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*Volume 83 ◆ Number 5*

# God's Laughter

*He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.*

*Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.*

*Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.*

Psalm 2:4-6

**H**eavenly, divine laughter! Laughter at the vain raging of the heathen.

How these heathen rage! Their rage is great against the Lord and against His anointed. This rage was great while the anointed of the Lord was upon the earth. When the light of God shined in the darkness, the darkness raged against it. The anointed came preaching and teaching, and the heathen raged to silence His voice. In the greatness of their rage the leaders of these heathen, wicked King Herod and

Pontius Pilate, conspired together to have Him crucified.

The heathen have continued to rage since God's resurrection of His anointed one. They still rage against Him who now sits at the right hand of God. The same rage with which they burned against the Lord they now carry against the Lord's anointed.

This heathen rage you must see in church history. You must behold it in the fires of persecution that consumed the people of God through so many generations. You must hear it with the names Nero and Diocletian. That rage you must hear in the stories of the Protestant Reformation, wherever kings and popes conspired to silence the word of salvation by God's grace alone. That rage is for you to know in the present. Behold it in the idols of wood and stone still worshiped in heathen lands. This heathen rage you must hear in Islam, in its rhetoric and in its assault on western civilization. You must hear it in the terrorists' explosions and in their gunfire.

In all this raging you hear a

very loud noise. More and more it fills the airwaves, newspapers, and magazines. More and more the din increases in your ears.



But we hear another sound beside that din. We give ear to it. It is a lovely sound, a voice most precious to us. Far different is this sound from the raging of the heathen. It is the voice of our God.

We listen to that sound. It holds our rapt attention. As we listen it grows far greater in our ears. Before this voice, all the raging of the heathen must fade to nothing. It is the voice of our God, who sitteth in the heavens.



Listen to the sound of that voice! You hear the sound of laughter, mighty laughter.

How can there be laughter? Is not the raging of the heathen a most serious matter? Does not its greatness cause us to tremble, feeling helpless before its power?

That voice is a voice of laughter because of the place of the Lord

*Rev. VanderWal is pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, California.*

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#### EDITORIAL OFFICE

*Prof. Russell J. Dykstra  
4949 Ivanrest Ave. SW  
Grandville, MI 49418  
(e-mail: dykstra@prca.org)*

#### BUSINESS OFFICE

*The Standard Bearer  
Mr. Timothy Pipe  
1894 Georgetown Center Dr.  
Jenison, MI 49428-7137  
PH: (616) 457-5970  
FAX: (616) 457-5980  
(e-mail: tim@rpa.org)*

#### Postmaster:

*Send address changes to  
The Standard Bearer  
1894 Georgetown Center Dr.  
Jenison, MI 49428-7137*

#### CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

*Mr. Ben Wigger  
6597 40th Ave.  
Hudsonville, MI 49426  
(e-mail: benjwig@juno.com)*

#### NEW ZEALAND OFFICE

*The Standard Bearer  
c/o B. VanHerik  
66 Fraser St.  
Wainuiomata, New Zealand*

#### UNITED KINGDOM OFFICE

*c/o Mr. Sean Courtney  
78 Millfield, Grove Rd.  
Ballymena, Co. Antrim  
BT43 6PD Northern Ireland  
(e-mail: cpraudiostore@yahoo.co.uk)*

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our God. He that laughs them to scorn sitteth in the heavens. His is heavenly power, heavenly glory, and heavenly majesty. His throne is established forever in the heavens.

Before the throne of His almighty power, the raging of the heathen is nothing. Their imagination is a vain thing. For to God alone belongeth power. His power is unlike the power of these heathen. His power is heavenly. His power is the only power, eternal and infinite. Any power these heathen presume to possess must melt away into utter weakness before the power of God's heavenly throne.

The raging of the heathen is folly. It is sheer vanity, pumped up to be something great. Their power they presume to be awe-inspiring. Awed by their own power, they suppose there is nothing they cannot do. By that power they will break their bonds asunder. By that might they will cast their cords from them. What great things they will accomplish, these heathen, in their rage!

All that pretense gives Him that sitteth in the heavens cause for laughter. What silliness is paraded before Him, the raging of these heathen! These are His creatures. The very air they breathe in their raging has come from Him. The very power by which they suppose to cast off their bonds is from Him.

He laughs!

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh them to scorn. The Lord shall have them in derision. The Lord will deride them. He laughs at their vanity. He mocks their pretended power. Let them rage. Let them conspire. Let them gather all their forces. Let them invent their most sophisticated weaponry. Let them turn it all against the Lord and against His anointed. Their loudest roar is a faint whine before Him. Let them

shout a little louder! Their greatest blast is as a pop of a firecracker. Let them come up with something greater for next time! Perhaps then it will have effect!

Then the Lord will speak. After His laughter, after His scorn, these heathen must feel the heat of His wrath. In His wrath He will speak. In His sore displeasure He will vex them.

That vexation will be a terrific blow upon the heathen. How they have raged! Yet all that rage is but the vanity of their imagination. Their imagination will come to nothing. They will surely be vexed. Before the wrath of God the raging of the heathen must fall silent. Before the sore displeasure of God the power of the nations is proved to be mere impotence.

Will these heathen learn? Will the nations willingly give up their rage? Will they admit the vanity of their imagination? Not at all. They will continue to be vexed. Though the mighty word of God sounds in their ears, and though they cannot turn it aside, that word never penetrates down to their heart. In their wicked hearts they still carry that rage. They will be vexed forever and ever.

What is the word that God will speak? What will He that sitteth in the heavens say to vex and trouble these heathen so?

That word, whatever it is, must be most beautiful and blessed to us. That word that shall so vex the heathen shall be our salvation. It must dissolve the rage that the nations carry out against the church of Jesus Christ. By that word we shall know the power of our God to redeem us.

God speaks the word, announcing the news. That news is about His Son. "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion."

My king! God has His own King. That King He has made, a King far more powerful than all the kings among the heathen. That King He has established, a King far wealthier than all the princes of all the people.

God has His own King that He has made. He is a King by whom all things were made, and for whom all things were made. By this King all have their being and existence. Him they serve. Even in their rebellion they serve Him.

This King is the very Son of Him that sitteth in the heavens. He is the only-begotten Son. He will declare His decree to His King: "Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee." The only-begotten Son of God has been given the throne. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. This King is also the great Son of David. He has been given according to the promise of God. He is the Savior of His people. One of them, He is also their King through the precious blood that He shed on the tree of the cross. This King has come near to us in His deep humility. Having humbled Himself to the death of the cross, and having purchased our righteousness by that death, He has now been given that most glorious place. God has established His King!

His throne is secure. His reign is everlasting.

Let the heathen rage. Let the people imagine a vain thing. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh them to scorn. The Lord shall have them in derision. For God has His King. His King He has set upon His holy hill of Zion.

This great, eternal King God has established in Zion, upon His holy hill.

That hill is God's. He has established that hill to be His very own. God is the Creator of every mountain and every hill. Every place upon the earth is His. But the hill of Zion is His in a peculiar

way. That hill is holy. The living, holy God has set that hill of Zion apart. He has separated it far from all other mountains and hills. Holy is that hill of God. It is the place He has chosen to make His dwelling place.

Part of the holiness of that hill is its purpose. Upon that hill God bestows His grace to His people. It is the city of God, the mountain of His holiness. It is the place where He lives among His people in covenant friendship. Here the holy God lives among His holy people. In them He shows the glory of His holiness. Living with Him on that holy hill, they worship His name and confess His truth.

By that worship and confession, the heathen know that hill of Zion. They know God's presence there on His holy hill. They turn in their rage against that hill to assault it. They try to destroy it by sword and fire. They try to turn it from the truth by every temptation

to apostasy. They attempt to level that hill by making it no different from the world.

But on that holy hill of Zion God has established the throne of His Son. He has spoken. It cannot be moved. It stands forever strong and sure, for God has established Zion. Upon Zion He has set the throne of His King. And God has given His King to His covenant people. He is their Savior and Redeemer. He is their Shepherd and Protector. With royal power He will defend and keep His own.



The almighty God sets His King upon the throne He has established in Zion, the hill of His choosing. That mighty act He declares to the heathen that rage. This deed He publishes to the people that imagine a vain thing. The heathen are vexed and the people troubled.

By that very same declaration are God's people comforted. This

glorious King God has given to be their own. By the blood of their King they have been redeemed. This King God has raised from the dead. The King now lives, to gather His own to Himself, by His Word and Spirit. He reigns in their hearts by grace. He rules over them in love.

Protected by our King, and loving His service, we rejoice to hear these words. The heathen appear great in our sight, causing us fear. But their rage must shudder and falter before the Lord's vexing rebuke. Their vain imagination must shatter before His sore displeasure. In that rebuke is our salvation. In the very sore displeasure of our God is our redemption. The heathen shall be utterly destroyed before the coming of the King set by God upon His holy hill of Zion. By that destruction is our freedom: freedom from fear, freedom to worship and serve our blessed King upon His holy hill of Zion.



## A Brief Introduction to the Emergent Church Movement (concl.)

**I**t is our contention that the Emergent church movement, for all its claims of presenting something new, a new perspective on the Christian faith—as in McLaren's *A New Kind of Christianity*—is not presenting something new at all. It is as old as twentieth century liberalism, be it in new

paint. The color in which they dress their instruction may be more hip, garish, and attractive to the contemporary eye (like an Elvis in velvet), but underneath is the same old lead-based painted instruction that served to deaden various Protestant denominations of the bygone century to begin with. The Emergent leaders, like their disowned predecessors, continue to call into question Scripture as reliable truth, its historical facts and doctrines if you will, and to question how any-

one can really be sure whether what he or his church sets forth is 'The Truth' in any area of the Christian faith and life.

As McLaren said in an interview, "Certainty is overrated.... When we talk about the word 'faith' and the word 'certainty,' we've got a lot of problems there. What do we mean by certainty?...Certainty can be dangerous." He much prefers "dialogue" and "disagreeing agreeably."

*Previous article in this series: November 15, 2006, p. 76.*

This has been the song and dance of the liberal theologians past and present. In the Emergent church movement, this beat goes on, be it more contemporary and hip, as they say.

What Rob Bell writes in *Velvet Elvis* (Zondervan, 2005) is representative.

Bell uses an interesting figure to describe what the doctrines of the Christian faith ought to serve as, likening them to large springs attached to a trampoline—teachings therefore that ought to serve to catapult Christians to heights of lively exhilaration and a sense of freedom (after all, The Truth shall set you free!); this in contrast to what twentieth century ‘modern’ evangelical Christendom has done to these doctrines—turning them into inflexible, immovable bricks in a wall; hence, Bell’s charging past mainline Protestantism with turning Christianity into “Brickianity”—a cute play on words.

