

THE *May 15, 2006*  
STANDARD  
BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

*In This Issue:*

- ◆ *The Law Beloved* 362
- ◆ *Intelligent Support of PRC Missions (3)* 364
- ◆ *All Around Us* 367
- ◆ *Charter of Christian Liberty (7)* 369
- ◆ *Foreign Mission Labors of the PRCA* 372
- ◆ *The Field Is the World* 374
- ◆ *Islam (6)* 378
- ◆ *Am I My Brother's Keeper?* 381
- ◆ *News From Our Churches* 383

Volume 82 ◆ Number 16

# The Law Beloved

O how love I thy law!  
It is my meditation all the day.  
Thou through thy commandments hast  
made me wiser than mine enemies:  
For they are ever with me.  
I have more understanding than all  
my teachers:  
For thy testimonies are my meditation.  
—Psalm 119:97-99

**W**hat a love to profess  
before men! What a  
love to confess to God!

Oh how love I Thy law!

Upon the law of God the psalmist has set his affection. Ardent, and with great zeal, he devotes himself to God's testimonies. His delight is fixed upon God's commandments. His desire is for the judgments of His God.

Oh how love I Thy law!

These words are an intense expression of feeling. They are spoken with fervor and zeal. The strength of the words uttered shows the strength of love for God's law.

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

This strong profession of great love is made before God. "Oh how love I thy law!" It is a prayer raised up before God. Consciously it is directed to His throne. The Lord has commanded. His commandments are heard. A word returns to Him, entering into His ear: "O how love I thy law!"



But is this profession of love true? We hear many professions that are not true. God hears many professions. Some of them are genuine. Others are empty. God hears expressions of intentions that never come to pass. He hears men professing affections that they imagine to be deep and lasting, but that quickly show themselves to be only passing fancies or whims. He hears words of committed love that are quickly and easily broken, leaving heartache and broken lives. Such professions were spoken with great fervor and zeal. But where are those words now? What happened to the strong feelings those words conveyed?

We hear professions of love. By the sound of them, we often feel assured that they are genuine. But are they? Where is the proof?

O how love I Thy law!

Proof abounds for the genuineness of this profession. The genuineness of the profession of love for the law of God is revealed in this, as expressed in the words that immediately follow: "It is my meditation all the day."

The psalmist makes that law his *meditation*. He brings the law of his God into his mind, in its words and sentences. He examines closely its words and the joining together of those words into sentences. He examines the thoughts that are given in those words.

He keeps the law of his God before his mind. With that law he occupies his thoughts. Things that might otherwise seem important, demanding his attention, are put in their proper place. The law of God is his aim and focus. He continually meditates upon it.

He examines that law by revolving it in his mind. He examines it from every conceivable angle. He examines it in its application to all kinds of different circumstances. He searches out all the implications of each of the words of this law of his God.

O how love I Thy law!

All the day that law is his medi-

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

#### REPRINT POLICY

Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgment is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

#### EDITORIAL POLICY

Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for The Reader Asks department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be signed.

#### EDITORIAL OFFICE

Prof. Russell J. Dykstra  
4949 Ivanrest  
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)

#### SUBSCRIPTION PRICE

\$17.00 per year in the U.S., US\$20.00 elsewhere.

#### ADVERTISING POLICY

The Standard Bearer does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$10.00 fee. These should be sent to the Editorial Office and should be accompanied by the \$10.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is one month prior to publication date.

16mm microfilm, 35mm microfilm and 105mm microfiche, and article copies are available through University Microfilms International.

Website for RPPA: [www.rpa.org](http://www.rpa.org)  
Website for PRC: [www.prca.org](http://www.prca.org)

tation. Constantly the psalmist holds the law of God before himself. So devoted is he to that law. He never grows weary of it. It never becomes worn or old to him. As long as he looks into it, he finds new things. He finds new points of obedience and new points of understanding. He finds more and more knowledge of God, more and more of the kindness of God to him.

All the day that law is his companion. All the day he refers to it as his guide. He enters into situations that require him to decry good and evil. That law points him to the good. He clings to that good and does it. That law shows him the evil. He flees from it or fights against it. That law protects him from sin in all kinds of circumstances.

All the day he tests that law of his God, and all the day he finds that it keeps him. All the day his love thus grows for that law.

O how love I Thy law!

The psalmist's love for the law of God is well grounded. It continually brings forth much fruit. He grows in the love of God and he grows in his love for the people of God. He seeks and finds opportunities to bring glory to God and help to God's people.



O how love I Thy law!

"Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me."

Through his meditation upon the law of his God, this man finds sure protection from his enemies.

His enemies are shrewd. They are not so bold as to attack openly and destroy. Instead they employ cunning and subtle strategies to accomplish their hateful goal, the destruction of the psalmist's soul. They scheme. They use intrigue. Perhaps they employ other people to assail a man. Perhaps they operate under a cloak of open friendship. But their hearts are filled

with hatred, and their determination is to destroy.

His enemies are clever. And by their devilish wisdom they would surely destroy this one that boasts in the law of his God. But, "Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies, for they are ever with me." The psalmist finds his refuge in the commandments of God. What evil can befall him?

By God's gift of wisdom to him, the psalmist sees the temptations that his enemies set before him. By that wisdom he is able to keep from yielding to them. He keeps himself in right paths. By that wisdom he recognizes that their friendship is fraudulent. God having made him wiser than his enemies, he sees through their deceitful gestures and words. He sees the evil of their ways, having known so well the commandments of his God. Thus warned, he is kept safe from all the temptations of the wicked.

He is kept safe!

God, by His commandments, keeps him. God makes him wiser than his enemies.



O how love I Thy law!

Still more amazing, this man is given more understanding than all his teachers.

His teachers did have understanding. And they imparted that understanding to this lover of God's law.

Oh, it might be said that there was something lacking in their instruction. Perhaps these teachers did not have the same love for the law that the psalmist did. Perhaps they were hypocritical teachers, like the Pharisees. They would then teach and not do. The law they taught would be a superficial law. Thus would their understanding be found wanting.

The psalmist could then say: "I have more understanding than all my teachers." He would understand that true blessedness is not to be found in the mere hearing of God's testimonies. Blessedness is in the doing of them. He would understand that true blessedness is not found in barren and frigid speculations about God's commandments. Blessedness is found in loving them with the heart, and in the sincere endeavor to live from the heart according to them all.

In that love of the heart and the sincere endeavor to live out of it is the proof of the profession.



O how love I Thy law!

Indeed, the psalmist would have more understanding than all his teachers.

But we must say yet more. Let us suppose that these teachers were not hypocritical. Let us suppose that they were filled with a love for the law of the Lord. Let us

suppose that they had a proper and true understanding of the law of the Lord. And yet this man is still able to say, "I have more understanding than my teachers."

Why? Because the testimonies of God are his meditation.

These teachers led him to the testimonies of the Lord. They faithfully reminded him of the commandments of his God. They taught him the law of God in righteousness and truth.

Those teachers led him to those testimonies and commandments and to that law, in order that he should make them his meditation, and keep them with him.

The psalmist follows their teaching. He keeps the testimonies of God with him. Those testimonies are his constant, beloved companions. He preserves them and cherishes them in his heart.

*In that love of the heart and the sincere endeavor to live out of it is the proof of the profession.*

Those testimonies show him much. He understands his life without. He understands his own outward words and deeds, and the words and deeds of other men around him. He understands what is right and what is wrong. By that understanding he is equipped to speak and do what is right.

Those testimonies also show him his life within. He understands the ways of his mind and the thoughts of his heart. He understands what is right and what is wrong in his mind and heart. The wrong in his mind he puts down. The right in his heart he encourages and promotes.

He grows in his understanding. He becomes greater than his teachers. By the work of the Spirit of Christ in his heart, he is enabled to go beyond what mere men can teach.

Through all his teachers he received the knowledge of God's law. By the Lord's commandments he is made wiser than his enemies. That law is his meditation all the day. So he exults in that law.

