that the covenant is salvation. And the result is that those who hold to a conditional covenant hold also to a conditional salvation. And if they are forced to consider election (as Scripture compels them to do), they are driven to a conditional election. All those baptized are said to be elect. Thus election is conditional and not determinative for salvation.

Such conditionality introduced into the covenant is an introduction of pure Arminianism into the doctrine of the covenant. The sovereignty of God in the work of salvation through Christ is denied and the covenant blessings are made dependent on the will of man, freed to make his choice for or against the covenant by a general grace imparted to him when he was baptized.

One can see at a glance how such a position compels one to deny all the five points of Calvinism. Eternal election as the fountain and cause of faith is discarded. A general atonement as the judicial ground of a general promise becomes a necessity. Total depravity is lost in the wilderness of this general grace given to all. Grace is resistible. Those once heirs of the promise and perhaps themselves elect can lose their salvation and election. Nothing is left. Only Arminianism and salvation by the will of man.

### **Justification by Faith and Works**

An extremely important consequence of the idea of a conditional covenant is the denial of justification by faith alone. This implication of a conditional covenant was popularized by Norman Shepherd (Norman Shepherd, *The Call of Grace: How the Covenant Illuminates Salvation and Evangelism*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 2000).

We will not go into this recent development in this connection. The controversy over the doctrine of justification by faith rages fiercely in the church world, and much has been written on it, also in our own Protestant Reformed Churches, in which the connection between a conditional covenant and the heresy of justification by faith and works has been clearly shown. I will make only one comment. If the fundamental doctrine of the covenant as the great and glorious salvation of the elect is made conditional, then all salvation is conditional. If all salvation is conditional, then justification is conditional. Then justification is not any longer by faith alone, but is conditioned on works, particularly the works of obedience. But then, too, the whole heritage of the Protestant Reformation is lost. Then the way is paved to return to Rome's Pelagianism and idolatry.

### **The Truth of God's Covenant**

Although the truth of an unconditional covenant has been held by Reformed theologians from the Reformation to today, an unconditional covenant was always difficult to maintain when the covenant is defined in terms of a compact or agreement. We have the fathers of our own denomination to thank for their development of the truth of God's covenant. This truth of God's covenant has given the Protestant Reformed Churches their unique place as a separate denomination in the ecclesiastical world.

Herman Hoeksema saw clearly that the theologians who had considered the idea of the covenant as a bond of friendship and fellowship were correct, and that such a conception of the covenant could not be maintained along with the idea of the covenant as an agreement. The latter had to be abandoned.

The total abandonment of the covenant as an agreement was not as difficult as it might seem, for, on the one hand, there was no evidence in Scripture for such a conception of the covenant, and, on the other hand, a closer examination of the covenant of works, which really determined the character of the covenant of grace, revealed that a covenant of works was nowhere taught in sacred Scripture.

A brief summary of the truth of God's covenant as taught in Scripture would include the following elements.

1) God's covenant is a bond of fellowship between God and His people in Christ, in which God takes His people into His own triune covenant life and dwells with them in a bond of peace and love as a husband dwells with his wife in the unity of one flesh.

2) God created Adam to live in such fellowship with Him, and God and Adam communed together at the foot of the tree of life. But Adam fell and alienated himself from God. He, as the head of the entire human race, became a covenant breaker. But God maintains His covenant, for He is always faithful. He maintains it with Adam and with all the true human race, the elect chosen eternally in Christ.

3) God was and is always sovereign. Adam had to be moved aside as the figure of Him who was to come, our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the covenant of grace would be fully and perfectly realized with the elect.

That covenant, rooted in eternal election, is solely God's work. God determined it from all eternity. God establishes it with His


elect in the line of continued generations. God maintains it by His sovereign grace and in His own faithfulness. God perfects it in heaven when the tabernacle of God will be with men. The covenant is one-sided, unconditional. The sovereign work of God alone.

This covenant includes in it the elect and their elect seed in the line of generations.

The Calvinism developed by the reformer of Geneva and set down in creedal form in the Canons of Dordrecht as the great bibli-

cal truth of the sovereignty of God in the work of salvation is now applied consistently and fully to the truth of the covenant. The two doctrines come together in perfect harmony in the organic unity of the truth of Scripture as confessed by the church.

The view of the covenant as a compact or agreement is such a cold and mechanical doctrine that it has no intrinsic appeal at all. But the biblical truth of the covenant between God and His people in Christ as a unity of friendship and

fellowship is warm, pulsing with life, moving the believer to doxologies of praise to the God of our salvation. It inspires every pilgrim in this world to seek the end of life's journey, the day when the tabernacle of God will be with men and He will dwell with them and be their God and they will be His people. It will be the full realization of God's covenant when God will wipe away all tears from their eyes and God will be praised forever for the greatness of His love and mercy. 

*Search the Scriptures*

*Rev. Ronald Hanko*

## *The Prophecy of Malachi Covenant Faithfulness and Unfaithfulness (16)*

### **The Sixth Disputation: Chapters 3:13-4:3**

13. *Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee?*

**T**his last main section of the prophecy of Malachi is more general than what precedes. Its purpose is to make a distinction between God's people in Israel and the unrepentant wicked. It speaks, therefore, of the spiritual difference between these two groups, of how that difference is manifest in the conduct of each, and of how each group will be blessed or cursed by God.

This distinction between two groups in Judah is, however, to be traced back ultimately to God's

eternal decree of election and reprobation as that is set forth in chapter 1. It is not just due to the fact that one group was repentant, loved the name of the Lord, and obeyed Him, while the other group was hard-hearted, unrepentant, and sneered at God's Word. That would mean that the difference is one of works. Instead, the difference lies in the fact that God eternally and exclusively loved Jacob and hated Esau.