The following makes his perspective clear:

Somebody recently gave me a videotape of a lecture given by a man who...said if you deny that God created the world in six literal twenty-four-hour days, then you are denying that Jesus ever died on the cross. It’s a bizarre leap of logic to make I would say.

But he was serious.

It hit me while I was watching that for him faith isn’t a trampoline; it’s a wall of bricks. Each of the core doctrines for him is like an individual brick that stacks on top of the others. If you pull one out, the whole wall starts to crumble. It appears quite strong and rigid, but if you begin to rethink or discuss even one brick, the whole thing is in danger. Like he said, no six-day creation equals no cross. Remove one, and the whole wall wobbles (p. 026).

The telling point is what Bell proceeds to use this figure to justify—namely, the dispensability of various doctrines, fundamental ones even, because, after all, a

trampoline can continue to function even with a few springs missing.

What if tomorrow someone digs up definitive proof that Jesus had a real, earthly biological father named Larry, and archaeologists find Larry’s tomb and do DNA samples and prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the virgin birth was really just a bit of mythologizing the Gospel writers threw in to appeal to the followers of the Mithra and Dionysian religious cults that were hugely popular at the time of Jesus, whose gods had virgin births? But what if as you study the origin of the word *virgin* you discover that the word *virgin* in the gospel of Matthew actually comes from the book of Isaiah, and then you find out that in the Hebrew language at that time, the word *virgin* could mean several things? And what if you discover that in the first century being ‘born of a virgin’ also referred to a child whose mother became pregnant the first time she had intercourse?

...Could a person keep jumping? ...Could you still be a Christian?

...Or does the whole thing fall apart? (pp. 026-027).

Bell’s response?

...if the whole faith falls apart when we reexamine and rethink one spring, then it wasn’t that strong in the first place, was it? (p. 027)

Nothing less than the virgin birth, a spring, a doctrine not necessarily vital for the Christian faith.

It makes absolutely no difference to me that on the same page Bell assures us that he himself “...affirms the historic Christian faith, which includes the virgin birth and the Trinity and the inspiration of the Bible and much more.” Bell is an ordained preacher claiming to speak on behalf of Christ—at least he is called to be doing that—and as such he is not ‘up there’ to tell men what *he* believes, but what God through His

Holy Spirit calls men to believe for the saving of their souls. What saith the scriptures? You know, that parting exhortation of the apostle Paul to Timothy, “Preach the word!” (II Tim. 4:2). This is simply Paul’s way of saying, “See to it that you build on the foundation of the prophets and the apostles, with Christ the cornerstone!” And if not? One is found to be a false witness about God! (I Cor. 15:15).

The great question in connection with a great creedal doctrine like the doctrine of the virgin birth is not, if after all it were found to be ‘untrue,’ whether a person could still *be a Christian* (by which question, by the way, Bell reduces Christianity merely to a ‘moral, upbeat lifestyle’), but whether there would *be Christianity at all*.

That Bell implies there could be, tells us what kind of ‘Christianity’ these spokesmen for the Emergent movement have in mind. It really does not need an eternal Son of God at all. Jump on a trampoline all you want, you have just kissed the gospel good-bye.

The next *spring* to be questioned could just as well be the *spring* of Christ’s resurrection from the dead. The same hypothetical questions Bell raises re the virgin birth could be asked with regards to it—what if men found a tomb in which, etc.?

And how would the apostle Paul answer the Bells of the church? Basically this way—Listen you silly young fool, “...if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching in vain, and your faith is also vain” (I Cor. 15:14).

Likening the great historic doctrines to “springs,” sound it ever so ingenious, is simply a clever ploy to make the Christian faith flexible and changeable enough to accommodate every unbeliever’s denial of this or that doctrine, finding him too a place in the church, and making room for such errors on the pulpit as well, and then calling these denials the ‘Christian

faith' also, because they work for some.

The metaphor the apostles used for their teachings was not "springs" but that of a foundation (Eph. 2:20, I Cor. 3:10ff.) on which the confession of the New Testament church and the faith of its members was to be built. And on this solid foundation only! Sounds to me a lot closer to "Mere 'Brickianity,'" than to a trampoline with various springs broken and judged unnecessary for true faith. I have for my source something written by the Holy Spirit Himself. What is Bell's, other than his fertile imagination?

The dishonest liberals who have dismantled Christ's church brick by brick over the past 150 years have always claimed themselves to believe all the fundamental doctrines, even to the confessing of the infallibility of the Scriptures. Their claim was, they just did not want to make these positions mandatory for others filled with skepticism born of a scientific age. Read the history of Machen and of the PCUSA of the early 1900s, and the doctrinal differences the leading liberals insisted on making allowances for. And then, having secured such allowances (called 'freedoms' and 'liberty of conscience'), these dishonest men in their preaching proceeded to ignore these great doctrines, questioning the relevancy of such for the Christian living (you know, like many today do the doctrine of election—of what real practical use is it?), and in the classrooms of Princeton, under the guise of 'academic freedom and intellectual inquiry,' questioning whether any of the great redemptive events had actually occurred after all. "Oh, we personally don't deny these things may have happened. We are just raising questions. Such questions in the academic setting are good, you know."

I have things to say concerning such men. They are not for

print. Luther probably said it better than I could anyway.

Bell is not the only one speaking the language of the liberals. This is language McLaren uses also.

While I [sic!] believe that actual miracles [recorded in the Gospels—kk] can and do happen,...I am sympathetic with those who believe otherwise, and I applaud their desire to live out the meaning of the miracle stories even when they don't believe the stories happened as written. (I find it harder to be sympathetic with those who take pride in believing the miracles really happened but don't seek to live out their meaning) (*A Generous Orthodoxy*, pp. 60-61).

It becomes plain that the Emergent church movement is about more than producing a brand of Christianity that is acceptable to the culturally savvy of our day; it is at bottom, if Rob Bell is any indication, committed to a Christianity that's man-centered to its marrow. That this is the 'faith' that the movement is in the process of embracing is nowhere more clearly exposed than by Bell's explanation of the incident of Peter's failed attempt to walk on the water upon seeing his Lord do the same. Christ caught hold of him and rebuked him as being of little faith. "Why did you doubt?" Jesus states. Doubt whom? No faith in whom? Bell's astounding answer?

Who does Peter lose faith in? Not Jesus; Jesus is doing fine. Peter loses faith in himself. Peter loses faith that he can do what his rabbi is doing...

...As we read the stories of Jesus' life with his...disciples, what do we find frustrates him to no end? When his disciples lose faith in themselves. He even says to them at one point, "You did not choose me, but I chose you." The entire rabbinical system was based on the rabbi having faith in his disciples.

...when [Jesus' disciples] fall

short it provokes him to no end. It isn't their failure that's the problem; it's their greatness. They don't realize what they are capable of....

God has an incredibly high view of people. God believes that people are capable of amazing things.

I have been told that I need to believe in Jesus. Which is a good thing. But what I am learning is that Jesus believes in me. I have been told I need to have faith in God. Which is a good thing. But what I am learning is that God has faith in me (*Velvet Elvis*, p. 133-4).

So, believing in Jesus essentially means believing Jesus believes in me.

Yes, I can see how popular this is with the religiously disenchanting of our day. "Open the doors, and see all the people." What I fail to see is how this differs from Robert Schuller and his megachurch, Crystal Cathedral gospel in any significant way. God believes in you. Now you have to learn to believe in yourself. Not to do so is what constitutes sin.

I do not recall the apostles ever quite taking this approach.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that had faith in a marvel like me!

The post-modern generation has been given its new hymn.

The Emergent church movement is not a correction of the deadly course down which liberalism led twentieth century Protestantism, but an acceleration down the same road. It breathes the same spirit of false ecumenicity that the World Council of Churches does, namely, that the world might become one by Christianity taking the lead and refusing to judge what anyone teaches as false and contrary to truth. As McLaren makes plain, the Christian faith

should become (in the name of Jesus Christ) a welcome friend to other religions of the world, not a threat. We should be seen as a

protector of their heritages, a defender against common enemies, not one of the enemies. Just as Jesus came originally not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it, not to condemn people but to save them, I believe he comes today not to destroy or condemn anything (anything but evil) but to redeem and save everything that can be redeemed or saved (*A Generous Orthodoxy*, p. 254).

This is the language of out-and-

out liberalism, for whom “to save” means little more than “not to condemn” – no matter what the sin or error. Who really can be sure historic Christianity has it right, and that these other religions are wrong. They too may have the Lord’s approval. Christianity – just one of the ways to live an authentic human life, to have a genuine high-regard for self.

The Emergent leaders may claim to be modern (pardon me, post-modern) reformers of the historic Christian faith. They are not. They are merely ‘repainters’ of age-old errors, and despite new, hip colors they are still applying lead-based paint from the same bucket as age-old liberalism.

The saving God will not honor those who have so little honor for His Only Begotten, or regard for His Spirit of Truth. 

Search the Scriptures

Rev. Ronald Hanko

## The Prophecy of Malachi (12)

# Covenant Faithfulness and Unfaithfulness

### The Fourth Disputation: Chapter 2:17-3:6 (cont.)

**I**n the first part of chapter 3 we come to the heart of Malachi’s prophecy. Here the Word of God through Malachi becomes not just a word of rebuke and judgment but the gospel of God’s grace. Here is the prophecy of Christ’s coming that lies at the heart of all that Malachi says, for it is His coming that delivers Israel, both priests and people, from their sins and provides both redemption and cleansing.

All this is in answer to Israel’s question: “Where is the God of judgment?” In sending Christ as the messenger of the covenant, God reveals Himself as the God of judgment, but also as the one who brings salvation through judgment

as He had earlier promised to do through Isaiah: “Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.”

This is always the way that salvation comes. Salvation comes through judgment first of all because God’s judgments against sin must be executed, and the salvation of God’s people is possible only because those judgments are executed on Christ as the representative of His own, rather than on them. But salvation also comes through judgment because the cross brings God’s judgments on the unbelieving and unrepentant world. Jesus Himself announced this in John 12:31: “Now is the judgment of this world.” Because God pours out His wrath against sin at the cross in all its fury, those who are not in Christ and protected by Him come under the wrath and judgment of God and are condemned and destroyed by it.

3:1. *Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way*

*before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.*

In this passage, which speaks of salvation through Christ, it must be understood that He, Christ, is the Messenger of the covenant of whom the text speaks. However, the text speaks not only of Him but of another messenger who prepares His way, whom we know from the New Testament to be John the Baptist. In fact, verse 1 is quoted in the New Testament especially in reference to John the Baptist.