O how love I Thy law!

How great this man becomes! Yet his wisdom and his understanding he still finds in God. The

Lord has made him wiser than his enemies. The Lord has taught him, giving him more understanding than his teachers.

This law is the law of the Lord. These are the commandments of God. These are the testimonies of Jehovah. These gifts he properly treasures. These words he properly uses. But he also sees through them. He sees through the gifts to the Giver. His love for the law of God he professes. That love he directs to God. Ascribing the gift to the Giver, he praises the Giver. He blesses the Giver.

O how love I Thy law! 

Editorial

Prof. Barry Gritters

## Intelligent Support of PRC Missions (3)

**I**n the two previous editorials I urged that the mission work of the Protestant Reformed Churches is worthy of heartiest support. First, it is worthy of support because of what it *is*—the diligent labor of churches and men eager to be faithful to the calling of Jesus Christ. Men of God and their families give their lives for the highest cause. In the hope that God's people will be called and God's name lifted up they go out. Second, it is worthy of support because of what it is *not*—an attempt to make the kingdom of Christ an earthly kingdom and the church of Christ merely a tool to serve this "kingdom."

But gratitude for what God has given the churches is not the same

as proud belief that the only wisdom regarding missions lies in the PRC, or naïve assumption that there cannot be growth and development of our understanding of Christ's calling in missions. In fact, true gratitude always seeks to be more faithful, to grow in obedience, to increase capacity for living dutifully. The greater the gratitude the stronger the desires to improve. Faithful over a little, we may be given responsibility over more.

During the past two years, a large part of this editor's task in preparing for teaching missions in the seminary has been to read and study the history of PRC denominational missions. This involved a careful reading of most of the missions decisions in the *Acts of Synod of the PRC* from 1940 to 2004—almost 65 years of missions history. The record of the PRC's mission labors before 1940 is in the

minutes first of the combined consistories, and then of the single classis—periodic meetings of representatives of all the PRC consistories. These minutes—mostly handwritten and in Dutch—have been translated by the late Rev. Cornelius Hanko. To read and study *all* of the material would have been impossible in the time available, except for the existence of a meticulously constructed index of the *Acts of Synod* and the minutes of the combined consistory meetings. Mr. Donald Doezema, stated clerk of synod, must be thanked for this work. Each year, the *Index* is updated, so that a student of PRC history can carefully research almost any topic (not just missions) if he has access to all of the *Acts of Synod*, which almost every PRC minister and many church libraries have.

In the course of studying PRC missions history, the increasingly

---

Previous article in this series: [May 1, 2006, p. 340](#)

strong conviction of this editor is that there are two areas in which PRC missions can grow in their faithfulness to Jesus Christ. Suggesting a need to grow in faithfulness is not necessarily to be taken as criticism, not of the missionaries or of those who oversaw their work—any more than to say that Christ’s growth in obedience (Heb. 5:8) implies He previously was disobedient. Besides, as will be shown, there may be good reasons—historical reasons—that explain why the growth in at least one of these areas has been delayed. At the same time, there are also reasons—good reasons—to be convinced that the time to seek this growth is the present.

### History

First, the documents show that, in the course of working out missions policy and practice, there has been little appeal to Reformed church mission *precedent*. Most of the decisions—good decisions—were made without explicit grounding in Reformed tradition. The records do not show that the mission policies adopted by the synods over the years were policies based on those from previous generations in the Reformed church world so that the PRC would stand on the shoulders of those who went before. And when issues or problems in missions arose, more often than not the resolution of those issues was not grounded in appeal to history. “What did the Reformed church in the past say when she faced these questions?” was not often asked. Because of this, many crucial missions decisions were, or appear to be, building from the ground floor.

This is a surprising thing for the PRC, whose life for 80 years has been defined by appeals to history. Reformed churches always ask the “question of history.” Rightly they do so. No decisions regarding doctrine, worship, church government, or life, should be taken without a conscious

grounding in the past. With that consciousness, the PRC have sought to “hold the traditions” and ask for the “old paths” (II Thess. 2:15; Jer. 6:16). In the debates regarding common grace (the PRC’s origin) and in the controversy over a conditional covenant, history was followed. The old paths were called for in discussions over Psalm-singing and other matters of worship. And when there is question regarding the Christian walk, such as marriage and divorce, “What has the church in the past decided?” is one of the first questions asked. Indeed, tradition may be *corrected*, if it is shown to be in conflict with the Scriptures. But tradition will be *consulted*. This does honor to the Spirit’s work in the church of the past and preserves the

church from a careless sectarian spirit that isolates. It also is the principle implied in the Church Order, Article 46. The denomination is and must remain a part of the church down through the ages.

But in the matter of missions, this sense has not been so strong. Two examples illustrate this. The struggle in the PRC some 25 years ago over baptism on the mission field produced much good fruit (see especially the document in the Acts of Synod, 1976, pp. 103-115), but produced little reference to history and tradition. Interestingly, one of the first questions faced by the Reformed churches in the Netherlands doing mission work was the question of baptism in missions. Or, in the question of the objects of missions—should we go to pagans or to “erring Christians”—there appears to be no appeal to history to justify going to the “schismatics among confessing Christians,” even though there is long history, ancient history, of the church sending missionaries first to

those who had departed from the true faith. Happily, there are exceptions. But they are exceptions, and not the rule in the PRC’s history.

What is necessary, first (to start at home), is that the seminary require the students to be familiar with *missions* history, beginning with the history of missions in the PRC, but including the history of Reformed missions and Christian missions from the earliest days. The seminary teaches *church* history and history of *doctrine*; included should be some *missions* history. Second, growth in obedience

in missions is that decisions taken at synods and in the mission committees be taken, as much as possible, in the light of the past. Third, the missionaries themselves will want to be fluent

in the ways of the church in this great gospel work—both past and present—so that they can assist the calling church and the synodical committee in knowing both the precedents and the modern errors to avoid.

### Training

The churches can also grow in faithfulness by increased training of those who will participate in missions. The training could include both of the missionary and of the bodies supervising the missionary.

That the churches have not required special training for missionaries may also be surprising. Yet a consideration of the PRC history in missions will explain the lack. From the beginning, the Lord opened doors for missions mainly among those who were already Christians but wanted to be instructed in the Reformed faith. Most opportunities the Lord gave were among “erring brethren” in other Reformed denominations. So missionaries criss-

...tradition will be consulted. This does honor to the Spirit’s work in the church of the past and preserves the church from a careless sectarian spirit that isolates.

crossed the country preaching and organizing churches among those who were already very close to being Protestant Reformed. For this work, a thorough seminary training was sufficient. Little, if any, specialized training in missions was even considered.

In the last decades, since the 1970s (1960s if Jamaican missions are included), the Lord has been opening other doors. The missionaries have been working among those who know nothing of the Reformed faith, and sometimes little if anything about Christianity. Protestant Reformed missionaries have worked in different cultures, both at home and abroad, in Jamaica and Singapore, the Philippines, India, and Ghana. Even the two current "home missionaries" labor in areas where non-Christian religions and radical heresies abound. The majority of contacts are no longer white Dutchmen with Christian education and solid family background. The religions are strange to the missionaries, the cultures — even local cultures — stranger. Now, the missionary's task is not simply to assist the potential church members in the Reformed faith. Times for Protestant Reformed missionaries have changed.

But the requirements for training have not changed. They should. Men in the churches are beginning to express this sense of need. Last year's report on the missions in Ghana, produced jointly by the calling church and the Foreign Mission Committee, was a call for missionary training (see the full report in the *Acts of Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, 2005*, pp. 96-117). The report reflects on the reasons to close the field in Ghana. "Our work in Ghana has ... suffered from our own lack ... in providing a focused training of ministers for the work of missions." "The work of missions ... is markedly different from the work of the pastoral ministry." The joint report judges that the churches were "unduly optimistic" when they expressed the

judgment that only a short period of "briefing and training will be necessary for the missionary and his co-worker." When synod examined the report, synod judged similarly. Among the mistakes listed in a painful self-examination were inability to communicate with non-English-speakers and an incorrect judgment that only a "minimal amount of culture training would be necessary." "The FMC reports indicate that they as a committee, and we as churches, were unprepared to undertake the work in Ghana." Part of the lack was training.