That love of God for Jacob did not include all of his descendants. There were many in Judah who were spiritual Edomites. They behaved like Esau, and were counted by God as his descendants, not as Jacob's. They would, then, be dealt with by God as Esau was. For them there would be no place of repentance (Heb. 12:17). They would be rejected by God (Heb. 12:17) and would be far off from the blessings of His covenant (Gen. 27:39). What they built, God would tear down, and they would be

called "The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation forever" (Mal. 1:4). So it is with all those who prove themselves the spiritual descendants of Esau, though they be born in the lines and families of God's people and of His covenant.

In this opening verse of the section, God speaks again of their stubborn impenitence. Always they resisted His Word. Never did they see themselves as the object of God's rebukes and threats. Endlessly they excused themselves. And even when God through Malachi rebuked them for this stubborn impenitence, they refused to see that they had done any wrong.

Nor is it ever any different. It is not only the heathen who are guilty of impenitence, but always there are those in the church who, with a comforting sense of their own importance and righteousness, never see themselves as the sinners described and admonished

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in the Word of God. Though they will make a vague and general confession of sin and acknowledge the truth of total depravity, they forever excuse themselves. When the admonitions of the Word are preached, they always think of someone else. When their sins are pointed out, they have a thousand arguments and always point the finger at others. When their children are accused of wrong-doing, they refuse to believe that their children could be guilty. No specific sins are ever confessed by them to God or to others. They do not know what it is to mourn for one's sins and to humble oneself before God. And if God presumes to judge them for their hard-heartedness, then immediately they are filled with complaints about Him, doubting His goodness and mercy, complaining of His injustice, and using that as a further excuse for their wickedness. How very near these sins are to all of us! If it were not for the work of the Messenger of the covenant and of His Spirit, there would be no one at all who does not come under the condemnation of these words of God through Malachi.

These Israelites were exactly like their fathers, and so are all who follow in their footsteps. God, through Ezekiel, had spoken against them long before this by saying to Ezekiel (33:30-32):

Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the LORD.

And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.

And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that

hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.

The Jews of Malachi's day, Malachi says, resisted God with their words. Those words are recorded in the last part of verse 13 and in verses 14 and 15. Those words included words that expressed their doubt concerning the applicability of God's Word to them. They included charges against God Himself and excuses for sin, but all those words were only the outward manifestation of hard, unregenerated hearts. In that, too, there is a warning for us. Such words of excuse, of doubt, of complaint, the evidences of hard-hearted and stubborn impenitence, ought never be found in the mouths of God's children.

Not only that, but their words had been spoken against the LORD, the God of the covenant, the God who had established His everlasting covenant with their fathers and who had repeatedly told them that covenant people must fulfill their obligations in the covenant and show by obedience, humility, and repentance that they are friends of the living God. This they had not done.

The word "stout" suggests that they had, at least in their own minds and hearts, "overruled" God and His Word. In truth they could not do that any more than they could rob God. This overruling of God must not be understood, then, in the sense suggested by one commentator who asks:

Can people actually overrule God? Of course they can. God has chosen to restrain his own actual sovereignty so as to give to human beings autonomy, which they must use for or against God.<sup>1</sup>

That is simply a denial of God's sovereignty and goes hand in hand with the wicked notion that salvation and damnation depend on the will of the sinner and not on the

eternal, unchangeable, and sovereign will of God.

That their words "overruled" God means that they justified themselves at God's expense and that, as far as they were concerned personally, the words God had spoken were defeated and gone. What a striking description of a very common sin! By excuses, by accusing others, by misinterpreting and misapplying the Word of God, by stubbornness, by disobedience, we "overrule" God's words to us, put them away from us, and set ourselves in His place as though we were rulers and lawgivers in our own right.

14. *Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?*

In these words, which God quotes from the mouths of the people themselves, the real reason for their hard-heartedness and impenitence comes out. It was, as is forever the case, the result of their covetousness. If there was no material profit in the service of God, they were not interested. They had tried the service of God and found it, in their estimation, profitless, and so they had abandoned it.

Like these covetous Jews are all the people, leaders, and followers who preach a health and wealth gospel, a "name it and claim it" gospel, and who are interested in the things of God only for what they can get out of it. They include those who seem to think that the name of Jesus is a kind of magic cure for all their earthly ills and who turn to Him only in their need for help with family troubles, sickness, and other trials. Included too are all those whose sole interest is enriching themselves, even if it is

1. Douglas Stuart, *Malachi*, in Thomas Edward McComiskey, *An Exegetical and Expository Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, vol. 3, p. 1376.

at the expense of the widows and the poor.

Nor are those who sell religious junk without blame. The books, the trinkets, the superficial piety they sell make merchandise of the gospel and are an abomination in their shallowness and silliness. WWJD bracelets, miracle anointing oil, genuine pewter pocket tokens, and a thousand other such things are not only as silly and superficial as the relics of Roman Catholicism but become a substitute for God's Word, for the true worship of His Name, and for repentance and holiness.

Nor are these sins that far from us. When we turn to God only in our need, as though He exists only to give us what we ask, we are equally guilty. When we are disappointed that our efforts and service do not bring us praise and are not noticed, we are no different than these Jews. When we are discouraged because our service of God brings no earthly advantage or profit, we fall under the condemnation of this word.

When these people said: "It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?" they meant what many mean today: "No one notices what we have done. No one praises us for our obedience. God doesn't love us in spite of the fact that we have

served Him. The proof is in the troubles He sends us. He cannot be a just and righteous God. What is the matter with Him anyway?"