Let us note that John, like Malachi (1:1), bears the same name and office as Christ. They are each God’s messenger. That is true because every priest and prophet is sent by God and brings the same divine message concerning salvation in Christ, but it is true also because every messenger of God speaks by the Spirit of Christ. We read of this in I Peter 1:10, 11: “Of

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*Rev. Hanko is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Lynden, Washington.*

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which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time *the Spirit of Christ which was in them* did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

John, as the first messenger of which the text speaks, prepares the way for *the* Messenger of the covenant. John did this by preaching repentance and by speaking of Him who would follow—by announcing Him as the Lamb of God. He preached and prepared the way also by his appearance and by the fact that he did his work in the wilderness, all of which were a testimony against the formalism and disobedience that characterized Israel. He even prepared the way by his baptizing, which pointed to the work that Christ, the Messenger of the covenant, would do to cleanse God's people from their sins.

The verse shows us, too, that the one whose way he prepared would be able to save because He would be God Himself come in the flesh. The Messenger of the covenant is also called here the Lord. The name, of course, is not the same as the name LORD in capitals. The first name means "Sovereign Owner and Master," while the second is the name Jehovah. Nevertheless, even the use of the name "Lord" here identifies Christ as God, for this Lord is called "the Lord whom ye seek." He is, in other words, the God of judgment, whose coming the Jews had doubted and questioned.

Only as the God of judgment, the one who is equal to the Father, fully and completely God, is He able to do what no mere man can do: suffer the judgments of God and finish them, and so bring in everlasting righteousness. Only He can cleanse the sons of Levi, whom even the Word of God through Malachi did not turn from wickedness.

When Malachi predicts that He would come to His temple, he is not so much speaking of the building, usually referred to as Herod's temple, to which Jesus did come and which He cleansed twice, but is rather speaking of the true temple, Christ's own body, the church, for whom and to whom He would come in order that it might be redeemed and delivered. Jesus Himself made that clear at the time of the first cleansing of the temple. When He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John. 2:19), He was, John 2:21 says, speaking "of the temple of his body."

That He is identified not just as God's messenger, but as *the* Messenger of the *covenant*, identifies Him both as the fulfillment of all the promises, the one of whom every other messenger was only a type and forerunner, and also as the one who would by His work bring God's people into the full enjoyment of their covenant relationship with God and who would establish that covenant on everlasting foundations, so that the relationship between God and His people could never again be interrupted.

But Christ is the Messenger of the covenant not only because He takes away that which separates God and His people, that is, their sin; not only because He, by His Spirit, actually receives them into fellowship with God, but also because He is in His own person the one who unites us to God. He is in one person the one in whom dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily and the one whose bone and whose flesh we are, so that in Him we live and walk with God and are joined to God. He is Immanuel, God with us.

That He is the one in whom we delight stands in stark contrast to the unbelieving question of 2:17. When He does come, unbelief is cured, doubt is turned to faith, and disbelief to delight, by His gracious work as God's Messenger.

This is all promised by Jehovah of hosts, the one whom all things serve and in whose army they march. Nothing, therefore, can prevent the coming of the Messenger of the covenant. Nothing can stand in the way of His work. Nothing can spoil or interrupt His work—not the rise of the Roman empire, not the apostasy of Judah in the days following Malachi's prophecy, not the rise of Pharisees who would be His bitter enemies, not even the temptations of Satan. All things would serve Him.

3:2. *But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:*

Christ's work is presented here under two similar figures. He is compared to a refiner's fire and to fuller's soap. A refiner's fire is the very hot fire of the man who purifies precious metals by burning away the dross and impurity. Fuller's soap is the soap that is used to bleach and whiten linen and other cloth, and a fuller the man who does that work. The emphasis therefore is on purifying and cleansing.

Christ does the work of fuller's soap and of fire by His death on the cross, for in dying He removes the guilt of those who were given Him by His Father and legally purifies them. He does that work also through His Spirit when He sanctifies them, for then He through the work of the Spirit removes the dross and corruption of sin in them and delivers them from the power of sin. He does that work finally in the judgment day when He, through death and the resurrection, removes even the presence of sin in His people and welcomes them into everlasting habitations.

In that work not only are His people purified and delivered from the dross of sin, but the wicked world and its ungodliness is also burned up and destroyed by the coming of Christ. In that sense,

too, the people of God are purified and cleansed, for they are then delivered from all temptation and from the possibility of sin. This is finished in the judgment day when fire destroys both the world and the wicked, but it begins already at the cross, for as Jesus says: "Now (at the cross) is the judgment of this world" (John 12:31).

The question that is asked about abiding the day of His coming is heard at the end of the world when the final judgment begins to come on the ungodly: "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from

the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Rev. 6:15-17). Indeed, Revelation 6:17 is quoting Malachi 3:2.

Nonetheless, no one of himself is able to abide the day of Christ's coming or to stand when He appears. All are sinners and are worthy of being destroyed by the judgment of God. Through the coming of Christ that judgment always comes on the wicked world, whether it be the false church or the secular world. It came on Bethlehem. It came on the whole Jewish nation in the rending of the veil at the time of Christ's death. It came on Jerusalem through the Romans when the city was de-

stroyed and the nation scattered. It comes today through the preaching of the gospel when under the gospel men and women are hardened in unbelief. It comes finally and forever when this old world is destroyed and the new kingdom of Christ brought in.

That some do stand is not because they are different in themselves, but because they are given to Christ and are hidden in Him when these judgments come. They are in Him by faith, and therein lies the urgency of the gospel. All who hear must believe, for who shall abide the day of His coming otherwise? All who hear must come to Him, for not otherwise can they stand when He appears, whether it be now through the gospel or once more at the end of all things. 

## All Around Us

Rev. Michael DeVries

### ■ "O Be Careful Little Tongue..."

You remember the little children's song that encourages the child to avoid sinning with various members of his body—eyes, ears, hands, feet. More than ever that warning is needed regarding the use of the tongue. An Associated Press article by Peter Schworm in the August 17, 2006 issue of *The Record*, newspaper of the Kitchener/Waterloo, ON region, reports under the title, "Teens swear more; but then again, so do adults":

As soon as the teenager saw the skies, he cursed, raining obscenities on the rainfall.

"You have got to be !%\$.% kidding me," he said to his friend as they stood near the mall entrance. "It's (bleeping) raining again."

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

"Yeah, what the (expletive)?" the second teenager muttered.

Waiting for the bus nearby, some senior citizens sighed and shook their heads at the crude language but held their tongues. Such language is, after all, everywhere.

Minutes later, two middle-school girls underscored that point as they scurried through the rain into the mall, leaving a string of R-rated exclamations in their wake.

Teen lingo has always been obscenity-laced, but nowadays cursing has become so routine that many teenagers are sincerely unaware that the words carry any "transgressive punch," as one cursing expert put it.

Once teenagers swore for shock value and to project a cool, defiant image, but in a culture saturated with raunchy rapsters, shock jocks, and foul mouth cartoon characters, teens are barely aware of the expletives they spew.

On teenagers' MySpace pages, cursing is all but mandatory, a kind of generic password into the teenage vernacular. At malls, in

movie theatres, and on street corners teenagers use flagrantly off-colour language without a hint of guilt or satisfaction.

Sheer volume and repetition have made even the most profuse profanity muted and stale. The sliding scale, with words forbidden only a few years ago now accepted in even polite circles, has left most expletives with little weight.

Educators say the trend is a sign of greater societal tolerance for many once-forbidden words and more relaxed cultural standards in general—more casual language for more casual times, everywhere you turn.

"Swearing in schools is par for the course," said P.M. Forni, director of the Civility Initiative at Johns Hopkins University and author of *Choosing Civility: The Twenty-Five Rules of Considerate Conduct*. Forni said that anecdotal evidence shows that not only is swearing on the rise, it's starting at a younger age.

A survey of public high school students found that more than 75 per cent reported hearing

so-called adult language frequently in the halls and cafeteria.

Getting students and teachers to agree on the ground rules can be tricky, say the experts. Adults tend to be too strict and use outdated mores, while students believe that nearly all words are inbounds.

But don't just wag your finger at today's youth. Almost three-quarters of American adults report hearing profanity in public at least occasionally, and two-thirds said people swear more than they used to, according to a survey conducted this spring by Ipsos Public Affairs research company.

About the same percentage of adults said hearing profanity bothered them, but almost half said they use it at least a few times a week, with 27 per cent admitting to using the F-word.

"We tolerate, as a matter of course, rudeness that only a generation ago would have raised indignation," Forni said.

Timothy Jay, a psychology professor at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts and author of *Cursing in America and Why We Curse*, sees it as a "safety valve," a way to safely vent excess anger.

Jay said casual swearing has increased as the world has become more fast-paced and stressful. Teenagers, he said, are especially curse-prone because "they're built to break the rules."

Who cannot attest to the truth of the thrust of this article? We expose ourselves to foul, often blasphemous language whenever we venture out into public or invite the public into our homes by means of television, radio, Internet, printed page, etc. One important question: Is indignation raised in our souls when we are subjected to foul language? Do we "hear" it? Or have we too become desensitized from a spiritual point of view? That ought not be! And, yes, our children are also inclined by nature, as are we older folk, to these sins of the tongue. Yes, by nature, teenagers, ours too, are

"built to break the rules." Especially in the circle of their friends, it is easy for young people to conform to a sad standard of corruption in speech. Let us warn them often. Let us strive to be good examples, refraining from all crude and vulgar speech and, above all, from all profanity.

How difficult it is! The Epistle of James warns, chapter 3, verses 5 and 8: "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!... But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." Let us take to heart the instruction of the Heidelberg Catechism, Answer 100: "...there is no sin greater or more provoking to God than the profaning of His name...."

### ■ "High-Tech Worship"

Most of us appreciate the many technological advances made in recent years. The church too is able to benefit from much of the technology—improved sound systems, advanced audio/visual recording equipment, computers for a multitude of record-keeping and correspondence purposes, informational websites. Even council/consistory minutes are increasingly being taken on lap-tops. But here, too, as with so many things, the question is: How far do you go? The following article confirms, as far as I am concerned, that many churches today are going too far, becoming technological travesties. G. Jeffrey MacDonald, Correspondent of *The Christian Science Monitor*, reports from Danvers, Mass.:

The Rev. Mike Laird is standing in front of his congregation, admonishing them about patience. Not patience as a generic virtue. But patience with him.