This is not the first time the PRC have seen the need for training missionaries. Already in 1952, synod issued a special call for "young men who desire to prepare themselves for foreign mission work in our seminary." At the same time, the Theological School Committee and the faculty were instructed to "study a proposed missionary training program in our seminary" and report to the following synod. The following year was the culmination of the schism in the churches, and nothing came of the mandate. Is there a reason it should not be resurrected?

In 1999, the Theological School Committee received a significant gift from an estate. The TSC earmarked this gift specifically for "instruction focusing on missionary skills and/or for student internships involving missions." Synod 2000 gave guidelines for use of the funds. Let us use them, while the Lord tarries.

Thorough training of missionaries has a history.

Gisbertus Voetsius, sometimes called the "father of reformed missions," mandated specialized training for all missionaries in the earliest days of the Reformation. Voetsius lived from 1589 to 1676.

After a rigorous selection process, Voetsius and the churches required the candidates to be thoroughly trained in languages of the people, their religious and cultural history, even science, history, eloquence, and social skills. This is the history of Reformed missions.

Again, a beginning is made in the seminary. In the past years, Professor Robert Decker has developed courses that are important in this regard. *World Religions* is required of every student. *Cross-Cultural Missions* and *Contemporary Trends in Missiology* have been offered as elective interim courses. These are good beginnings for training a Protestant Reformed missionary in the twenty-first century. The seminary must build on these good beginnings.

If the Lord gives strength and opportunity to the churches, there could also be developed a training program for calling churches and mission committee members. All would be well-served by a familiarity with 1) mission principles, 2) Protestant Reformed mission history,

3) missions history generally, and 4) the great value of learning the differences in cultures and the mistakes that can be made without this understanding. Since Babel, the cultural differences have

grown so great, it is well-nigh irresponsible not to learn the culture and customs of the people with whom a man will labor.

Let us pray for our missionaries and their families, for the consistories and committees that oversee them. Let us pray for and support them intelligently. Let us read missions history. Let us be knowledgeable of this great work of Jesus Christ in gathering His church.

*Lord God, gather, defend, and preserve Thy church. Be pleased to use us. Make us faithful.* 

*Since Babel, the cultural differences have grown so great, it is well-nigh irresponsible not to learn the culture and customs of the people with whom a man will labor.*

## ■ Some (Unscientific??) Musings

An interesting article from the Associated Press appeared in the *Grand Rapids Press*, March 17, 2006, as proof of the “Big Bang” theory of the origin of the universe. The article was titled: “Now that’s ‘inflation’” and subtitled: “Evidence shows universe expanded in a trillionth of a second.” The article made astounding claims:

By the faint cosmic glow of the oldest known light, physicists say they have found evidence that the universe grew to astounding proportions in less than the blink of an eye.

In that trillionth of a second after the big bang, the universe expanded from the size of a marble to a volume larger than all of observable space through a process known as inflation. At the same time, the seeds were planted for the formation of stars, galaxies, planets and every other object in the universe.

“It’s giving us our first clues about how inflation took place,” said Michael Turner, assistant director for mathematics and physical sciences at the National Science Foundation. “This is absolutely amazing.”

Researchers found this long-sought “smoking gun” evidence by looking at the cosmic microwave background, the oldest light in the universe. The light was produced when the universe was about 300,000 years old — a long time ago, but still hundreds of millennia after inflation had done its work.

Even so, the pattern of light in the cosmic microwave background offers clues about what came before it. Of special interest to physicists are subtle brightness variations that give images of the

microwave background a lumpy appearance.

Physicists presented new measurements of those variations during a news conference Thursday at Princeton University. The measurements were made by a spaceborne instrument called the Wilkinson Microwave Anisotropy Probe, launched by NASA in 2001.

“It amazes me that we can say anything at all about what transpired in the first trillionth of a second of the universe,” said Charles Bennett, a Johns Hopkins University physicist who presented the research with Lyman Page and David Spergel, both of Princeton.

Earlier studies of the space probe’s data determined the universe is 13.7 billion years old, give or take a few hundred thousand years.

Now for some unscientific (?) musings.

1. Amazing that there is a scientific (?) theory called “inflation.” In less than a blink of an eye, in less than a split second, the whole of the universe expanded from something the size of a marble to the vastness that we now observe. This is supposed to be part of the evolutionary theory—the “big bang” origin of what we see today. It is the beginning of the whole “evolutionary” process that is presumably “science.” Normally nothing can travel faster than the speed of light—so I have read. It presumably takes billions of years for the light of the more distant stars to reach the earth. By what scientific law could the universe so suddenly come into being? “Inflation”?

2. What scientific proof could there be that a marble-sized object could suddenly explode to form the vastness of the universe with all of its myriads of stars? Was this “marble” eternal? What would set off the kind of explosion that “inflation” would require? There

must be some explanation. One cannot insist on teaching this in “science” classes in the schools unless there is some semblance of a scientific explanation for the eternal “marble” that explodes and spreads almost infinitely and fantastically quickly.

3. Scripture does indeed provide the far more reasonable answer to the “big bang” theory. Genesis 1:1 states, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” There was nothing before that creation except God. There was no marble-sized ball out of which the universe originated. There was no time, no space, no matter. Then God said, “Let there be light. And there was light.” In less than the blink of the eye the whole of the universe was made. What the scientists claim to have discovered fits far more with the statements of Scripture than with the “scientific” explanations of man.

## ■ Evil Attacks Against the Gospel

At the very time when churches commemorate that great victory of Calvary, the resurrection of our Lord, one sees attempts of the unbelievers to belittle, deny, and distort that great victory. It is no wonder! From the time of Adam man has sought to rid himself of God and His work. He would do this especially by trying to destroy the faith of God’s people. That old lie of the devil is still behind this attempt (“Yea, hath God said...”).

It is not surprising, then, that unusual means are used to suppress the truth of the very existence of Christ. The *Chicago Tribune*, January 29, 2006, reports concerning legal action taken against a priest in Italy by an atheist who demanded the court there stop his teaching concerning Christ.

---

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

An Italian court has given a village priest a tough assignment for a man of faith: "Prove it."

In essence, Rev. Enrico Righi was told to either put up or shut up. His legal problems began four years ago when he wrote in his parish bulletin that Jesus was born in Bethlehem to a father named Joseph and a mother named Mary. That message hardly originated with Righi, pastor of St. Bonaventura Catholic Church in Bagnoregio, a hilltop hamlet north of Rome. Myriad others have proclaimed it, but a resident of a nearby town cried foul.

Luigi Cascioli is an atheist, as passionate about his faith as the priest is about his. The Italian Penal Code is his bible. "According to article 661," Cascioli wrote in a complaint to the provincial court, "there is an abuse of popular credulity when someone, by means of fraud, deceives a great number of people."

Joseph and Mary, he claimed, are "two totally imaginary characters and therefore historically non-existent." Thus the Catholic Church deceives its followers, conning them into putting coins on the collection plate—an abuse of article 464 of the penal code, as Cascioli reads it.

The article continues by presenting many different and erroneous claims concerning religions and miracles of Scripture in particular. If the report accurately presents the teaching of that priest, he too teaches things contrary to Scripture (that Jesus was born of a *human* father and human mother). It gives some indication, however, to what extent unbelief and atheism go to destroy the truth—even to challenge in the court that the teaching of Scripture must be "proved" scientifically or not taught at all.

Cal Thomas in the *Grand Rapids Press*, April 14, 2006, comments about similar attacks against scriptural truths:

It happens twice a year, at Christmas and Easter.