The truth is that there is no profit in the service of God, not in the strict sense of that word: nothing earned, nothing ever merited. What we do receive from Him is always more grace, and all of it undeserved. Even the reward promised in His Word to His people is only grace upon grace. Yet that grace in its abundance and blessing puts the lie to those who think that the service of God is vain. It is the way of everlasting peace, eternal wealth, and reward beyond what we would ever ask or think.

15. *And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.*


Verse 15 continues their haughty complaint. The Jews were suggesting that the heathen, who did not serve God, were happier than they were, though idolaters; that the prosperity of these heathen was proof that it was of no account to fear and obey God; that God was building the heathen up while tearing Judah down. The proof of it all, according to these Jews, was that the heathen escaped any punishment for their wickedness.

This, too, is often suggested to-

day, though perhaps not in such blatant terms. When theologians speak of a love and grace of God for all, when they promote universalism in any form as many do, they are saying that there is no real profit in the service and worship of God. God loves everyone anyway. Nor do those who listen to such theologians miss the point of what they say. Their actions speak of the fact that they have understood the "gospel" that is preached today to mean that they can continue in their wickedness and unbelief. After all, God loves them no matter what. So it is that the urgency and seriousness of the gospel are destroyed.

Moore sums it up thus:

This atrocious insinuation, that God favored evil-doers, was the highest insult they could have uttered, and was that which, as it were, drove God to inflict His judgments upon them.<sup>2</sup>

Those judgments are not actually mentioned until chapter 4:1. God pauses before speaking of those judgments to describe the attitude of His redeemed people and of the blessings that they would enjoy in verses 16 and 17 of chapter 3. 

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2. T.V. Moore, *A Commentary on Haggai and Malachi*, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974, p. 165.

*Go Ye Into All the World*

## Foreign Mission Labors of the PRCA

Mr. Allen Brummel

### Organization of a Church in Manila

**T**he Foreign Mission Committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches once again presents a brief annual review of the foreign mission work being done by our churches.

Even though we have correspondence with various contacts in other countries, the focus of our work continues to be in the Philippines. We had opportunity to remain busy in the work of bringing the gospel and teaching through the faithful labors of our calling church (Doon PRC)

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and our missionary, Rev. Spriensma, until he left the field in February to take up his new labors as pastor of the Kalamazoo PRC.

The Berean Fellowship with whom our missionary, Rev. Audred Spriensma, had worked for several years brought a request to organize into a church to synod of 2006. This organization was approved and took place in November 2006. Even though the group has organized into an autonomous church, they requested that Doon council continue to be in contact with them in an advisory capacity. They also requested that the Foreign Mission Committee continue to labor with them in their area and elsewhere in the country.

#### **The Committee**

The Foreign Mission Committee meets once a month. The committee is made up of three ministers and six elders (or ex-elders) from our churches in Doon and Hull, IA and Edgerton, MN. The current members are James Andringa, Allen Brummel, Andrew Brummel, Rev. Steven Key, Brian

Kroese, Rev. Dennis Lee, Robert Mantel, Rev. David Overway, and Gene Van Bommel.

#### **The Calling Church**

Doon council continues to be the calling church for a missionary to the Philippines. They are in the process of calling a missionary to work in the Philippines with the Berean Protestant Reformed Church in the Philippines (BPRCP) and in other areas on the islands. They also stay in close contact with the BPRCP in an advisory role.

#### **The Philippines**

The BPRCP was organized with twelve families on November 20, 2006. The sacrament of baptism was administered and confessions of faith were heard. Along with Rev. Spriensma, a delegation from Doon and the Foreign Mission Committee was on hand to witness this historic and emotional event in the lives of the saints there.

Through Rev. Spriensma and the group at Manila, there was other mission work being done. Rev. Spriensma continued to give

instruction to a group of pastors in the Batassan Hills area and with a small group in Inayuan on the southern Island of Negros. The ongoing labors at Gabaldon have progressed well, with a new worship place under construction for their use. Rev. Spriensma continued to work with Vernon Ibe, with a view to his being trained someday for the office of minister of God's Word in the Philippines. In all this we have seen God's blessing.

The Foreign Mission Committee would like to take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude and appreciation to Rev. Spriensma and his family for their years of faithful labor on the Philippine mission field. We wish Rev. Spriensma God's blessing as he has now taken up labors elsewhere. We pray that God will provide a man of His choosing to take up the missionary labors that continue to await us in the Philippines.

We pray that God will continue to use the Protestant Reformed Churches to spread the good news of salvation to the far reaches of the world.

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## *“Whether They Will Hear...” (Domestic Missions)*

#### **Northern Ireland**

**T**hough the organization of a church is not the be-all and end-all of the work of missions, there's no denying that the reaching of that goal brings intense satisfaction to the parties involved—the members of the mission who ask for it, the calling church and the mission committee that evalu-

ate the request, and the synod that finally approves it. With respect to synod, that “intense satisfaction” was clear from the opening lines of its letter to the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland (CPRC), read at the occasion of their organization on August 2 of 2006. “It was with great joy and thankfulness to God,” the letter began, “that we, the Synod of the PRC in session June 16, 2006, were privileged to approve your request to be reorganized as the Covenant PRC in Northern Ireland.”

Synod did well to give expression to those sentiments. And we all do well to make them our own. Perhaps to read a little more of that letter will help us do that.