It's a summer Sunday morning, and many of the high-tech gadgets that give the North Shore Chapel its up-to-date identity aren't working. The clip from "The Matrix" won't play. The Bible verses displayed on a big

screen aren't the ones he wants. The soundtrack to a slide show of kids doing arts and crafts cuts off abruptly.

It doesn't help that the service is being held in a rented discount movie theater, creating perhaps a heightened expectation for special effects, especially when God is involved. But the church's volunteer technology expert is unexpectedly absent: His wife is giving birth. "Today, I'm taking a mulligan," Mr. Laird says, plaintively.

Balky equipment aside, a growing number of churches are joining the movement towards a digitized ministry. From experimental congregations to mainline denominations, they are using jumbo screens, websites, sophisticated videos—everything but God thundering out of a cloud—to attract worshipers and relate to people in the language of today.

Critics rue the potential of bells and Whistler-like video images to distract from the deeper meaning of church. But as the techno-worship trend matures, users say it's serving a profound purpose: turning sideline sitters into active church participants, cultivating compassion, and making it easier for the taciturn to tell inspiring stories.

Technology is becoming more pervasive. Between 2000 and 2005, the percentage of Protestant churches using large-screen projection systems jumped from 39 to 62, according to The Barna Group, a Ventura, Calif.-based church research firm. More than half now also have websites, send out mass e-mail blasts, and incorporate video into services. Stoic Congregationalists at times use film clips to illustrate a spiritual point. Pentecostals use giant monitors to show fellow worshipers sweating, waving arms, or collapsing because they've been "slain in the Spirit."

North Shore Chapel member Julie Gil knows the merits of techno-religion. She became a Christian about six years ago while reading Tim LaHaye's best-selling novel, "Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth's Last Days," closely identifying with a career-focused character who has a conversion. Still, few knew how she

came to trust God because she feared public speaking. Then a church member videotaped her during a small group discussion and produced a five-minute version for Sunday worship. "Although I knew I was being videotaped, I didn't really think about the camera," Ms. Gil says. "So it was just like talking to a friend."

In some cases, video seems to elicit as much compassion as a sermon....

Still, not everyone is enamored with the trend toward digital worship. Technology can feed an idolatrous tendency in America, one that says everything from education to energy has a technological solution, according to Quentin Schultze, a professor of communication at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich., and author of "High-Tech Worship? Using Presentation Technologies Wisely." "Our overly optimistic attitude towards using presentational technologies in worship reveals the quick-fix mentality of our times," Mr. Schultze writes in his book.

Others feel churches aren't using new media enough in services. For ones that do, experts say a few principles govern the effectiveness of the technology. Mr. Jewell, for one, believes it works best when the gadgetry is not the focus of attention. He suggests using homegrown images and sounds that strike a chord with the congregation. The content also should be appropriate. Jewell recalls one of his student pastors who used neon colors and music from U2 in a presentation for an elderly congregation.

Technology is definitely the lifeblood of the North Shore Chapel, a part of the Christian Reformed Church in North America that claims John Calvin as its spiritual ancestor. During the week, the pastor offers spiritual guidance by e-mail. Some members donate money through automatic bank withdrawals, which allows the church to avoid collections on Sunday morning. Many members worship daily by logging into sacredspace.ie, a website operated by Irish Jesuits. "If you have a nine-to-five job in the cube (cubicle), you show up 15 minutes

early and have quiet prayer time," Laird says.

At the theater, 30 minutes before the service, a screening room feels like an electronic lab. Volunteer Elizabeth Gilman loads tunes from her iPod into a software system designed for churches. Another member tests still shots on a big screen—a sunrise, storm waves battering a castle, a foggy harbor—selected to illustrate the idea of trusting God under all circumstances. The smooth presentation belies the perennial debates that go into it: Is God best revealed in human emotions? Animals at play? Desolate landscapes?

A keyboardist reads notes from an electronic screen, and teenagers in T-shirts and shorts warm up their voices and guitars. To them, the technology provides a welcome distraction for the audience. "I'm leading them in worshiping God, not us," says singer Natasha Skovron. "So it helps that they're not watching us."

The church meets in a theater, Laird says, for the same reason he leads a theology discussion group in a nearby bar: People feel at ease in the environment. Attendees, mostly young adults and children, agree the technology makes them feel more comfortable. Construction worker Kevin Toerne of Danvers, Mass., whose children go to nursery and Sunday school in adjacent screening rooms, says the "upbeat music" and visuals help make the church less "stuffy."

Julie Shimer of Rowley believes it all keeps the ministry relevant. "It makes it seem like (the church's message) is not an old traditional thing that doesn't apply to your life," she says.

Some of those most moved by the techno-ministry are the ones who have participated in staging the service. Rob Kristoff hadn't thought much about hymn lyrics until he had to pick among some 3,000 electronic images to illustrate spiritual themes. The experience made him think hard about the purpose of worship. "If a song is about the bread of life, they (in the congregation) don't just need to see bread," he says. "They need to see what it looks like to be hungry."

With a noon matinee scheduled, worshipers pack their equipment and disappear into the suburban traffic. With that, they go their separate ways—at least until everyone gets back to their computer.

All this—such a spectacle—particularly in a nominally Reformed church, is rather shocking. Where is the simplicity of biblical, Reformed worship? Where is the reverence of biblical, Reformed worship? Above all, where is the centrality of the preaching of the gospel that characterizes biblical, Reformed worship? What a telling statement this is: "video seems to elicit as much compassion as a sermon." Be not deceived! The Heidelberg Catechism, Answer 98, provides the proper response: "...we must not pretend to be wiser than God, who will have His people taught, not by dumb images, but by the lively preaching of His Word."

The temptation is ever present that we suppose that worship is first of all for *us*, that it must meet our felt needs. Then worship becomes entertainment, amusement, performance. Then worship must make us feel comfortable. Then it must lift to an emotional high and make us feel good about our participation, involvement, or contribution.

But, according to Scripture, worship is first and foremost for God! We are to "kneel before the Lord our Maker" (Ps. 95:6). His name must be magnified as we enter into His fellowship in worship.

We must not suppose that any manner of sincere worship is pleasing and acceptable to God. Calvin says it well: "we should know that it is unnecessary to parade our 'good intentions' as a cover-up for what we have invented, indeed; but on the contrary we should know that the principal service which God requires is obedience" (*Sermons on the Ten Commandments*, p. 67). 

# Harvest

At this same time each year, it seems that the world is morbidly preoccupied with death. A favorite name for the season is fall, something leaves do after they shrivel up and die. A celebrated holiday, Halloween, is merely a weak attempt to mock death and hell—and by implication Jesus who has the keys of both. Even Thanksgiving Day seems to be, for many, little more than a day to “eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” Let it not be so for the believer.

The season we know as fall, Scripture calls harvest. It does so in God’s promise to Noah, “While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest ... summer and winter ... shall not cease” (Gen. 8:22). Harvest is a time of celebration for the church. The greatest joy is harvest time (Is. 9:3). During harvest, Israel had its great holiday Feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Weeks (Pentecost). Then they enjoyed a Sabbath’s rest and fruit of their labor (Ex. 34:12; 23:16). The laws governing harvest ensured everyone could partake of the bounties. The Israelite landowner could not harvest the corners of his field, remove every scrap of food, or return to fetch any sheaf he had forgotten; this harvest food was for the poor, orphans, widows, and Gentiles (Lev. 23:22; Deut. 24:19). Jesus even benefited from this harvest generosity, for His great ancestor Ruth the Moabitess, survived by gleaning the crops Boaz obediently had left (Ruth 1:22).

By His providence God made sure joyful events of covenant salvation occurred at harvest. It was during harvest that Israel both escaped the bondage of Egypt and also crossed the Jordan into the land flowing with milk and honey (Josh. 3:15). At harvest time Samson was provoked to war against the Philistines, and reduced their crops to a smoking wasteland (Jud. 15:1). Gideon’s timely victory at harvest kept Israel from starving (Jud. 6:11). The ark was returned to Israel at harvest (I Sam. 6:13). When God brought His people from captivity, it was called a harvest (Ps. 126:5-6). And even the great temple would be built on an old harvest threshing-floor (II Chr. 3:1).

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*Rev. Langerak is pastor of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

Harvest joy is God’s gracious blessing. Since He is pleased to give it in the way of wise toil, Scripture gives much admonishment regarding harvest. The ants are examples of diligent labor to harvest while there is time (Prov. 6:8). A wise son gathers during harvest, but the fool sleeps (Prov. 10:5). If the sluggard will not sow if it is cold, he begs during the harvest (Prov. 20:4). They that sow iniquity and wickedness, harvest the same (Job. 4:8). And so when His people do not live thankfully in obedience, God takes away harvest joy and replaces it with desperate sorrow (Is. 17:11). When they eat like piggish sots, He sends the beast, fire, insect, and worm to destroy the harvest, saying, “Be ye ashamed ... because the harvest of the field is perished” (Joel 1:11). When they oppress the poor, He withholds rain so the harvest is withered (Amos 4:7). If they trust in their own strength, He sends enemies to take their food so they cry, “The harvest is past ... and we are not saved” (Jer. 8:19). But with repentance and thanksgiving, He sends harvest blessings again. For they that sow in tears, harvest in joy (Ps. 126:5).

Perhaps the world’s preoccupation with this time of year is because they sense that harvest marks their own death, it is the season of their fall from glory. To the wicked, God cries, “The harvest is ripe ... for their wickedness is great” (Joel 3:13). Concerning Babylon, He shouts, “It is time to thresh her, yet a little while and the time of her harvest shall come” (Jer. 51:33). Even the hypocrite shall not escape this apocalyptic harvest, for Jesus will tell the reapers, “Gather ye first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn” (Matt. 13:30, 39). But make no mistake, harvest is a thankful time of celebration for the church. Its beginning was Pentecost, the original Thanksgiving Day. Then the Spirit of harvest was poured out and the Lord sent corn, wine, and oil to be satisfied therewith (Joel 2:19-28). This great harvest of God’s first fruits is on-going in fields white for harvest (John 4:35). Pray “the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers in his harvest” (Luke 10:2), a harvest completed in the great day of our Lord with the cry of the angel, “Thrust in thy sickle and reap: for the time is come ... for the harvest of the earth is ripe” (Rev. 14:15). 

# Azusa Street Revival and Pentecostalism (2)

## The Teachings of Pentecostalism

**T**he very core of Pentecostal religion is the doctrine of the second blessing, or, as it is sometimes called, the baptism with the Holy Spirit. When most people think of Pentecostalism, they think of long lines of people waiting to be healed, of tongue-speaking, of singing with rhythm and clapping of hands, and of rather disorderly meetings with a lot of shouting, many "Praise the Lords," and even rolling about on the floor. But these practices do not tell what Pentecostalism really is. At its heart lies the doctrine of the second blessing.