The newsweeklies sometimes carry cover stories. The newspa-

pers print items calling the reason for these seasons into question.

This Easter is no exception, but the intensity level seems to have increased.

This year's first attack came from St. Paul, Minnesota where local officials decided to ban the Easter Bunny from City Hall. They said it might offend some non-Christians, as if the Easter Bunny has anything to do with Easter's real significance. Apparently it escaped the notice of the City Council that the Easter Bunny might offend Christians, because, like Santa Claus, it is a counterfeit....

Newspapers also carried a story about a Florida State University scientist who speculated that Jesus didn't really walk on water; he walked on ice. The scientist theorized there must have been an unusual cold snap 2,000 years ago that froze the Sea of Galilee. This begs the question how Jesus was able to pull off such a stunt when Peter also walked on water, before his lack of faith sank him....

Next was a story on the "Gospel of Judas," a work written between 130 and 170 A.D., long after the events it purports to describe. In this document, Jesus is revealed as having urged Judas to betray him. That a number of Judas' contemporaries said otherwise in Scripture matters not to skeptics.

Adding to the gospel of unbelief is the movie version of the best-selling novel, "The Da Vinci Code," which, if it is faithful to the book, will mix a few historical facts with a great deal of fiction. The book claims Jesus married Mary Magdalene and fathered children. The film is scheduled for release next month. Like the book, the movie will have as much to do with fact as Oliver Stone's film on the Kennedy assassination.

What is responsible for this flood of skepticism, heresy and outright denial of the biblical record? Why is there not a similar cultural onslaught against other faiths? Only the suicidal would treat Islam in this way....

Thomas continues by commenting on the unbelief of so many. He characterizes the opposition as "hostile and unbelieving." He points out the errors of those who so greatly oppose the work of God in sending His Son. He then correctly identifies the faith of the Christian as that which assures him of the truthfulness of the biblical account:

Christians who believe the Bible's account of Easter believe it because they also believe God's spirit guarded human hands from making errors in recording these events. Skeptics have no such guide. They should be humbled that God is far wiser than the wisest man. (1 Corinthians 1:25-27)

Before accepting what heretics and unbelievers say, consideration should be given to what is contained in the guidebook.

Our confession is a matter of living faith worked in us by the Spirit of the Son. The reprobate unbeliever will not repent nor turn from his evil way though he see the angels of God, as did the guards at Jesus' tomb. Not only does he not believe, he seeks also fervently to destroy the faith of those who do believe. Such attacks will surely continue and increase until Christ comes again.

## ■ Bodily Resurrection

**T**he *Grand Rapids Press*, April 8, 2006, reports on a poll taken recently that indicates that most Americans do not believe in the bodily resurrection from the dead. Perhaps that should surprise no one. The article stated:

Most Americans don't believe they will experience a resurrection of their bodies when they die, putting them at odds with a core teaching of Christianity.

...Only 36 percent of the 1,007 adults interviewed a month ago by the Scripps Survey Research Center at Ohio University said "yes" to the question: "Do you believe that, after you die, your

physical body will be resurrected someday?" Fifty-four percent said they do not believe and 10 percent were undecided.

"This reflects the very low state of doctrinal preaching in our churches," said Al Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and editor of the Southern Baptist Journal of Theology.

"I continually am confronted by Christians, even active members of major churches, who have never heard this taught in their local congregations," Mohler said. "We have a lowest-common-denominator Christianity being taught in so many denominations that has produced a people who simply do not know some of the most basic Christian truths."

What is particularly disturbing is that the survey shows that even a sizable minority of those called evangelical (born-again) Christians do not believe in the bodily resurrection. The conclusion of Mohler (quoted above) surely appears correct, "This reflects the very low state of doctrinal preaching in our churches...."

One gains the impression that the preaching ought not so much emphasize "doctrine" today as to emphasize "love." An emphasis on "doctrine" seems to divide, while emphasis on "love" presumably unites. However, there is no disjunction between doctrine and the scriptural view of love. Love as

taught in Scripture is doctrine. However, the love that receives most of the emphasis today is based on the Arminian emphasis that "God loves everyone." Such love minimizes doctrinal distinctives. That love becomes the basis for a social gospel that ignores the doctrines of Scripture. This "love" often is presented as God's attitude toward all people that will not even allow for the scriptural concept of hell or of the one way of salvation through Christ's cross. It is sad indeed that lack of doctrinal preaching has had the troubling effect that many do not even know anymore some of the basic teachings of Scripture. 

Search the Scriptures

Prof. Herman Hanko

## The Charter of Christian Liberty (7)

# An Exposition of the Book of Galatians

## Paul's Defense of His Apostolic Credentials (1:1-2:14)

### Paul's Warning Against Apostasy

*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*

Galatians 1:8, 9

---

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

*Previous article in this series: March 15, 2006, p. 279.*

**T**hese verses contain an almost heart-stopping warning and threat to the Judaizers in the Galatian churches and to all ministers of the gospel. We must remember that this is the Word of Christ Himself to ministers, and that Christ, enthroned in the heavens, says to ministers: "Pervert my gospel and the end is hell."

Such a strong condemnation pronounced upon unfaithful pastors and teachers by Christ Himself can be explained only in the light of Christ's love and concern for His church. That church is so important to Him that He gave His own blood to redeem it. It is His bride, His beloved, the glory of His own body.

Christ has ordained that His church shall be gathered from out of the wicked world by the preaching of the gospel, for through the preaching Christ Himself speaks and calls His own. He saves them from sin and hell through the gospel; He sanctifies them by the power of the gospel; He provides for all their spiritual needs as long as they are in the world by means of the gospel; He keeps them safely in His own hand unto the end of their life by the gospel. The gospel is the only power to work these mighty and wonderful things.

When wicked men, claiming to preach in the name of Christ and posing in their hypocrisy as possessing the gospel of Christ, per-

vert that gospel, they are disobedient to Christ, threaten the welfare of the church, and bring the beloved of Christ to the brink of destruction. Is it any wonder then that Christ is very angry with such men? It would be tantamount to a man who, being entrusted with the care and protection of another man's wife while the man himself is away serving his country, would try to persuade that wife to be unfaithful to her husband. Even if the wife, in faithfulness to her husband, would resist all efforts to make her sin (as the church, by the power of grace, also resists unfaithful pastors), the husband, upon learning of such treachery, would be furious.

#### Differences Between the Two Verses

The warning and threat of judgment is repeated, and the two verses appear to be very similar to each other. One wonders why the apostle said nearly the same thing twice. Such a question requires that we make a few general observations about the differences, subtle though they may be, between the two verses.

First of all, of rather minor significance is the difference between the wording used in the description of those of whom Paul speaks. In verse 8 the apostle mentions himself along with his co-workers and includes an angel from heaven who would come to earth to preach. In verse 9 he speaks broadly of "anyone." It is clear that this is an all-inclusive warning that the apostle makes to all who take upon themselves the task of preaching the gospel. In fact, the universality of this warning is underscored by the fact that it embraces angels who might come from heaven to preach or teach — as they did on occasion in the Old Testament and in the apostolic era before the Scriptures were complete.

It may be unlikely that such a thing could happen after the Scriptures are completed and Christ has

ordained ministers in the church; but who knows whether once again angels as preachers will come at the very end, when the witnessing of the church is silenced by persecution (see Rev. 11:1-10). In any case, though the elect angels would never pervert the gospel, they are mentioned here to impress on the minds of ministers the utter seriousness of bringing the pure gospel to God's people. Even angels are not exempt from the judgments that would come on unfaithful ministers.

Also of minor importance is the fact that in verse 8 the apostle speaks of the gospel "which we have preached unto you," while in verse 9 he speaks of "the gospel which ye have received." In the first expression the apostle puts the emphasis on the preacher; in the second he reminds the Galatians and all who hear the pure preaching, that the one gospel that is given by Christ is the gospel that the saints received as the Word of Christ that saved them. Why would they now want anything different — if some minister tried to teach them another gospel than that which gave them blessing?