“We recognize,” Synod 2006 continued, “that this is the answer of the Great King of the church to your prayers offered during the past four years—prayers offered in hope and supplication when the possibility of reorganization seemed remote indeed. But in His faithfulness the King of the church has rewarded your persistent

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*Mr. Don Doezeema*

May 15, 2007/Standard Bearer/377

prayers and perseverance in truth, and blessed abundantly the faithful, energetic labors of your missionary-pastor Rev. Angus Stewart, in a way surpassing human expectations. And so you stand this day ready to be organized once again as a congregation manifesting the body of Christ and representing the Reformed faith in your fair land. We rejoice with you in gratitude for what God, in His great mercy and goodness, has done for you."

And then, this prayer: "...may the Word go forth from you to bring many throughout the United Kingdom to stand with you in the cause of the blessed truth of the gospel."

And this expectation: "We look forward to a rich relationship of fellowship and of mutual encouragement as we together await the return of our Lord and Savior."

The prospect of "a rich relationship of fellowship" became, of course, the immediate concern not of the Domestic Mission Committee (DMC) but of the Contact Committee. God willing, the fruit of *their* efforts will be the establishing, soon, of a sister-church relationship.

The prospect of continued work for the PRC in missions in the British Isles, however, remains our (i.e., the DMC's) concern. And hardly would we think of activity in the British Isles *apart from* the CPRC. We were in fact instructed by Synod 2006 to investigate the possibility of such activity—in consultation with Hudsonville (the calling church for our former missionaries in Northern Ireland) and the newly organized CPRC NI. Earlier this year, therefore, Rev. Eriks (Hudsonville) and Rev. VanOverloop (DMC) went to Northern Ireland and discussed the matter with the CPRC consistory.

It came as no surprise to the emissaries from North America that the CPRC did not need to be urged to be engaged in missions.

She *was* engaged—not only within Northern Ireland but also across the southern border in the Republic of Ireland and across the water in Wales. And the development of their contacts at this stage, they believed, lay within their own ability to undertake. Neither the work in Limerick nor the work in Porthcawl had developed to the point where additional manpower from the PRC would serve a useful purpose.

For the time being, therefore, Hudsonville and the DMC plan to serve the CPRC only in an advisory role with respect to the work of missions in the British Isles. Truth is, we will be more than happy to render other assistance if the need arises. But we must say that we are pleased with the current state of affairs and acknowledge with a deep sense of gratitude the fruit that the Lord has given to our work in this place. In mission work in other countries, after all, we strive to establish truly indigenous churches, which are, among other things, *self-propagating*. Under the blessing of God, this has happened before our eyes in Ballymena. We are thankful.

### Home Missions

And then there's Pittsburgh. Nigh unto ten years we've had a presence here. And what do we have to show for it?

Looks, does it not, as if we go, in our reporting, from a success story across the sea, to something quite other on the home front.

But would you believe that the DMC's report to Synod 2007 regarding its work in Pittsburgh is...*upbeat*? Yes, the word means "cheerfully optimistic." And that's exactly what we are. We are as thankful to God for the opportunities He has been pleased to give us in Pittsburgh and eastern home missions during the past year as we are for the organization of a church in Ballymena and the potential for labor in the British Isles.

Forgive us for recalling a little

history here. 'Ancient' history, even—Synod 1942. That was a different day, of course, but there was, that year, some advice for home missions on synod's table that is as instructive today as it was 65 years ago.

The Mission Committee recommended that synod "instruct Fuller Ave. [First Church] to call a missionary." It happened that among those assigned to the advisory committee on mission matters at that synod was the pastor of "Fuller Ave." (Rev. Herman Hoeksema). If he was not the author of the advice with which synod was served, Hoeksema no doubt played a prominent role in its formulation. It read like this:

We may state that the opinion has been expressed by some that the present war situation makes the calling of a missionary at this time inadvisable. However, we feel that it is exactly these conditions that forcibly demonstrate the total inadequacy of any gospel that does not stand foursquare on the basis of the absolute sovereignty of God. It is the opinion of your committee, not only that the work of the kingdom may not come to a standstill whatever the world situation be, but also that these very serious times represent a challenge for us to declare the sure sovereignty of God whose blessing is upon His people, and whose curse is upon the wicked. We ought to be steadfast and unmovable, abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing—and keeping ourselves assured of this—that our labor is not in vain in the Lord. Brethren, in these times that try men's hearts, we must not be found retrenching and withdrawing, but moving forward. The word of the Lord to Moses challenges us: "Say unto the children of Israel that they go forward." We must testify of sin and grace, and hold forth the Word of God to the utmost of our ability also outside of our own denomination, whether men hear or whether they forbear.

In view of this we heartily urge Synod to instruct Fuller Ave.

to proceed to the calling of a missionary at once.

Note especially two things. First, “whatever the world situation...not be found retrenching...but moving forward.” Is it a time of war? Makes no difference. Or is it, perhaps, this: that we live in the end times, and in a country of people about whom it can be said with a great deal of truth that they once were “enlightened,” have once “tasted the good word of God,”...and have fallen away (Heb. 6:4-6). Makes no difference. Do not retrench. Move forward.

And then this: “...whether men hear or whether they forbear.” The command of Christ is, “Go.” We are privileged, as churches, to hold a rich heritage of the truth. And the church’s King says, “Go. Proclaim it. To the utmost of your ability. Also outside your own denomination. Whether men hear...or whether they forbear. Leave the results to Me. I will build My church.”

When we do that, in our own land, “to the utmost of our ability,” will there be many who will “hear”? Likely not. Rev. Bruinsma, in his annual report to synod this year, draws attention to the implications of Hebrews 6:4-6 for the work of home missions. “In general,” he says, “the people among whom I labor in our own country are nominally ‘Christian’ people. [They are] unbelievers who no longer attend any church.... God has cut them off in their generations.... That makes home missions hard.” Hoeksema said the same in a little syllabus that he wrote on the principles of missions. “So my conclusion is that although the church can and does witness, even to dead branches, the work of evangelism, as a work of mission, is without much fruit, because God does not return to the branches that are once cut off.”