This doctrine teaches that a child of God, regenerated, converted, believing, sanctified, and walking in the path of his pilgrimage, is at a lower level of salvation than he ought to be, because he has not received all that is available to him in Christ. God intends more for him than this relatively lowly status. He must receive the second blessing.

Although the Holy Spirit of Christ has already worked in his heart the work of salvation, he can and must aspire to greater blessings and to a higher level of piety,

obtainable only when he is baptized with the Holy Spirit. At the time of his conversion he may have been saved by the Holy Spirit, but he needs more: the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Upon his conversion, or as an infant, the baptism of water may have been administered to him, but another baptism is required.

This baptism with the Spirit sometimes comes unexpectedly, especially when an individual is actively seeking it through prayer. But more frequently it comes through the agency of the ministrations of others who lay hands on an individual and pray for this second blessing.

Frequently, this second blessing of baptism with the Spirit is accompanied by some startling behavior, which is also characteristic of revival meetings. The two have much in common, for revival meetings are conducted with the purpose of seeking special outpourings of the Spirit to bring renewal to a dead church. Such revivals are accompanied by bizarre behavior of all sorts. In some Pentecostal circles such bizarre behavior also accompanies the second blessing.

A person who receives this second blessing is also suddenly endowed with special gifts called charismata, after Paul's description of such gifts in I Corinthians 12:4. From this word comes the name Charismatic Movement. These gifts include speaking in unknown tongues, ability to perform

miracles, the gift of prophecy, and the gifts of interpreting prophecy and interpreting unknown tongues. In more radical Pentecostal circles, the gifts include also the handling of poisonous snakes. For proof of this latter, appeal is made to Mark 16:18.

The second blessing, or baptism with the Spirit, is, in the theory of Pentecostalism, a re-enactment of the first Pentecost and an on-going fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel, which Peter quoted on that day in his sermon.

## Criticisms of Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism is a dangerous threat to the church of Christ, which has the calling to hold fast to the truth revealed in the Word of God. It is a measure of the spiritual and theological departure of much of the church world that Pentecostalism is tolerated and approved within Reformed and Presbyterian churches. It is a destructive movement that contradicts Scripture's own doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit and comes close to a blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, if it is not so.

We mention here, somewhat briefly, the objections to Pentecostalism that arise out of Scripture's teachings.

Pentecostalism is seriously wrong when it speaks of the second blessing or baptism with the Holy Spirit as a power to bring the child of God to a higher level of spirituality and piety. By doing

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*Prof. Hanko is professor emeritus of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.*

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this, Pentecostalism speaks scornfully of the ordinary life of the Christian who daily fulfills his or her calling in life in the home, the church, or the shop. This daily struggle with sin, this constant battle to live in obedience to God, this mundane and routine willingness to bear one's cross in patience, all this and so much more that belongs to the life of the Christian in the world is looked down on and denigrated. Such a Christian is, in the eyes of Pentecostalism, a second-class Christian who has not attained to the higher, nobler, more spiritual level of piety and Christian experience that belongs to the spiritually elite. Such a wicked classification of Christians smacks of Phariseeism.

Pentecostalism speaks of gifts of the Spirit that belong to the apostolic period. This is a serious error. It lacks completely an understanding of the purpose of special gifts. God gave special gifts to the early church as signs of the truth of the gospel. This was necessary because the Scriptures were not written as yet, and those who were brought, by the preaching of the gospel, to faith in Christ, had no complete Scriptures with which to compare the teachings of the apostles to determine their truth. They could not perfectly do what the Berean Christians did in part: search the Scriptures to see whether these things were so. But when the Scriptures were completed, the need for signs and wonders was past. The church had the written Word of God. That is not only enough, but far, far better than signs and wonders. In fact, to lean heavily on signs and wonders as a necessary part of the Christian's life is to speak disparagingly of God's Word in the Bible. It is to say that the Bible is not enough; more is needed. It is to do what the rich man in hell wanted done when he pleaded with Abraham to send Lazarus to his brothers, because a ghost from the dead would do what the Bible could not do. Let the Pentecostals hear

Abraham's words to the rich man: "If they will not hear Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded though one should rise from the dead."

That Pentecostals teach the importance of signs and wonders is not strange. They really do not believe in the sufficiency of Scripture. They want to add to it, in contradiction of Scripture's own words in Revelation 22:18. They want prophecies, additional revelation through those who speak in tongues, special words from God through special revelations. I would not be surprised if someday Pentecostalism produces an additional Bible.

Pentecostalism stands in the tradition of mysticism. I need not go into this, for I have treated mysticism in an earlier article. But let it be said, though briefly, that the mysticism of the Pentecostals stands in the tradition of mysticism as it has raised its ugly head throughout the ages of the church since the Montanist movement in the third century. The Christian who has attained to a higher level of the Christian life has attained to direct and immediate fellowship with God through prophecies, visions, dreams, special revelations, and other mystical experiences.

Mysticism tends to bypass Christ, for it speaks of *direct* communion with God in meetings with God that are characterized almost entirely by spiritual ecstasy, highly emotional experiences, indescribable encounters with the divine, and a soaring of the soul to heavenly realms that submerges a person in the divine being. Here is where Pentecostalism and revivalism meet. Leaders of revival speak of direct encounters with the triune God, in which they talked with God, discussed with Him various matters, and were given by God various bits of information that they proceeded to communicate to others. Evan Roberts, the chief figure in the Welsh 1904-05 revival, spoke of his conversations with

God, the length of which he measured by glancing at some clock or wristwatch as the conversation proceeded.

Pentecostalism is deadly mysticism and denies that the only way to the Father is through Christ. Christ is set forth in the Scriptures, and only in these Scriptures do we know Christ, and knowing Christ, know God. But that knowing of God through Christ revealed in the Scriptures is an intellectual apprehension of the truth of the Scriptures and never a revelation apart from the Scriptures. Eternal life is, according to Jesus in His high-priestly prayer, *to know* God as the only true God and Jesus Christ whom God has sent.

Finally, both Pentecostalism and revivalism have an incorrect understanding of Pentecost. Pentecost was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church, which marked the end of the old dispensation and the beginning of the new. For, according to John 7:39, the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of the ascended and glorified Christ did not exist in the Old Testament. (See also Acts 2:33.) The new dispensation differed from the old in significant respects because of the presence of the Spirit in the church. In the old, the church was limited to the Jews; in the new, the church is gathered from all nations of the earth. (Hence the sign of speaking in tongues.) In the old, the believers were utterly dependent on prophets, priests, and kings to know the will of God; in the new, the believers have the Spirit and "need not that any should teach them" (I John 2:27; Heb. 8:10, 11). In the old, the revelation of God was limited to types and shadows, which enabled the saints to know only in part; in the new, believers are led, through the Spirit, into all truth (see John 14, 15, 16) and are able to understand things they did not understand before. The apostles who, even on Mt. Olivet at the time Jesus ascended, were still looking for an earthly kingdom

(Acts 1:6), a misconception rooted in their failure to understand the work of Christ on the cross, suddenly, after the Spirit was poured out, understood it all clearly; and Peter was able to preach an extraordinarily insightful sermon, in which he laid out the full meaning of Christ's perfect accomplishment

of salvation in His cross, His resurrection, His ascension, and His pouring out of the Spirit.

Pentecost was a once-for-all event. Pentecostals and Revivalists, who speak of repeated Pentecosts in special outpourings of the Spirit, sin greatly in deny-

ing the meaning and significance of that glorious event almost 2000 years ago.

Pentecostalism, because it is to be found in most denominations, may very well be the one unifying factor in a false ecumenism that will eventually unite the church in the service of the beast. 

*In His Fear*

*Rev. Richard Smit*

## The Fruit of the Spirit (1)

**T**he apostle Paul warns us in the book of Galatians to avoid two extremes: on the one hand, the error of believing and living as though justification is by faith and also by and because of our obedience to the law; and, on the other hand, the error of believing and living as though our liberty in Christ is an opportunity to serve the lusts of the flesh. Instead of walking in either of those two evils of legalism or of anti-nomianism, we are called by the Lord to walk in the life to which He saves us.

What constitutes that new life in Jesus Christ and how that new life comes to visible expression in and through us is described, in one of many ways in Scripture, by Galatians 5:22-23. There the apostle teaches that our liberty and life in Jesus Christ become visibly manifest in "the fruit of the Spirit." That fruit of the Spirit, which He sovereignly works in the regenerated, believing, justified, and sanctified children of God, is "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness,

goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

It is our plan to treat the fruit of the Spirit in a series of articles, considering in general the truth of the fruit of the Spirit in this article, and then examining more closely each individual part in future articles, the Lord willing.



The spiritual fruit evident in the child of God is the fruit of the Spirit. He is the Spirit of Christ. He, in His sovereign power, unites us to Christ in the living bond of faith. He took hold of us, who were dead branches in the dead tree of mankind, and has ingrafted us into the living tree, Jesus Christ. Through that divinely established and maintained bond of faith, we receive the new life of Christ. Christ's purpose in joining us to Himself by His Spirit is that we might bring forth fruit abundantly unto the glory of God.

Galatians 5:22-23 emphasizes the Spirit as the agent and worker of that fruit of the new life of Christ. He is sent into us by the Father and the Word to bring to reality the covenant bond between Christ and us. He is the One who sovereignly preserves and nurtures the bond by His almighty and irre-

sistible grace. The Spirit brings us into that new life of the liberty of our Lord Jesus Christ. He raises us out of death into life. He calls us out of our darkness into His marvelous light. He joins us to Christ in the bond of faith and works that faith unto believing and a faithful confession of the faith. He applies to us the blessings of justification and, as a result, purifies us in the life of holiness and godliness. He preserves us daily until the day when we shall be like Christ in body and soul.

Unto that goal, the Spirit then works in us His fruit. He works in and through us the production of His fruit. This work of the Spirit of Christ is not a cooperative effort between us and Him. Rather, just as a grafted branch in an apple tree receives its life, nutrients, and support from the tree into which it has been grafted, so also our life, nutrients, and support come from the Spirit of Christ. We are His living and lively branches to bring forth much fruit.

The Spirit is pleased to work His fruit within and through us by dwelling in us. The Spirit comes irresistibly and breaks down the wall of enmity and pride of our dead hearts. He never waits for us to make the first move. He

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*Rev. Smit is pastor of the Immanuel Protestant Reformed Church in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada.*

comes irresistibly into our hearts and, once there, He remains in the new life of our regenerated hearts to work in us all things according to God's good pleasure. It is God's good pleasure that He cause us to produce spiritual, visible, holy fruit.