A third minor variation is the addition in verse 9 of the words: "As we said before, so say I now again."

While some commentators want to refer this "said before" to verse 8, the more likely idea is that the apostle refers to his ministry among them when he was first with them. He means to say, "I warned you when I was still with you that there would be false teachers who pervert the gospel. I told you that, upon penalty of hell itself, no one might teach any other gospel than that which I taught. I taught you as an apostle who had received from Christ Himself the gospel Christ wanted preached in the churches. Now you lust after the teachings of those who teach a perverted gospel. Now I say once again what I said before."

We ought, at this point, to no-

tice that verses 8 and 9 are introduced with the word "but." The meaning is clear enough. There were those in the Galatian churches who were perverting the gospel. Let them and the congregation know what severe judgments await those who commit this terrible sin.

"Preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you ... preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received...." Although these two statements are similar in the AV, they differ significantly in the Greek. The difference is one of the mood of the verb "preach." The main verb in verse 8 is in the subjunctive mood, while the main verb in verse 9 is in the indicative mood.<sup>1</sup> Because the subjunctive mood carries with it the idea of uncertainty or probability without certainty, the translation could, perhaps, better be: "If we or an angel from heaven *should preach* to you...."

The main verb in verse 9, also in a conditional sentence, is in the indicative, a mood that does express certainty. That verse, therefore, is correctly translated in the AV. We could, perhaps, emphasize the difference by translating it, "If anyone *do preach*...."

The difference is important. Verse 8 lays down the general principle set forth here. "If now or in the future, at any time or in any circumstances, be he man or angel, should preach to you something different from what we have preached, let him be anathema." But in verse 9, the apostle has his eye on the Judaizers themselves, and, while not addressing them directly, nevertheless expresses something that is really going on in the Galatian churches. "If in fact anyone does preach (and this is happening among you) anything different from what you have received, let him be anathema."

What is the gospel that Paul preached among them and that they received as the very truth of

their salvation? Paul testified before the elders of Ephesus on the beach that he had preached wherever he went the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:24, 27). In short, however, as Paul explains to the elders on the shore near Ephesus, it is the gospel of the grace of God that he had received from Jesus Christ. In his letter to the Corinthians Paul insists that he preached only "Christ crucified" (I Cor. 1:23), even though it was a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks, for among those who believe, it is both the wisdom and power of God.

If we may sum up the whole gospel in a very short statement, especially within the context of the letter of Paul to the Galatians, we could do no better than to say that the gospel, as far as its contents are concerned, is the good news<sup>2</sup> that God, out of unmerited favor and eternal love, according to His own eternal purpose, has sovereignly given, for Christ's sake, the blessings of salvation to His people, without any merit of their own and on the basis of no works that they perform, but on the basis of His eternal determination to glorify His own name.

Another gospel would, therefore, be any gospel that, while piously and deceptively speaking of salvation by grace, makes salvation dependent on the will of man or on man's works in any sense of the word. Another gospel is the gospel of Pelagianism, of Arminianism, of free willism, of justification by faith and works. Another gospel is a gospel of salvation by human merit. Another gospel is any gospel that teaches that Christ died for all, that God wants everyone to be saved because He loves everyone and gives grace to everyone, but depends on their choice in His final decision to save or to damn. Another gospel is any gospel that ascribes power to man and gives him some glory for his salvation, but detracts from and denies in whole or in part that all

glory belongs to God and to Him alone.

The gospel of free, sovereign, and particular grace is the gospel that Paul received from Christ and that he preached to the Galatians (and everywhere he went in his missionary journeys), and this is the gospel that the Galatians received and believed, confessing that it was their salvation.

This is the gospel by which the Son of God gathers, defends, and preserves unto Himself, from the beginning to the end of the world, a church chosen unto everlasting life — of which I am and forever shall remain a living member.<sup>3</sup>

"Let him be anathema."

The word "anathema" comes from a Greek word that means, literally, "set apart and devoted to God." This was the same idea as the Hebrew word "curse." The treasures of Jericho, for example, were "accursed to the Lord" (Josh. 6:17, 18). The idea was that such things as were set apart and devoted to God were devoted to God without hope of redemption.<sup>4</sup> Applied to men, the idea is that such as are anathema are subject to the direst punishments because they have sinned against God, scorned His holiness, spurned His justice, and were devoted to God as those who manifest God's virtues of justice and righteousness when they are punished.

This is, then, a very severe judgment that the apostle pronounces upon unfaithful ministers of the gospel. God's judgment rests upon them already in this life, but ultimately it comes when righteous judgment is pronounced on them by Him who sits as the Head of the church on His great white throne. Our Christ, who loves His church, will make known His fierce wrath against all who did His church harm. He will vindicate the cause of His people, who suffered under the hands of those pastors who sheared the sheep of Christ rather than feeding them.

It would serve our purpose well to quote here the words of

Ezekiel: "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds: Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them" (Ezek. 34:2-6).

Ministers would do well to listen with trembling to the "woe upon you" of Ezekiel and the "let him be anathema" of the apostle Paul. 

1. In the English language the use of the subjunctive mood is gradually disappearing. But in the Greek, the difference between the subjunctive and indicative is critical. While the subjunctive mood has a variety of uses in the New Testament, it almost always, in one way or another, carries on its shoulders the idea of a kind of uncertainty. Such is the case in this verse where it is used in a conditional sentence.

2. Both the verbs and the nouns used in these two verses refer to the gospel as "good news."

3. See Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21, Q. & A. 54.

4. Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* defines the word in that way and gives the example of Leviticus 27:28, 29. In this passage the word applies to a sacrificial animal, but can also be applied to people, as in the case of Achan (Josh. 6:17).

## Foreign Mission Labors of the PRCA Continuing Work in the Philippines — Closing the Ghana field

Mr. Allen R. Brummel

**T**he Foreign Mission Committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches hereby presents a brief annual overview of the foreign mission work being done by our churches. Specifically we provide you with information on the process of closing the Ghana field and the work being done on our mission field in the Philippines. Although the FMC has also corresponded with various contacts in other countries, the focus of our work this past year has definitely been in the Philippines. It has been especially in the Philippines that the Lord has given us opportunity in the past year to be busy in the work of preaching the gospel.

It was with sadness that the field in Ghana had to be closed down during the past year.

### The Committee

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

tel, Rev. David Overway, and Gene VanBemmel.

Rev. Daniel Kleyn was also a member of the FMC in the past several years. However, in September of 2005 he accepted the call to be pastor of First PRC of Holland, MI and thus resigned from the committee. We acknowledge, with thanks to God, the many years of faithful work Rev. Kleyn did for foreign missions, especially during his time as FMC secretary from 2004-2005.

The Lord willing, Rev. Dennis Lee, who has now been installed as minister in Edgerton PRC, will join the FMC after synod gives approval for this in June.

### The Calling Church

As Foreign Mission Committee, we acknowledge that the major share of the work on the mission field falls on the shoulders of the calling church of Doon PRC for the Philippines.

The council of Doon is kept busy from month to month and from week to week in the constant work of supervising the field. This is especially true of their mission field sub-committee, which must consider all the reports and correspondence from the field, and present recommendations each month to their council. The council then sends their decisions to the FMC for our review and concurrence. The sub-committee attends

the FMC meeting as liaison between the council and FMC while the Philippine matters are being discussed.

We are thankful for the faithful labors of the calling church, for that has helped us immensely in our duty to oversee the work of foreign missions.

### Ghana

After careful deliberation, the FMC and Hull council came to a joint decision to bring a recommendation to Synod 2005 to close the field. Synod concurred with the recommendation and instructed the FMC and Hull council to proceed with implementing the closure in a timely and careful manner.