To Hoeksema, however, that was no deterrent to missions. He could heartily urge Synod 1942 “to instruct Fuller Ave. to proceed to

the calling of a missionary at once.” Does apostasy abound? Yes. Are there dead branches lying all over the place? Yes. “Brethren, in these times that try men’s hearts, we must not be found retrenching and withdrawing, but moving forward.... We must testify of sin and grace, and hold forth the Word of God to the utmost of our ability also outside of our own denomination, *whether men hear or whether they forbear.*”

And our home missionaries today are doing exactly that. Rev. Bruinsma, in one of his bimonthly reports to his calling church and to the mission committee, testified that he is finding that his work “is so much more than trying to get people to join a mission.” “My task,” he writes, “is to sow the seed of God’s Word in Pittsburgh. I have to search out ways and means to preach the gospel [including, he explained, all forms of teaching] in as many places as I can within and around Pittsburgh.”

“...in as many places as I can.” It was almost with a sense of wonder that Rev. Bruinsma could report that, with respect to opportunities to bring the Word, “this past year God has been good to us in this way in Pittsburgh. I have been given opportunity to address a group of men who are unhappy with the trend they see in their Presbyterian churches. They have invited me to meet with them every month to continue to discuss issues with them. I have been able to preach for a couple of Presbyterian churches, one on a regular basis. I also teach a class in one of them every other week. The subjects of each class are of interest too: particular grace versus common grace, the Reformed view of the calling versus the well-meant offer of the gospel, unconditional versus conditional covenant, and more. God has opened doors for me in this past year to teach these beautiful doctrines of grace that He has entrusted into our care as churches.”

And that isn’t all. There was a

lecture in the spacious Heinz Chapel on the campus of the University of Pittsburgh, an address (on the sovereignty of God) at a businessmen’s luncheon, radio work, video-conferencing, writing of pamphlets, and preparing of correspondence courses for more distant contacts in the eastern states. In all of these Rev. Bruinsma was busy. And all of these, he says, “must go into our evaluation of the ‘success’ of the work on a mission field.” And, too, “all this makes the work of missions an exciting one worthy of our enthusiastic support.”

It has Southwest’s support. And the DMC’s. And, we trust, also yours. For this is the work of missions. This is obedience to the command to go, to proclaim, and to leave the fruit to Him who sends. Whether men hear, or whether they forbear. “I will build My church.”

Opportunities vary from community to community of course. Rev. Miersma does not find the same in Spokane that Rev. Bruinsma does in Pittsburgh. But he takes advantage of what opportunities there are—in writing, in developing a provocative and informative web page, in following up aggressively on all responses, and in giving thorough instruction to all who join the Fellowship. Visiting delegations from Loveland (the calling church) and the DMC were able to testify that there is evidence of “sustained interest in the Spokane community in the labors of the mission.” And Loveland can report to synod that they were “deeply impressed with the maturing in faith of the members of the group.” Having come, themselves, to know and to love the Reformed faith, as it has been taught to them by their missionary pastor, the members of the Covenant of Grace Protestant Reformed Fellowship in Spokane are actively, personally, reaching out to others. And out of concern for their children, and in good hope for the future, the core

group is working, even, to form a *school society*. This is encouraging.

Fayetteville, NC is another area that is given some regular attention in our home missions. Rev. Bruinsma, as eastern home missionary, travels there once a month. A member of the DMC visits the Protestant Reformed Fellowship of Fayetteville on a bimonthly basis. And recently we held a series of lectures in the area.

Fayetteville deserves, we think, more attention. Prominent among the reasons for not calling a man several years ago to labor in the south was...manpower—vacant pulpits in the PRC. The Lord willing, that may soon change. Given the vacancies, and the number of potential graduates from our seminary, we will soon have more men for the work than there are pulpits to be filled. And that can mean only one thing—that we will have the manpower, as we have also the financial resources, to be far more active in the great work of missions. That's humbling. Who, after all, are *we*, the PRC, to deserve so grand a privilege? And it's exciting. What, after all, could be *more* exciting than the prospect of that kind of service to the Lord of the harvest?

### Sioux Falls

It's that prospect that makes us glad also for work in Sioux Falls, SD. As most of our readers are aware, this activity is of recent origin. Its beginning was unique in the history of this committee. Often in the past our 'investigation' of an area was in response to a request for help from individuals who had discovered the Protestant Reformed Churches and found themselves attracted to their doctrines. If such a request can be viewed as a "Macedonian call," the "Come over and help us" would certainly be understood to mean "Come over and make *us*, and this community, the objects of a Protestant Reformed mission endeavor." From Sioux Falls we received a "Come over and help us" of a different sort. The


request came from a small Bible Study group, the members of which were *already Protestant Reformed*. They needed not therefore to be instructed in the faith and practice of the PRC. Protestant Reformed distinctives were already part of who they were. Their "Come over and help us," therefore, was a request for a denominational presence in their community, a work in which they were ready and willing to be *active*. A ready-made core group, if you will.