What is this good fruit, generally speaking? This good fruit can be described as the good works "which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). These are the works that we perform out of the true faith of that living union to Christ, according to God's commandments and ordinances, and unto the glory of His name alone. This fruit becomes evident in our confession and walk of life. This fruit is spiritually sweet and delightful, not only to our Father in heaven, but also to our fellow saints. As a result of its spiritual pleasantness, our earnest desire is that Christ will work in us mightily by His Spirit this delightful fruit of His Spirit.



What does this fruit really look like in this life?

Galatians 5:22 teaches us that this fruit is *one* fruit, with nine different aspects. We do not read of "fruits," but of *fruit* (singular). The fruit of the Spirit can be compared perhaps to an orange. The orange is one fruit in our hand, but once we peel it open, we see that it has many distinct sections to it. Even though it has many sections to it, it remains one fruit joined together by its sweetness and goodness, which fill each individual wedge.

Similarly, the Spirit produces in His living branches this delightful, covenant fruit. A heavenly and spiritual sweetness and goodness characterize and permeate the whole fruit. Yet, the Spirit shows us in Galatians 5:22-23 that this one fruit has many distinct sections, which in their own unique way are filled with the spiritually delicious sweetness and goodness of the Spirit.

What is that delicious sweetness and goodness that permeates the whole of the fruit?

It is the love of the Spirit, which is mentioned first in the list of Galatians 5:22. The love of the Spirit of Christ is that bond of perfection, the bond in which we are knit to Christ by His Spirit, and the bond in which He seeks us and takes us into the love-life of covenant fellowship. That love of Christ is the unifying substance and sweetness that permeate the entire fruit of the Spirit. In this love, we love God, and we love the neighbor, which is in principle our whole life and duty in this new life and liberty of Jesus Christ. This love of the Spirit of Christ is fundamental to the joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance that the Spirit sovereignly works in and through us by His grace. That is the fruit that is delightfully tasty unto our Father in heaven and also to our fellow saints upon earth who see and taste this fruit and are consequently delighted by it.



The Spirit is pleased to work this fruit in us through the way of leading us to crucify "the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof" (Gal. 5:24b). What those works and affections of the flesh are is listed in Galatians 5:19-21: "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like." These works of the flesh work death and misery. Those who walk and continue therein shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:21). In that way, one brings forth that which is repulsive, rotten, bitter, and dead. While the fruit of the Spirit is unified and harmoniously full of goodness and sweetness, the works (notice the plural) of the flesh are divided, miserable, and biting bitter.

In light of that, we must regard our sinful natures as repulsive and evil. We must not view our lusts as something with which to play. We must not attempt to get as close as possible to the fulfillment of those lusts without actually falling into sin completely and getting caught in that sin. Rather, we must flee those works of the flesh like fleeing a plague of death. We must treat these works of the flesh as rotten fruit to be cast away.

That is the life of putting to death the works of the flesh and the sinful nature. It is a life of warfare against the lusts of the flesh. It is a life of daily seeking refuge at the cross of Calvary for the perfect obedience of Christ and for His strength to fight faithfully against our sin. It is a life of submitting to the Word of God and willingly submitting to the knife of God's Word to do its surgery on us: the slaying of our sins and wickedness, and the building up of the faith and goodness of Christ within us.

We learn by the work of the Spirit in us that fruit-bearing does involve the painful process of being pruned from the works of the flesh unto the production of the fruit of the Spirit. Although the process is spiritually painful and grievous, yet the blessed goal is that we might grow in the blessed life of producing the good fruit of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

Therefore, by the gracious wonder of the Spirit and grace of God, we are created in Christ Jesus to be bearers of the good fruit of the Spirit according to the measure that God has determined for the glory of His name.



To excite in us an earnest desire to see that the Spirit continue His work in us, we read in Galatians 5:23, concerning producing the fruit of the Spirit: "against such there is no law." It is not a crime to produce this fruit of the

Spirit. The world may legislate against it. The world may persecute you for it. However, as far as the supreme court of God's tribunal is concerned, there is no ordinance in His law that states that we may not produce this fruit or that our production is limited strictly to a very meager quota. There are no human regulations, bylaws, or marketing boards that restrict or stifle fruit production. Never should there be a fear of over production.

Our production of the fruit of the Spirit falls within the realm of true Christian liberty. Just as it is the freedom of a rainbow trout to swim and to live within the God-ordained boundaries of its providentially appointed lake, so also it is our God-ordained and God-given life and freedom to produce the fruit of the Spirit according to

His good pleasure and to the quantity that He has determined. It is our liberty to enjoy and bring forth this fruit of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance. Therefore, you will find no divine law prohibiting you from pursuing that life of bringing forth the fruit whose sweetness and goodness is delightful to the Father and to your fellow saints. Rather, the Lord works in us and encourages in us by His Word and Spirit the pursuit of daily fruit-bearing.

It is important that we seek in daily prayer that God by His Spirit may work in us the fruit of the Spirit. This is important because fruit-bearing is vital to the communion of the saints. By fruit-bearing, God is glorified among His saints. In our life of fruit-bearing, we are thereby assured of our eternal salvation. In this life of bear-

ing forth the fruit of the Spirit, we are equipped to bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2) and to enjoy the liberty and peace of Christ with our fellow saints in the body of Christ.

As the Spirit works the beginning of that fruit-bearing within us in this life, we have blessed hope. It is true that our best works are polluted with sin. There appear on the fruit many spots of sin, and there hide in our best works worms of wickedness. But thereby the Spirit makes us long for the day when we shall be planted as living trees by the streams of living water that flow forth from the throne of God. There we shall bring forth abundantly, continuously, and sinlessly the heavenly, wholesome, pleasant, sweet fruit of the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ for the honor and glory of our heavenly Father. 

When Thou Sittest in Thine House

Abraham Kuyper

## Sheep in the Midst of Wolves

### Training

**W**hen it comes to the training of their children, some Christian parents put themselves above the Lord Jesus.

Christ has certainly declared that between His followers and the world there is a difference as of sheep and wolves; but they seem

to know *better*, and think that *their* children and the children of the *world* are all of one sort.

So they see not the least danger ahead when their baptized and Christ-consecrated children associate and are on intimate footing with children of their years, from families where Christ is not known. And when the choice stands between children of a somewhat lower social rank from Christian homes, and children of their own more highly social rank but who stand outside of the faith, all too frequently they give the preference to that more highly social association for their children.

Worse yet, when a school must

be selected for their children, be it a lower or a higher grade school, even then many parents are *wiser* than the Lord Jesus, and do not believe that here too there is mention of sheep and wolves.

In general, they are in favor of Christian education. Of course by itself this is better. And, everything else being equal, they would give their preference to a Christian school.

But when everything else is *not* equal, and as a Christian school either requires more expense, or does not offer like privileges, or is not of one's own social rank, it is dismissed from further thought, and the child is sent *among wolves*, as

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Jesus would say—but as, to improve upon Jesus, they say: among *society people*.



But, you will say, Jesus did the same.

He did not keep His disciples apart. For He Himself declared it, in the very word to which appeal is made: “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves” (Matt. 10:16).

And this is so, only with this difference, that Jesus sent them among wolves *when they were ready*.

Nowhere in Holy Scripture do you read that when He chose Peter and Andrew, John and James, and others as His disciples, the Lord Jesus first sent them to the schools of the Scribes or to the then University in Jerusalem.

These men had first been at school with John the Baptist. Truly no “respectable” school. In the wilderness, with a man clothed with camel’s hair, and all sorts of sinners and publicans as pupils. A strikingly *peculiar* school.

And then Jesus had formed a school for Himself, and in two classes, if you will, had taught the twelve and the seventy each by themselves.

And so greatly concerned is He lest His disciples should come under wrong influences that, when He meets the masters of other schools, He almost always carries on the conversation Himself and shields His disciples.

So the Lord Jesus, who evidently thought altogether differently about it from such parents, has trained His disciples quite *apart from* and *outside of* the influence of the official schools.

And only then, when this had been done, when their education was sufficiently finished and they were prepared, only then did Jesus appoint them, to begin their official ministry, and sent them out into the world, saying: “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.”



And of course this then is necessary.

When our children are matured and ripened, they must go out into the world; then there is no more room for delay. Jesus Himself prayed in John 17: “I pray thee, Father, *not* that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that *in* the world thou shouldst keep them from the evil.”

To fight *for* Christ *against* the world is the calling in life also for our children. Thereby alone shall they once obtain the crown. And of course you cannot fight the world while you keep yourself apart. For this you must go out into the world. And as a sheep of the fold risk yourself among wolves.

So *you* must do, and so *your child* must do. But not until he is prepared, until he is matured, until he is well armed and equipped.

But such parents do not mean it in this way at all. They do not say: “My son is mature at an early age and burns with such zeal for Christ, that he is ready now to go out among wolves to fight for his Savior.”

No, nothing of this.

If such zeal for the Lord Jesus had been fostered by them in their sons, they would be the first to send their children to a school where the Christ is held in honor.

But they have not fostered this zeal from infancy. This zeal is *not* kindled in their child. For this reason their children find the wolves so nice and pleasant, and they say: “Father, let us rather go out among the wolves. Such strong, noble animals. With those sheep, things are so tame.”

And then such parents answer: “Well, my boy, I do not want to compel you. If it can make your life more pleasant, go out among the wolves. But let them not bite you. Look out.”



Such is the condition.

A condition which is possible only when one accords his own insight a *higher* place than Jesus’ utterance, and does not really believe what Jesus says. When in general one believes in Jesus, but does not give himself captive to His word.

There is, it is granted, *some* truth in it. There are wolves among them. But, first, they are not all such. And, then, there are wolves and wolves. And these men at least are not such very wild, devouring wolves. Among them there are wolves that are even lovable.

And after having so weakened oneself by all sorts of shallow, superficial representations, one proceeds to reason further about as follows: “My child has always been present when the Bible was read. I have always set him a good example. Really inimical he is not. And, moreover, so long as he is not converted, it makes no difference whether I send him to a Christian school or not; if he truly is a child of God, his Savior will protect him even among wolves.”

Oh, our heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? (Jer. 17:9).

And this is called loving one’s child. Such are parents that have made the Baptism vows. And every evening you may find such parents on their knees, praying that God will keep their child.

But of what it is *to tempt God*, such worshippers seem to have no faint idea.

One thing, however, may be asked of them, and that is, whether, after such a loveless weakness with respect to their children, they think that they can find ground for such praying in any internal address of the Holy Ghost?