The members of the mission fellowship were first notified on April 24, 2005 of the Hull council recommendation to Synod 2005 that the mission field in Ghana be closed. Soon after this announcement, our missionary, Rev. Rodney Miersma, and our missionary assistant, Mr. John Bouma, began to check into the requirements for the sale of the mission property as well as the value of this property. After they received notification of synod's decision, they reached an agreement to sell the mission property to the Global Evangelical Church, of which Gabriel Anyigba is a pastor.

Our missionary assistant as-

---

*Mr. Brummel is the secretary of the Foreign Mission Committee.*

sisted in the closure of the mission field by selling the equipment that he used while laboring on the field. This equipment included a pickup, furniture, and other items. Upon completion of these labors, John and Judy Bouma left Ghana on July 1, 2005 and arrived back in the United States on July 2.

Our missionary continued to preach the Word of God to the fellowship as long as we maintained possession of our mission building. The final worship service was held on Sunday, July 10, 2005. Our missionary continued to seek the spiritual welfare of the fellowship members by seeking alternative worship possibilities for these saints. In the end, the members of the fellowship were encouraged to seek contact with a group known as Revival Chapel. This group is associated with Rev. Kenneth Hovingh, an OPC minister with whom we had previous contact. Having left Psalters and library books with the fellowship members, we also continue to send literature, such as the *Standard Bearer* and the *Beacon Lights*, to Ghana to assist these saints in their Bible study and spiritual growth.

Our missionary was also busy with the disposition of the mission assets. He negotiated the sale of the mission property along with the pickup and other miscellaneous equipment that was used in our labors in Ghana. The missionary, along with the Hull council, calculated an appropriate severance package for Emanuel Osafo, the caretaker of the mission property, who would be displaced with the closing of the mission. After working through many obstacles in clearing the remainder of our funds for departure from Ghana, Rev. and Mrs. Miersma left Ghana and returned to the United States on July 29, 2005.

Although it is difficult to leave behind a remnant of saints who are desirous to hear God's Word, God's will has been made evident to us even in the events of closing

the mission field in Ghana. We continue to maintain contact with some of the saints in Ghana and we pray that the Lord of the harvest will sustain and bless them as they seek to grow in the truth of His Word.

The FMC would like to extend its hearty thanks to Rev. Rodney Miersma for his faithful labors in preaching the Word of God throughout his time in Ghana, and to Mrs. Miersma for her faithful support of her husband in the mission work.

The FMC is also very grateful to Mr. and Mrs. John Bouma for their volunteer work in assisting our missionary in Ghana.

### **The Philippines**

Our missionary, Rev. Spriensma, continues to labor with the core group in Manila, the Berean Church of God Reformed. There are some 13 families who are members of the group, along with more families who visit somewhat regularly. On the Sabbath, the group meets twice for worship, with catechism classes being taught between services. Also, the saints enjoy a Sunday meal together, because travel to and from church is difficult for some. Rev. Spriensma reports that the group continues to grow under the preaching and catechism instruction. They are maturing in their faith and knowledge of the particulars of the Reformed faith. The men of the church also participate in a church government class with a view to being able someday soon to organize as a church. In addition, there is a Board of Trustees, which sees to the day-to-day operation of the fellowship and deals with the benevolent needs of some of the saints. In this way, they are beginning to learn how to conduct meetings properly, and they are learning some practical lessons in church polity.

In the past year, we were able to send a delegation of Rev. Overway and Rev. Bruinsma to

evaluate the work on behalf of the FMC and Doon's council and to visit our missionary. They report that the men of the fellowship are committed to the Reformed truths we hold so dear, and that they benefit much from Rev. Spriensma's instruction and preaching. Our delegation was able to visit many of the saints in their homes and also observed the church government class. They can and do joyfully testify that the work in the Philippines has indeed been blessed by our heavenly Father. There is a spirit of unity among the group, and there is a desire on the part of many to be baptized, to make profession of their faith, and to baptize their covenant seed. The saints there are eager to begin to stand on their own, and to organize into a church. It is the testimony of our missionary, and it is the testimony of our delegation, that the saints in Manila are indeed ready to be organized as a church. On the basis of this, the Doon council and the FMC heartily recommend that the Berean Church of God proceed to organization. This request has been forwarded to Synod 2006 for approval.

In other work, Rev. Spriensma continues to conduct classes with pastors and elders of the Bastion of Truth Reformed Churches. This is a small group of churches that perhaps in time will be interested in joining the BCGR in a denomination. The men of the churches are committed to the Reformed faith, and they seek our instruction. Also, Rev. Spriensma continues to work in Inayuaun, holding conferences when possible with a group in that place. This area may be a place where an organized BCGR can labor. The work in Bacolod was discontinued recently because our main contact broke with us and is unwilling to help us. We pray that God will in the future provide us the opportunity to minister in this area again.

Our missionary family has endured much trial in the past year in the way of the afflictions of their daughter Jessica. We are thankful to God for the measure of healing given to her, and we pray that she may continue to experience His grace. Rev. Spriensma and his family feel safe in the Philippines, but take reasonable precautions when they feel it to be necessary. The FMC is grateful to God for Rev. Spriensma's faithful labors and for his family's support of him in his work.

Our prayer is that God will continue to bless the work in the Philippines, and we pray that God will sustain Rev. Spriensma, Alva, and Jessica in that foreign land. Finally, we are thankful to our heavenly Father for His mercy toward His people, and that He gathers, defends, and preserves His church. With the psalmist, we pray, "Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy

holy name, and to triumph in thy praise" (Ps. 106:47).

There is obviously much work to be done in the Philippines. We thank the Lord for the opportunity He has given us to be busy in this work. We thank Him also for our missionary, for the faithful and energetic work the missionary does, and for His blessing upon the labors that are being performed.

#### Conclusion

As you know, the mission work of our churches is carried out and performed especially by the missionary, the calling church, and the FMC. But these men and bodies, though they are indeed the ones who are directly involved in the work, do what they do on behalf of the churches as a whole. This means that all who are members of our churches are part of this important work. The Lord gives all of us the opportunity and privilege to be involved in the spread of His truth to the four cor-

ners of the earth. We hope and pray, therefore, that both the missionary's newsletters and this annual review help to keep you informed of your work in foreign missions.

We thank you for your support, both through prayers and financial gifts. We ask that you continue to remember the missionaries and their families, the calling churches, and the FMC in your prayers. We would also encourage you to write the missionaries and their families. They make a great sacrifice in order to do the work of missions. Please take the time to send them a letter or e-mail. They enjoy any and all correspondence, and have specifically stated that this provides encouragement for them in the great task that the Lord has set before them.

May it please the Lord to continue to use us as instruments in His hands in Christ's great work of gathering, defending, and preserving His church. ■

---

## DMC: "The Field Is the World"

Mr. Don Doezema

Included, often, on the Sunday bulletins of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Fellowship in Ballymena, Northern Ireland is a little section entitled "Encouraging Quotes." The "Quotes" come from letters of recipients of the literature and/or tapes distributed by the CPRF as part of their faithful witness to the truth. Not long ago one of those bulletins carried the re-

sponse of a Northern Ireland reader of a publication of the CPRF. It read like this:

This is a note to express my gratitude for your mailing to me regularly copies of the *Covenant Reformed News*. The truths expressed by yourself and others of the Reformed faith are as showers of blessing in a land where truths based on the Word of God seem to be scarce today. I find your literature inspirational and enlightening. Thank you, may the Lord bless you in all your labours.

Inspiring and enlightening — like showers of blessing. Indeed, literature today figures large in a church's outreach. In fact, it has done so for hundreds of years. Ever since Johannes Gutenberg's invention of movable type, the printed page has been pressed into the service of the church. Rev. Angus Stewart, Hudsonville's missionary to Northern Ireland, has certainly made effective use of it in the British Isles. He preaches in Ballymena, lectures with some frequency in other locations — and

---

Mr. Doezema is secretary of the Domestic Mission Committee.

by the printed page he reaches out to every part of his designated "field."