Though the request came as something of a surprise to the DMC, it did not arise out of the blue. The Bible Study that sent us the request was sponsored by the Reformed Witness Committee of the three area Protestant Reformed Churches—Doon, Edgerton, and Hull. The biweekly meetings of the Bible Study were led by Rev. Steven Key, pastor in Hull PRC. Those who attended were members primarily of Doon and Hull PRCs who live in Sioux Falls. The aim of the Reformed Witness Committee (RWC) was to try to draw others from the community to their fellowship. The RWC became convinced, at length, that potential in the Sioux Falls area was such that the increased activity that it warranted should "become the work of the churches in common" (cf. DMC constitution). Accordingly, the RWC addressed to the councils of the three sponsoring churches a request that the Bible Study group be "given permission to contact the DMC directly with a request for a laborer and support for this work."

Thus it was that we received the request, and, after sending a delegation from the DMC to visit the Bible Study, we decided to grant it. We found Candidate Clay Spronk willing to be the "laborer," and we found the Edgerton Council willing to oversee his preaching. The Spronks moved to Sioux Falls at the end of January and settled quickly into the work with what is now called the Heritage

Protestant Reformed Fellowship. A steering committee was appointed promptly—with various sub-committees that went directly to work. Newspaper advertising, developing of a web page, securing a supply of pamphlets, placing of signs for the location of worship services, following up with contacts, exploring possible use of radio and the Yellow Pages—if ever the expression "hit the ground running" applied to the work of a beginning mission, it fits here.

The DMC did and does indeed like what it sees there. Those in regular attendance at the worship services in the Ambassador Room of the Holiday Inn in downtown Sioux Falls number about thirty. Small—but a solid base for establishing a PR presence in a new community. A different beginning, surely. But is there a better way?

Included in the DMC's report to Synod 2007 is a recommendation that synod "approve the calling of a third domestic missionary, whose initial labors will center in Sioux Falls, South Dakota." Another recommendation is for the budgeting of funds for investigation of *other* new fields. We grounded that request, and conclude this *SB* article, with the following observation: "Serious search for possible 'new fields' must of course always be a priority for the church of Christ. But a sense of urgency is added to this responsibility when we consider that, given the number of potential graduates from our seminary in the near future, the Lord is evidently giving us men to expand our witness. This is a gift. Our local evangelism committees and our denominational mission committees are obliged, before the face of God, to be more vigorous than ever in their reaching out to others, so that we can continue to pray, in earnest, that the Lord of the harvest give *us* laborers to be sent forth into His vineyard (Luke 10:2). May there be many more Sioux Fallses." 

# She Girdeth Her Loins with Strength

## Management of the Household

**N**o, there is not alone *sickness* or *health*. There is still a *third* something. Something that lies in between "health" and "sickness," and that sometimes, already at an early age, follows us after as decline of strength: *weakness*.

"Nerves" it is called with one, "poverty of blood" with a second, with a third "exhaustion." But, by whatever it is caused, or to whatever cause it is attributed, the result is one. There lacks strength where strength ought to be. And the anxious feeling of not *being able* where one wants to do, comes back every morning, and to the exhausted man or woman continues as a plague until evening.

Especially woman, and not least married woman, *suffers* under this plague.

She became mother. What in Genesis 3 God laid upon Eve, that she should bring forth with sorrow, is also fulfilled in her. Thereby her constitution, not overstrong already, suffered the more. And now the activities of life became too much for her. It went more and more above her strength. And while she tried to row against the stream, she became more and more worn out, till at length the weary head became so heavy, and the arm she would stretch out fell almost helpless in her lap.

And though in this measure it is, thank God, the case with but a few, it is an almost *universal* phe-

nomenon that our housewives and housemothers, who are at the head of a somewhat busy household, frequently have no more strength of head and limbs for their difficult task of life, and that they themselves first, but also the family, and especially the children, suffer under this.

This distressing condition is even frequently aggravated by the fact that her daughters also lack freshness of vigor. So that, instead of supporting their weak mother, they themselves rather lean upon her.

And when the sons of the house also look pale, and need tonics and, instead of giving the impression of healthful virile strength, already at an early age begin to show shadows alongside of the unevennesses of the face; and also the man of the house complains; and as a climax of trial the very servants almost make you say that, as regards weakness of health, they are part of the family, in the end it becomes too much for "mother," as on her rests the heaviest part of the burden of family cares, and many a housewife is at length carried out to the grave, because her busy household, in addition to her weak constitution, it is not too hard to say, had literally killed her.



To the danger that threatens the housewife from this side, the Proverb-poet also had an open eye, and therefore of the virtuous housewife he writes, that: "She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms" (31:17).

Just what the psalmist sang of Jehovah, sang of the Lord of hosts, when he jubilated that our God had clothed Himself with majesty and strength, and presently focused it

all in this one note of joy: *He hath girded Himself*.

And because the Lord Himself "girdeth His loins," therefore it is He also who is able to stand by His beloved in their weakness, even as, in the very words of Solomon in Psalm 89:21, it is said to David: "With whom my hand shall be established; *mine arm also shall strengthen him*."

*To gird the loins* is the perception, the feeling, the sensation of increase of strength, till you say to yourself: *Now I am able again*. And *to strengthen the arms* is to bring this restored strength into the arms, not now to be idle but to apply this regained strength after the Lord's ordinance.

This virtuous housewife herself girds the loins, not merely when with advancing years she becomes conscious of failing strength, but while as the picture of health she still directs the affairs of her household.

Of course this is figurative speech, and has nothing to do with putting on of a corset to feel oneself more firmly attired.

This girding is not done with a girdle which externally is fastened around the waist, but with a girdle of *will-power* and *self-control* and *prudent exertion*, which is woven in the inner chambers of the heart upon one's knees before God.

An imagery, which tells you that this woman did not let herself will-lessly drift with the stream, did not let go of herself, and did not succumb under her task, but consciously controlled the task, took hold of herself, exerted herself, and regulated the expenditure of her strength. Also that she took care in time, that when the lamp had burned many hours, fresh oil kept the flame burning, before it would die out.