Consider indeed, what is implied in that sharp antithesis which Jesus makes between sheep and wolves.

Does Jesus mean to say thereby that His followers, without exception, are all so gentle and so dear; and that on the other hand the people of the world are as malicious as a wild animal?

Not in the least. With such self-complacency and with such self-conceited looking-down upon the people of the world, Jesus' saying has nothing to do.

You have seen in the meadow how violently sometimes a sheep can butt and be anything but lovable.

But *this* is the point: A wolf is strong in defense of his own domain, and this makes the people of the world so much stronger *in the world* than you, so that you are no

match for them, so that your child stands *defenseless* over against them, and certainly is *lost* when he comes among them.

This first. And in the second place, the people of the world are fanatical in their zeal for the world, and are bent upon inspiring your child, who now still resists, with the spirit of the world. They cannot rest until your child is become part of the world. For this reason Jesus calls them *wolves*. They want to make your child like unto themselves, identify him with themselves, and thus spiritually *devour* him.

And in the face of them we and our children stand as defenseless

*sheep*, but as lambs of the flock of our Lord.

Not as a hart or an ox, which a wolf attacks also, but very definitely as "sheep."

Why so?

Simply because a hart defends himself till he drops, but a sheep, when the wolf comes, *flees to his shepherd*.

And so the lesson is this.

First keep your children with Jesus, and under the shadow of His wings educate them until they are ready.

And when they are ready, send them out into the world, let them out among wolves, but as sheep, i.e., as young people *whose shield is the Lord*. 

Go Ye Into All the World

Rev. Arie denHartog

## Woe Is Me if I Preach Not the Gospel

**C**hapter nine of I Corinthians gives us most excellent instruction for the calling of the church to preach the gospel. Never has there lived a preacher or a missionary who was more faithful and more mighty in accomplishing the work of his Lord than the apostle Paul. Never has there been one who has more exalted the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and at the same time steadfastly refused to have glory for himself among men. Never has there been one who has been more truly successful as an instrument for the salvation of the Lord's people.

Let us not follow the example

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*Rev. denHartog is pastor of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.*

of some famous modern preacher. He may boast of having gained a huge following through his ministry. He may have made himself the senior pastor of one of the famous megachurches in our land with thousands of members. But beware of such a man!

Let us not run off to be trained in some highly publicized seminar with great claims of training men and women for 'successful ministries.' Rather, let us learn from the inspired apostle of the Lord. In the next few articles we intend to draw attention to what Paul has to say in I Corinthians 9.

Paul does not usually distinguish in any absolute way between what today we call preaching in the established congregation and preaching on the mission field, whether in home missions or in missions among the heathen in far-

off lands who never before heard the gospel. As we know, Paul went on three great missionary journeys. He also at times preached for extended periods in established congregations to build them up in the knowledge of the truth.

We want to make three great statements in this passage the focus of our attention. The first one is the statement "necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (I Cor. 9:16). The second statement is "I made myself servant to all, that I might gain the more" (I Cor. 9:19). The third statement is "I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some." All of these statements have at times been grossly misinterpreted. We shall by the grace of God attempt to set forth the meaning and implications of these statements.

In this article, then, we focus on this mighty statement: "Necessity is laid upon me, yea woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel!" This "necessity" was laid upon Paul when the crucified, resurrected, and exalted Lord stood before him on the road to Damascus. The history of this is recorded in Acts chapter 9. At the time Paul was "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." He was, in doing this, the great enemy of the Lord. But the mighty sovereign Lord of heaven and earth confronted Paul. He stood before Paul in His glorious majesty. Paul was blinded by the brilliant light of His glorious presence. He was cast down at the feet of the Lord. In great astonishment Paul said, "Who art thou, Lord?" And Jesus answered, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Trembling before the Lord, Paul earnestly asked, "What wilt thou have me to do?" and the Lord answered him, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." This amazing and unforgettable event in the life of Paul made him deeply conscious of the fact that he was the Lord's servant, really literally His slave, not by his own will, but by the will of the sovereign Lord.

Paul speaks of an awesome, a fearful, compelling necessity that had been laid on him. He was overwhelmed by this. This is what drove him in his whole ministry. In I Corinthians 9 Paul speaks of not insisting on the financial support that was rightly his according to the Word of God. Paul was ready to relinquish this right if he thought that insisting on it would create an offense and a hindrance in preaching the gospel.

There were charlatan preachers around already in Paul's day who went from place to place preaching and asking for money. Paul was not like many modern-day preachers who have made the busi-

ness of preaching one of the most lucrative of our day. These command salaries equal to those of corporate executives and live in astounding luxury and in palatial estates. All the while they imagine themselves to be ever so important, even indispensable to the cause of Christ. They are doing such great things for the Lord in the world that they have the right to make endless and nauseating appeals for more money from their supporters. The Bible calls this business "filthy lucre."

Woe is me if I preach not the gospel! Some dreadful calamity would come upon Paul if he refused or was in any way unfaithful to the commission of his Lord. The fearful judgment of the Lord would come upon him! This does not mean that Paul considered the Lord to be an unmerciful tyrant. The false preacher who seeks his own glory and his own advantage must in fact live in the fear of the judgment of the Lord, who will surely hold such a man accountable. The Lord of Paul and of all faithful ministers is a gracious and merciful Lord. So gracious was this Lord to Paul, who confessed himself to be the chief of sinners, that he was forgiven even the heinous sin of having once been a persecutor of the church. But the sovereignty and majesty of the Lord was still the cause for holy reverence and trembling fear on the part of Paul, and this affected his entire ministry. Only in the way of be-

ing a willing and faithful servant of his Lord could Paul look for the reward of His grace upon his ministry. In this way would he have glory before God rather than before the men of this world.

Paul is very clear concerning the purpose of the ministry. He does not want to have glory for himself. If ever there was a man

who had a "purpose driven ministry," it was this apostle of the Lord. His purpose is stated in verse 16: "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory in." Christ must be glorified through the preaching of the gospel, the declaration of the truth concerning Him, and the saving of His people.

Several things are clearly implied in the statement of Paul under our consideration. The first of these is that Paul was committed to the method of the Lord Himself by which He saves His people, builds them up in the faith, and inspires them to live unto Him. Today there is so much emphasis on what methods are used in accomplishing the work of missions. Famous preachers and popular training institutes claim to have some great new plan of action for leaders in the church. Whatever method will produce the greatest show and greatest measure of success in the eyes of world, this is considered to be the ultimate goal for their great ministries.

More than ever today there are challenges being posed to the Lord's own method through which He Himself saves His people and gathers His church. Simply put, the Lord's method is the preaching of the gospel.

But so much of Christendom considers this method outdated and ineffective. One can better gather a lot of people by making the worship service a popular en-

tertainment program that rivals the wild and exciting and popular concerts of the world. All the modern-day media and electronic wizardry must be employed. Rock bands must take center stage. All the senses must be engaged to stir up excitement and enthusiasm and emotion. The focus must be on the appearance of the person on the

*More than ever today there are challenges being posed to the Lord's own method through which He Himself saves His people and gathers His church.*

stage, and his popular appeal to the audience.

These kinds of man-centered presentations will draw large audiences, especially of the young, though even the older generation goes for such programs today. But the question has to be asked, is this audience truly the church, as it claims? Do such popular meetings represent the fearful, holy, truth-centered, God-glorifying worship of God that is clearly demanded by the Holy and Sovereign One of heaven and earth? Are these worship services, as popular as they may be, the means whereby God's people are built up in the knowledge of the truth and equipped to confess the name of God in this ungodly world? Do these kinds of programs instruct God's people in true godly living and holy consecration to their God?

The faithful slave of Christ must be steadfastly committed to and have full confidence in the power of the preaching of the gospel. This is the Lord's own method whereby He accomplishes not only the saving of His people but also the hardening of the hearts of the wicked. From age to age the method of the Lord has remained the same. Woe is me if I preach not the gospel!

Secondly, the passage under our consideration speaks of the great importance of preaching the truth clearly and without compromise and with all authority. Paul was passionate in declaring and defending and maintaining the true doctrine of God. He did not preach a gospel of four or five simple spiritual laws to follow that would magically make a person a Christian. Paul shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God, holding back nothing that was profitable for the people of God.

The Lord is glorified through His own word when it is preached. He is not glorified by the wisdom of the world, humanistic psychology, or the modern-day popular preacher who tries to be a stage

actor. Woe is me if I preach not the gospel! A man may gather to himself a church of 10,000 or more members by means of a false gospel. The false gospel is always eminently more popular than the true one. But even if a false preacher establishes a megachurch through his preaching, he has nothing to glory in. He will be condemned by the Lord in spite of his acclaim among men. It is striking that many of the apostolic churches were so small that they could meet in a home. Paul was not ashamed of these. Are the preachers of this century better than and more 'successful' than the apostle Paul was?

Hear the great confidence Paul had in the power of the gospel! He says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth: to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1: 16).

The solemn duty of the preacher is to set forth the truth of the gospel in all of its glory and power. He must declare the truth of God's absolute sovereignty in saving His people. He must declare the truth of the righteousness of God as it is revealed alone in the cross and resurrection and exaltation of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This truth stands against all the boasting achievements of mere men. It condemns all the works of men and all their glorying in their own righteousness and in their own imagined inherent goodness and great achievements in life.

This gospel will never be popular among men. The truth of the gospel will always prove to be a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to Greeks. The world will never change. Increasingly, as the end of time approaches, the apostate church is hardened in its blindness and even open hatred for the truth of the gospel. The faithful preacher may not remove the offense of the gospel and change it in such a way that it will become

more popular among men and receive greater acceptance in the world.

The apostle of the Lord expended tremendous efforts, laboring day and night for the sake of the gospel. The necessity that the Lord laid upon Paul impelled him in all of his great missionary journeys in which he traveled virtually to the ends of the world. He tells us that on his journeys he suffered many perils, he was opposed by many fearful enemies, he endured great hardships, he was severely persecuted. Several times he experienced the agony and shame and public humiliation of scourging. He was opposed by wicked men inspired by the devil himself. He was often falsely accused by those who opposed the preaching of the gospel. When these could not find fault with the Word of God that he brought, they attacked his person. See the litany of all that Paul suffered for the sake of the gospel that is recorded in II Corinthians 11: 23-26. Contrast with this how the popular church leaders of our day use the ministry to enrich themselves and live in palatial estates in worldly pleasure and luxury.

The conviction of the necessity laid upon Paul gave him the courage to stand even before the princes and kings of the earth. He was not afraid of men, no matter how mighty they were. He dared to condemn false teachers and enemies of the cross of Christ in spite of their worldly popularity.