And beyond. By other means.

Think of this — from another of Rev. Stewart's correspondents:

I spoke to [a friend] last night and she mentioned that she had listened to the Romans 9 sermons. She found them to be excellent. I looked at the website and saw that I can download them on my Ipod (MP3), which I have done. I look forward to listening to them. It's great to have access to your sermons.... David Engelsma's "common grace" and "world-flight" article in the PRTJ is excellent! ...Thanks for the great work you are doing.

That was from France!  
Or this:

Currently we have two-three couples listening to messages every week from the PRC and your website. I've transferred them into audio CD for portability. I am planning to do a complete series with them from the Heidelberg Catechism. The *Three Forms of Unity* you gave me, I could let them use for reference during the message.

That, from Australia!  
And this:

I have a friend ... who wants to send a donation ... to the Church in Ballymena .... He has been listening to your series and reading from the website.... The first Reformed church we found was the PRC. The first Reformed sermons we heard were the PRC.... We cannot adjust to just any other church.... Please pray for us. We need much grace and mercy to go through this every day.

From Texas!

Does a "mission field" have no boundaries?

Ah, yes, how the world has changed since the days of Gutenberg! Better — how the

world has changed in the last 25 years! Twenty years ago Rev. Bruinsma was missionary in Jamaica. When he was preaching to the little congregation in Waterworks, that was pretty much the extent of his influence for the day. The Internet was still only a dream. No one in all of France had an Ipod. The Bruinsmas' quite adequate home in Westmoreland didn't even have a telephone. Today, he's stationed in Pittsburgh. He arrived there just a couple of months ago. And already he's thinking of leading the worship services in a little Fellowship in North Carolina — while remaining in Pennsylvania. Conceivably, by installing relatively inexpensive equipment in the two places of worship, and being hooked up on both ends to a high-speed DSL line, Rev. Bruinsma can be preaching to the saints in the Pittsburgh Mission — and be seen at that moment on the screen in the assembly of the Protestant Reformed Fellowship in Fayetteville. Or vice versa. This is exciting.

And what about our western home missionary? Well, Rev. Thomas Miersma's web page brought him in contact with a Russian/English translator in, would you believe, Kazakhstan. The man wanted information on the covenant, the doctrines of grace, and the millennium. And he got it ... from a missionary in Spokane — as he had gotten other material from a missionary in a little fellowship in ... Ballymena! This man had also discovered Rev. Stewart's web page on the Internet. Both missionaries, now, are corresponding with him and consider the contact to be "a sincere and genuine one."

What are the implications of all this for a home missionary's "field"? Nothing profound, perhaps. But it is interesting how the concept has evolved in the PRC's work in missions over the years. Early on, the field was the community in which the missionary la-

bored. Nothing more. In 1941 the Mission Committee did report that, in consultation with "Fuller Ave. Consistory," they had decided that "for the time being our missionary is to locate in Sioux County, Iowa, and labor in the Middle West." This, they said, implied that the missionary's "method of working will somewhat be changed" — in that "up till now our missionary has usually concentrated his labors in one particular community and took up his residence in that community. This time out West he will try to open more than one field at a time." Already therefore the concept was getting a little broader. But the idea still was not so much a larger field as it was multiple fields in a larger area.

Synod 1953 approved a recommendation of the Mission Committee that a missionary be called "specifically for the State of California, with Chino as the first objective." And 20 years later, in 1973, synod approved the Mission Committee's "offering a missionary a field of labor with a two hundred mile radius." No small field was that, stretching as it did from Philadelphia to Prospect Park in the densely populated Northeastern States.

As a rule, however, the North American "fields" were *communities*: from Byron Center in 1948, to Ripon in 1983, Birmingham and Charlotte in 1979, Northwest Chicago and Blue Bell in 1984, and Venice in 1990.

In 1994 there was a deliberate attempt to broaden the scope of a missionary's place of labor. Synod that year approved calling a *home missionary*. That was a shift from the then-current practice of calling a missionary to a *specific field*. A place of labor was indeed designated (the San Luis Valley) but only as the location of his *initial* residence and work. He would be available to investigate other possible fields throughout the country. That's how a work in Pitts-

burgh was started — by a mobile Rev. Thomas Miersma. In 1998 synod approved calling an *eastern* home missionary, who, again, would be stationed *initially* in Pittsburgh but would follow up leads with a view to starting, D.V., other fields elsewhere in the east, while the western home missionary did the same in the west. Hence, Fayetteville and Spokane, respectively.

Even with that shift in the designation of the area to which a missionary is called (from a Venice, FL in 1990 to the whole of the eastern part of the country in 1998), the emphasis remains, as it should, on the “field” or “fields” within that larger area. That’s because the goal of missions is not simply to get the word out, by preaching here, there, and everywhere, but to concentrate efforts in a given area with a view to establishing a church there. In keeping with that, there has been, in all of the fields over which the DMC has supervision, not only regular preaching on the Lord’s day, but on-going catechism instruction; leadership training classes to prepare men for serving in the offices; the broadcasting of the Reformed Witness Hour and the holding of public lectures in the area; distribution of literature; all kinds of advertising....

One of the positive fruits of that, incidentally, will be seen at this year’s synod when consideration is given to the request of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Fellowship of Northern Ireland to organize. That will be most gratifying, as will be also the TSC’s request that Mr. Martyn McGeown be admitted to the seminary as a diploma pre-licentiate student beginning in Fall Semester 2006. He’s one of the “sons” of the church in Ballymena. And he will be trained for what the CPRF sees already to be a need for manpower for the maintaining and expanding of the work in the British Isles.

Neither Pittsburgh nor Spokane

is thinking of organization in the near future. Not that there is a lack of commitment. From that point of view, it’s a delight for the DMC and the calling churches to visit them, to witness their zeal for the truth and to hear of their desire to share it with others. It’s “numbers” that is lacking. And that can sometimes be discouraging — especially when one ponders what has come of almost all of the “fields” mentioned earlier in this article. Which reminds me of something I read recently in Pink’s *The Sovereignty of God*. Pink was reflecting on exactly that kind of discouragement — and insisting that it ought not to be.

He preaches the gospel as faithfully and zealously as he knows how [says Pink of a hypothetical evangelist], but he finds the vast majority of his hearers are utterly indifferent and have no heart at all for Christ.... He becomes thoroughly disheartened, and asks himself, What is the use of it all? Shall he quit, or had he better change his mission and message? If men will not respond to the gospel, had he not better engage in that which is more popular and acceptable to the world? Why not occupy himself with humanitarian efforts, with social uplift work, with the purity campaign? Alas! That so many men who once preached the gospel are now engaged in these activities instead.

What then is God’s corrective for His discouraged servant? First, he needs to learn from Scripture that God is not now seeking to convert the world, but in this age He is “taking out of the Gentiles” a people for His name (Acts 15:14). What then is God’s corrective for His discouraged servant? This — a proper apprehension of *God’s* plan for this Dispensation. Again: what is God’s remedy for dejection at apparent failure in our labors? This — the assurance that *God’s* purpose *cannot* fail, that God’s plan *cannot* miscarry, that God’s will *must* be done.... That *we* are not responsible for results: that is *God’s* side, and *God’s* business.

Paul may “plant,” and Apollos may “water,” but it is *God* who “gave the increase” (I Cor. 3:6). Our business is to obey Christ and preach the gospel to every creature, to emphasize the “Who-soever believeth,” and then to leave the sovereign operations of the Holy Spirit to apply the Word in quickening power to whom *He* wills, resting on the sure promise of Jehovah — “For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: *it shall not return unto me void*, but it shall accomplish *that which I please* (it may not that which *we* please), and it shall prosper in the thing *whereto I sent it*” (Is. 55:10, 11).... (All italics Pink’s.)