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*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.*



Not *complain* and *sigh*, but *pray* and *give thanks*, and with courage in the eye face the life of each new day, is the precious effect upon the busy housemother of *quiet trustful faith*.

For faith is to live, not from what one sees before one's eyes, but from what one does *not see*. Hence, after the rule that not the *body* must govern the soul, but the *soul* the body, and that in cautious wisdom of the *understanding* and in steel-strength of *will* the weak woman has been equipped of God with two mighty weapons wherewith to do battle against weakness.

Reports of healings by prayer are abroad again, especially in America. And the fact cannot be denied that by spiritual operations of faith, among Protestants as well as among Roman Catholics, remember Lourdes, healings have taken place that make you think of miracles.

And yet these healings are nothing but the effect of will-power inspired by faith, concentrated upon one single point, which will-power, with higher strength, reacts against the appearance that over against the body the soul stands impotent.

With cases of weakness one generally summons a physician, and who would despise the blessing of medicine. But it is a subversion of the divinely appointed order when the soul in you imagines that it stands impotent over against the body.

By all sorts of sins, also by unbelief, to a dreadful degree you can weaken your body and especially your nerves. But also by faith and a holier sense you can to so uncommon a degree strengthen this same body and these same nerves.

This is *girding your loins with strength*.

And the young married woman who begins this early; who, with the increase of her family, uninterruptedly goes on with this, and never for a moment allows her family to run away with her, but calm and "strong in prayer" prepares

herself for her task, will obtain the glorious experience that in the midst of the distractions of a busy family-life, godliness has a blessing also for her physical powers.

She who has neglected this and for years has brought her will into bondage to her nerves, and thus in old age reaps the bitter fruit of this, is of course not able to restore this wasted power by a single act of will.

But even then, it still holds true that girding the loins with strength, by serious, prayerful exertion of faith, is the only means to come away from under it. Even in such almost hopeless conditions, faith *never* refuses its strength-restoring operation.



Does this mean to say that now the weak housemother may withdraw herself in the mystery, and neglect the outward means of support?

Of course not, for then it were purely the operation of the feeling and no health, working faith.

No, faith knows *how* to apply means.

It knows that God Himself has not merely foreordained salvation for His elect, but at the same time and in that same counsel has ordered the *means of grace* to bring about the salvation.

With mystery it must begin, but it must not stop therewith.

*Faith* fosters *wisdom*, which is something altogether different from school learning found in books.

You can so plan your household and so direct it, as to show lack of wisdom. But you can also do all this in such a way that wisdom *shines out* from it.

There can be exhausting activity and confusion and disorder. But there can also be good rules, fixed procedure, steady direction, and thereby beneficent order.

And in the measure in which this prevails in your household shall the use of your strength be either a wasting of the same, or a harnessing and effective application thereof.



Your strength is a gift of God, a *talent* entrusted to you.

This strength, this talent, must not remain what it is. It must be put to usury. Gains must be won by it. It must increase. And before God you must be able to say: "Three talents hast Thou given me. See, Lord, three other talents have I gained therewith." And though as regards strength you received but one talent, yet this one talent must not be buried but must be *doubled*.

But whether it is only just received, or whether it is already doubled by faithful discharge of duty, you must be sparing in the use of it.

It must not be *played with*. It must not be *wasted*. Self-control must direct all your doings.

There is division of time. There is division of the daily task. There is division of what you charge others to do. Not the woman who rushes along with things all day long and wears herself out, but the woman who, calmly seated in her armchair, plans the daily run of the household and tactfully directs its course serves her God in her carefulness and radiates blessing in all her environment.

Even the matter of sleep, which increases strength, and regular meals, which feed the body, are to the believing woman parts of serious and regular performance of duty. She knows that the lamp which receives no oil gives out, and the hearth that is not continuously replenished. And therefore also sleep and feeding are no play with her, but a part of performance of duty and of obedience to her God.

To surrender a part of her housekeeping cares, that the whole slip not out of her hand, may at times be a demand of faith.


Nothing by way of material aid is to be despised, provided it renders her service, and she does not lean on it.

Upon God alone she must lean, and upon that *spiritual strength* of soul which God has granted her.

She alone who believes, not sentimentally, but practically, shall

in this also be more than conqueror.

So in this struggle let the girdle

of faith be the mystery of your strength. 

## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Mission Activities

The PR Fellowship in Fayetteville, NC hosted the second lecture in their series of lecture-discussions on the subject of "Answering Postmodernism" on March 23 at the Wingate Inn Conference Room, with Rev. Arie denHartog, pastor of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI, as the featured speaker. Rev. denHartog spoke on the topic, "Is Church Membership Necessary?"

In a follow-up to our last "News," we are happy to report that Rev. Angus Stewart and the Covenant PRC in Northern Ireland were able to hold their lecture on "Homosexuality: What Does the Bible Teach?" in Limerick on March 23. Rev. Stewart writes that the meeting went well and passed without further trouble.

### Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of the Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI recently reported to their congregation concerning some of their work. Highlights include: bulk mailing a newsletter introducing Southeast to homes within 1/2 mile of their church; looking at the possible support of requests for translation of Reformed literature; considering using their church web site to gain more exposure for the service of providing audio versions of the *Standard Bearer* for the blind. (SE currently mails 28 cassettes each issue.) The Evangelism Committee plans to place audio versions of Rev. Langerak's sermons on their web site, and to put Prof. B. Gritters' recent sermon on "God's Calling of

the Church to Sing" into pamphlet form. They also report having filled several pamphlet requests, including one from Auckland, NZ, and Nigeria.