So all-compelling was the necessity that the Lord laid upon Paul that he finally was ready by the grace of God to sacrifice himself, to suffer and die as a martyr. The apostle could die in peace after having served his Lord faithfully in his ministry. After having fought the good fight and finished his course and kept the faith, he knew that the Lord would give to him a crown of life.

Who today is ready to follow this example? 

### Great Sin – Greater Love

Dear Father, as I kneel in prayer to Thee  
Grant that my sin I may more clearly see;  
That I may be appalled by its immensity.  
The very best accomplishment of mine  
Stands not alone, but sin does e'er entwine;  
It chokes out righteousness as tendrils from a vine.

With Paul I must in humbleness confess:  
The good that I would say, I can't express;  
The evil which I hate breaks forth in wickedness.  
Then Paul asks how he can from this be free;  
The answer's found, O Lord, alone in Thee:  
The blood of Thy dear Son is all my hope and plea.

Forgive, O Father, ev'ry wayward thought,  
The words and deeds I have in darkness wrought;  
Help me to follow Thy commandments as I ought.  
Destroy my pride, my trust in Thee increase.  
The knowledge of Thy love makes unrest cease:  
Christ's righteousness brings me abiding joy and peace!

*Thelma Westra*  
Jenison, Michigan

### News From Our Churches

### Mr. Benjamin Wigger

#### Mission Activities

The delegation of officebearers from the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI recently returned from a weekend visit to our churches' mission in Pittsburgh, PA with a good report about the blessings of the Lord on the mission and the work being done there. They report that our missionary, Rev. W. Bruinsma, continues to work very hard with plans for a number of new events. He and his family are greatly appreciated by the members of the mission. While there, the delegation participated in a Bible study group, composed of an enthusiastic and spiritually interested group of young people discussing the Lord's Day. The mission group is also very excited about the prospect of finalizing the purchase of their new church property.

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

We can also add here that Rev. Bruinsma gave a Reformation Day lecture at the Heinz Chapel on the campus of the University of Pittsburgh on October 31, entitled "Who Determines Right and Wrong?" A great deal of advertising was done beforehand to promote this event, and there are plans to follow up this lecture with a series of Bible studies in various locations in Pittsburgh, starting already the following week. The core group from the mission and Rev. Bruinsma planned to begin meeting twice a week through the end of November. On Monday evenings they planned to meet at the Hampton Inn in North Hills and on Wednesdays at the Comfort Inn in Peen Hills.

As part of their continued oversight of our denomination's mission labors in Spokane, WA with the Covenant of Grace PR Fellowship, a delegation from the Loveland, CO PRC visited there the first weekend in November. In conjunction with that visit, our Domestic Mission Committee also sent

a delegation that same weekend. Rev. R. Kleyn, one of the men on that committee, not only preached for the Fellowship on Sunday, November 5, but he also gave a Reformation Day lecture on Friday, November 3, on the subject of Biblical Family Worship.

At its meeting on October 17, the DMC considered a letter from the families that are meeting together for Bible studies in Sioux Falls, SD, asking that the DMC assist them in establishing a church in that city. Evidently willing to consider looking into the possibility of their being involved in this work, the DMC agreed to send a committee to meet with the group at their regular biweekly Bible studies scheduled for November 13. It will be interesting to see how this develops.

#### Evangelism Activities

In connection with its continued support and sponsorship of "Christianity on Campus" at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, MI, the Evangelism

Committee of Grace PRC in Standale, MI sponsored a special lecture on the campus, given by their pastor, Rev. M. Dick, on October 26, on "Luther vs. Erasmus: Free Will, Christian Humanism, and Christianity." Luther, of course, was the Reformation champion of free grace, while Erasmus was the humanist champion of free will. They battled each other in the sixteenth century, and that battle between true Christianity and humanism continues today – on secular campuses and all over the world.

On October 27 the Evangelism Committee of the South Holland, IL PRC sponsored a lecture given by Rev. Doug Kuiper, pastor of the Randolph, WI PRC. Rev. Kuiper spoke on "Philip Melancthon, Luther's Assistant and Successor."

The Evangelism Committee of Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI sponsored a Fall lecture by Prof. D. Engelsma on an important and timely subject. Prof. Engelsma spoke on "The Latest Attack on Grace in the Reformed Churches; Justification by Works – A Covenant Heresy." This speech spe-

cifically challenged the error of Federal Vision. This lecture was given at Grace Community Church in Hudsonville, MI on October 27. Questions and answers followed the speech (cf. [www.southwestprc.org/literature.htm](http://www.southwestprc.org/literature.htm)).

#### Denomination Activities

**T**he Martha Ladies Society of the Doon, Iowa PRC hosted the annual Fall Combined Ladies League Meeting on October 24. Rev. D. Overway, pastor at Doon, spoke on the topic of "Instructing and Disciplining Our Children."

Members of our PR congregations in West Michigan were invited to Fair Haven Ministries in Jenison, MI on Sunday evening, October 29, for a "Men Sing Thy Praise" concert. The evening included beautiful selections by the Hope Heralds, Trinity Men Singers, Voices of Victory, and a combined group of over 80 men from our area PR churches. It was truly a powerful and inspiring evening of praise to God. A collection was taken for the 2007 Y.P. Convention.

#### Congregation Activities

**R**ev. Doug Kuiper, pastor of the Randolph, WI PRC, was given an opportunity to address the Young People's Group of the First Christian Reformed Church in Waupun, introducing them to the PRC, on Sunday evening, October 22.

Members of Faith PRC in Jenison, MI were invited to join a Crochet/Knitting class, October 26, in their Fellowship room. Those who wished to do the crocheting around a towel were reminded to bring a hand towel, G-hook, and sugar and cream cotton yarn, while others could bring any project they were working on.

#### Minister Activities

**T**he Doon, Iowa PRC, the calling church for our denomination's mission work in the Philippines, extended a call to Rev. M. VanderWal to become our next missionary in the Philippines. Rev. A. Spriensma plans to conclude his labors there in the next couple of months, before taking up his work as the next pastor of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC, the Lord willing. 

## Announcements

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of Grandville PRC express their Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Ed Lotterman and family in the death of Ed's father,

##### MR. DON LOTTERMAN.

May they find comfort in the words of Jesus in John 14:1-3: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Rev. Ken Koole, Pres.  
Tom Bodbyl, Asst. Clerk

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Southeast PRC express their Christian sympathy to Rich Kamminga, and to Bernie and Henrietta, in the death of Rich's wife,

##### JEANETTE KAMMINGA.

May they find their comfort in God's word in John 14:16-19: "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also."

Rev. William Langerak, President  
Ron Kooienga, Assistant Clerk

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Study of the Grace PRC express their Christian sympathy to Berdina Lotterman and her family in the loss of her husband,

##### DON LOTTERMAN.

Isaiah 61:3 comforts those who mourn with these words: "To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified."

Rev. Dick, Pres.  
Jodi Vreugdenhil, Sec't.

# THE STANDARD BEARER

## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

We rejoice with our parents and grandparents,

### HOWARD and LAJEAN BONESTROO,

as they celebrate their 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on December 16, 2006, Lord willing. We express our gratitude to God for the many blessings that He has given to them and to us through them. "Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it" (Psalm 127:1a).

All that I am I owe to Thee,  
Thy wisdom, Lord, hath fashioned me;  
I give my Maker thankful praise,  
Whose wondrous works my soul amaze.

Psalter 383:1

- ❖ Mike and Carol Bonestroo  
Carl, Tyler, Alycia
- ❖ Dan and Cyndi Bruxvoort  
Emily, Jesse
- ❖ Rev. Allen and Crysta Brummel  
Dean, Allyn, Ethan, Brandyn,  
Steven, Crystal, Darren, Alyce
- ❖ Chris and Cara Vermeer  
Casey, Chase, Carmen
- ❖ Dave and Cassie VanderMeulen  
Julie, Bekah

Doon, Iowa

## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On November 11, 2006, our parents and grandparents,

**MR. and MRS. HARVEY HOLSTEGE,** celebrated their 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. We, as children and grandchildren, thank our heavenly Father for providing us with parents who gave us covenant instruction and who were true godly examples. We pray that God continue to bless their marriage and their lives together in the years ahead.

Psalm 103: 17-18: But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

- ❖ Greg and Rhonda Holstege  
Michelle, Marissa, Stephanie, Jodi,  
Travis, Maci
- ❖ Mark and Brenda Zandstra  
Christina, Ryan, Chad, Nicole
- ❖ Jay and Heidi VanBaren  
Zachary, Connor, Kaylee, Reid
- ❖ Mike and Nikki Holstege  
Zoe, Logan, Danika
- ❖ Jeff Holstege
- ❖ Joel and Lanae Holstege  
Lindsey, Jori, Spencer

Hudsonville, Michigan

## NOTICE!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, January 10, 2007, at the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, Michigan. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk by December 10, 2006.

Jon J. Huiskens  
Stated Clerk

## Reformed Witness Hour

### February 2006

Date	Topic	Text
December 3	"The World Turned Upside Down"	Luke 1:51-53
December 10	"Eternal Ruler Out of Little Bethlehem"	Micah 5:2
December 17	"The Majesty and the Glory of Incarnation"	John 1:1-4, 14, 29
December 24	"Born in a Manger"	Luke 2:6, 7
December 31	"Emptied from Vessel to Vessel"	Jeremiah 48:11

## First PRC of Holland MI Winter Conference 2007

"The Antithesis:  
Godly Living  
in Ungodly Times"

### January 12:

"Antithetical in a  
Technological Age"—  
Speaker: Rev. Daniel Kleyn

### January 19:

"Antithetical in an  
Age of Covetousness"—  
Speaker: Rev. Garrett Eriks

### January 26:

"Antithetical in an  
Age of Great Immorality"—  
Speaker: Prof. Herman Hanko

All three dates are Fridays.  
Speeches will begin at 7:30 P.M. and refreshments and fellowship will follow each speech, D.V. Tapes of the lectures will be available upon request.

## RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of the Loveland PRC extend their sincere sympathy to the family of

### MRS. FLORENCE SCHWARZ,

whom the Lord took to glory on October 22, 2006. May they be comforted by the words taken from Psalm 17:15: "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."

Rev. Rodney Miersma, President  
Robert Brands, Clerk

## RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of Grandville PRC express their Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Robert Huizinga in the death of Linda's mother,

### MRS. LORENE KUZMA.

May they be comforted in the words of Psalm 121:2, "My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth."

Rev. Ken Koole, Pres.  
Tom Bodbyl, Asst. Clerk