The Evangelism Committee of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI is planning their activities for this year around the theme: "Having a Heart for God." Among their projects will be revitalizing the Mission Board in their church lobby to show our denomination's current missions, as well as the persecuted church. The committee hopes to sponsor seminars and workshops for the congregation on equipping the saints to evangelize. They plan also to continue developing Georgetown's web page, with real time streaming of their church services for the future.

In an effort to invite family, friends, and neighbors to their Good Friday and Easter Sunday worship services, the Evangelism Committee of the Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL decided to print one thousand copies of their new invitation flyer in an effort to make it easier to invite others to Bethel's regular and upcoming special worship services. Bethel hoped to distribute these flyers by encouraging each family to pass out at least a dozen copies to family, friends, and neighbors. In addition, Rev. Mahtani and two other members of the Evangelism Committee placed over 500 flyers in neighborhood businesses and stores around Bethel a couple of weeks prior to Good Friday worship services.

### School Activities

The Internet continues to be of special concern for parents. What steps can be taken to ensure that our children are using the Internet correctly—and perhaps

even more importantly, safely? In an effort to answer these questions and to give guidance to parents in our schools, two groups recently provided some direction. First, the PTA of Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville met on March 8 to hear Rev. Rodney Kleyn speak on "Internet Use in Our Homes." Rev. Kleyn also provided a follow-up from that speech on the next weekly school memo by giving Heritage parents a list of resources that they could use to their benefit to equip themselves against the dangers of the Internet. Secondly, the Ladies Auxiliary of the South Holland, IL PR Christian School met on March 20 to hear Mr. Mike Feenstra, a teacher at South Holland, speak to them on, "The Awareness of Internet Communications for Our Use." Rev. Kleyn concluded his remarks on that school note by saying, "I realize that the Internet has many positive uses..., but as the potential for its good use increases, so also does its potential for harm to our homes, hearts and children.... If we leave our children to themselves in this wide world of the web, they will come to ruin and bring us to shame (Prov. 29:15). 'The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.'"

The students of Covenant Christian School in Lynden, WA presented their annual Spring Program on March 30 at Lynden PRC. Supporters of Covenant were invited to join the students as they spoke, sang, and gave a PowerPoint presentation on their theme, "The Beauty of the Lord."

The congregation of the Loveland, CO PRC was invited to stay after their evening service on April 1 to enjoy a program given by the Loveland PR Christian School Choir and Handchime Choir.

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

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Jenison, MI 49428-7137

## THE STANDARD BEARER

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### Young Adult Activities


The Young Adults of the Loveland, CO PRC once again hosted their annual Spring Retreat on March 19-23 at the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, CO. This year's retreat looked at the theme of "Contending for the Faith," with Rev. R. Miersma, pastor at Loveland, and Prof. R. Cammenga as the featured speakers. Rev. Miersma's speech on March 20 was entitled, "Contending for the Faith," and Prof.

Cammenga's speech the following evening was entitled, "Contending for the Life of the Faith."

### Young People's Activities

The Young People of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI sponsored their annual soup supper on March 22. In addition to the usual good menu of soup and salad, this year's supper featured a chili cook-off contest. If you had an old family favorite, or a secret chili

recipe, you were invited to enter the contest. Twelve participants did. To ensure fair judging of the different chili entries, Georgetown secured the services of Revs. Eriks, Kleyn, and VanOverloop.

The Young People's Society of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC sponsored a soup supper/gym night on March 24 at the gymnasium of Kalamazoo Christian High School. Supper began at 5:30 P.M. followed by gym activities at 6:30. 

## 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 resume 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.

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 5, 2007, Lord willing, our parents and grandparents,

**JIM and KAREN ANDRINGA**, celebrated their 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. We, their children and grandchildren, express our sincere appreciation to them for their godly example and for their covenantal instruction. We praise and thank God for His goodness to them and for the years He has blessed them together. It is our prayer that He will grant them many more years together. "He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations" (Psalm 105:8).

- \* Chad and Dawn Andringa  
Jaci, Shayna, Mandi, Silas, Shelby
- \* James and Tanya Haveman  
Tyler, Derek, Damon
- \* Rob and Candice Andringa  
Kaylie, Luke, Gavin

Sanborn, Iowa

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 27, 2007, our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents,

**CHARLES and LOIS KREGEL**, will celebrate their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. As we remember the many years God has given them together, we are mindful of His great covenant blessings to us their children—blessings of covenant instruction, of a godly influence, and of service in His church. May God continue to bless them in their remaining years together.

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

- \* Kenneth and Mary Velthouse  
Mike and Kathy Velthouse  
Erika, Samantha, Kayla  
Stefan and Kris Engelsma  
Matt and Mandy Velthouse  
Cassidy, Ashley, Kaitlyn  
Marc Velthouse
- \* Joel and Ellen Bruinooge  
Kevin and Heather Millman  
Derek Bruinooge  
Kyle and Audra Bruinooge
- \* Charles Kregel, Jr.
- \* David and Mary Kregel  
Bradley (in glory)  
Mike and Lisa DeBoer  
Jenna, Allyson, Troy  
Brent Kregel  
Jason and Jill Kregel  
Ryan Kregel  
Emily Kregel
- \* Laura Nickle  
Drew

Byron Center, 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.

Delegates in need of lodging should contact Mr. Hib Kuiper, 3391 8th Ave., Hudsonville, MI. Phone: (616) 560-7925. E-mail: hkuiper@1800lastbid.com.

Consistory of Trinity PRC  
Mr. Robert Drnek, Clerk.