I have been privileged to serve on the Domestic Mission Committee for quite a few years — long enough to have seen many of the fields mentioned above come to what would appear on the surface of things to be ... nothing. I read Pink — and was encouraged. I needed to be reminded of God’s plan for this dispensation and to be assured that His purpose cannot fail or His plan miscarry. He gives the occasions, the opportunities, to plant, and to water. And He gives the resources and the means to do so. And then, most wonderful to contemplate, He is pleased to use our feeble efforts to bring His own to a knowledge of the truth.

The opportunities abound. And the means that the Lord has provided are, to this writer at least, thrilling. I’m thinking, again, of the Internet. Imagine this, that came out of correspondence generated by Dr. LeMaster’s Fayetteville Protestant Reformed Fellowship’s website:

I discovered some conservative Presbyterian and Reformed denominations on the Internet and

began reading their explanations of covenant theology.... I had discovered quite a few, including the Protestant Reformed Churches, Christian Reformed Church, Presbyterian Church in America, Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and a few others. It was my father, though, who really brought my attention to the PRC. After that, every chance I got, I would study their website. I was convinced that the Three Forms of Unity were the truest expressions of Scripture and that the PRC followed those standards without any compromise.

That was from a young man in Alabama — 16 years old! Incredible. And that's only one example of many. People from all over the world are "discovering" the Protestant Reformed Churches via the Internet. A lot of it comes out of the home study of a retired PR minister in Hudsonville. Rev. VanBaren has spent literally hundreds of hours developing the [www.prca.org](http://www.prca.org) web page. That site has worldwide implications. Who is there, in today's world, who does not have easy access to the Internet? No doubt there are still folks in Waterworks and elsewhere in the hills of Jamaica who are still without telephones. And there are surely many in the 'older' generation who, like me, remain happily computer illiterate. But for the rest, *anyone* who wants to know *anything* about the history, the work, or the faith and practice of the PRC can find it all right there — at [www.prca.org](http://www.prca.org). And, increasingly so, on the websites that are being developed on our mission fields. In a recent newsletter to the churches, Rev. Miersma wrote that he now has *Behold He Cometh* and *Wonder of Grace* available on-line at [www.reformedspokane.org](http://www.reformedspokane.org), as well as all the liturgical forms and some material from the *SB*. And, he said, "in connection with our specific concerns, we also put up material directly addressing the

corruption of worship taking place in the Spokane community." The website, then, serves a purpose both near and far. "We have found," Rev. Miersma continued, "that many of our visitors have often spent some time, even a couple of months, on the various PRCA websites before they come to visit." That's local extension work. And, as we have seen, there's also Spokane ... to Kazakhstan.

True enough, the Internet has been exploited by the devil to drag men down to hell — perhaps more than any other invention of man ever has. But in their development of this marvelous technology, men are doing no more than beginning to make use of the powers inherent in God's creation. Powers that He has put there ... to serve the church. And one cannot help but think that the Internet is indeed for just such a time as this. A day of abounding apostasy. A day in which the work of missions can do no more than gather from here and there a small remnant according to the election of grace. In such a day, to have such a tool placed in our hands by the King of the church — that, to this writer, is exciting!

Does that mean that our missionaries ought to change their focus from preaching, to becoming efficient webmasters? No. For one thing, there can be "links," of one website to another, so that the countless hours spent in that little study in Hudsonville can pay huge dividends also on the mission fields. And, for another, [www.cprf.co.uk](http://www.cprf.co.uk) does not have to be all the work of Rev. Stewart. And it isn't. On that website are: 400 audio pieces, 120 *Covenant Reformed News* articles, 40 quotes, 110 articles, 118 pamphlets — with regular addition of more audio sermons, more articles, more pamphlets, and continual reorganiza-

tion of material. And who did all of that? Surely Rev. Stewart had a hand in it. But, as he writes in his annual report, "many CPRF members and attendees helped us type up many pamphlets not previously available on-line." And Martyn McGeown is the Webmaster. Rev. Stewart doesn't let a website distract him from sermon-making. And the beauty of it all is that, without any extra effort on his part, the sermon that he prepares will be heard not only in Ballymena, in a downstairs room rented by the little Covenant Protestant Reformed Fellowship in Northern Ireland, but also in Texas, and Australia, and who knows where all else. This, let me repeat, is exciting.

There is a sense, of course, in which our missionaries' "fields" are still just Ballymena, Pittsburgh, and Spokane respectively. That's as it should be. The goal towards which the DMC, the calling churches, and the missionaries direct their energies is the establishing of a *church* in each of the locations. But for 2,000 years the field of missions has been "the world" (cf.

Matt. 13:38). And never before in the history of the church of the new dispensation has that "world" been so *accessible*. According to Rev. VanBaren, 10,000 hits per month on [www.prca.org](http://www.prca.org)! And the Reformed Witness Hour Committee testifies to the same in their annual report to synod. They too have an Internet site. And they report that *complete program downloads* are approaching 10,000 per month.

For me, all of this helps put two families in Fayetteville, four families in Pittsburgh, five families in Spokane, and nine families in Ballymena in perspective. What is this but a working out of "God's plan for the dispensation"? And that plan doesn't miscarry. 

*One cannot help but think that the Internet is indeed for just such a time as this.*

## Islam (6)

# Western Responses to Islam: Resident Islam's Response

*"And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment."*

I Chronicles 12:32

**M**uslim institutions, schools and economic power should be strengthened in America. Islam isn't in America to be equal to any other faiths, but to be dominant. The Koran, the Muslim book of scripture, should be the highest authority in America, and Islam the only accepted religion on Earth.<sup>1</sup>

This goal of Islam was openly expressed back in 1998 by Omar M. Ahmad, chairman of the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR). Surely Omar does not speak for all Muslims that reside in the West, nevertheless he does speak for CAIR, which is the most organized and influential Islamic voice in the West. So modern-day Issachar must turn to CAIR for help in understanding Western (resident) Islam's response to the Islamic movement.

## What is CAIR?

The Council on American Islamic Relations was established in

---

*Mr. Kalsbeek is a teacher in Covenant Christian High School and a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, Michigan.*

*Previous article in this series: March 1, 2006, p. 259.*

378/Standard Bearer/May 15, 2006

1994. Their website states that its purpose is

to promote a positive image of Islam and Muslims in America. Through media relations, lobbying, education and advocacy, CAIR puts forth an Islamic perspective to ensure the Muslim voice is represented. In offering this perspective, CAIR seeks to empower the American Muslim community and encourage their participation in political and social activism.<sup>2</sup>

The specific means they employ to accomplish these goals their website goes on to identify. Included is a Civil Rights Department that "counsels, mediates and advocates on behalf of Muslims and others who have experienced religious discrimination, defamation or hate crimes." Their Governmental Affairs Department "conducts and organizes lobbying efforts on issues related to Islam and Muslims." CAIR's Communications Department "works in conjunction with local and national media to ensure an accurate portrayal of Islam and Muslims is presented to the American public." In the process they monitor the media "to challenge negative stereotypes, but also to applaud and encourage positive representations of Islam and Muslims." Publications are produced by CAIR to "address the needs and rights of American Muslims.... CAIR's research Department publishes an annual report on the status of American Muslim civil rights, which serves to document

hate crimes and discrimination cases reported to CAIR's Civil Rights Department." Their Education Department

organizes regular conferences and training seminars for governmental and law enforcement agencies, media professionals and the academic community. These events are designed to present easily accessible and accurate information about Islam and Muslims. CAIR's TeamWorks sensitivity and diversity training workshop is offered to employers, educators, and organizations as a proactive approach that highlights relevant Islamic practices and offers suggestions for religious accommodation.<sup>3</sup>

It would be unfair to fault CAIR for their seemingly benign goals and the means they claim to be using to achieve them. After all, something must be done to ensure a fair shake for Islam in hostile Western society. However, all analysts do not agree that CAIR is as harmless and "moderate" as it claims. They question whether or not CAIR actually practices the moderation they preach. Often the answers to their concerns find CAIR wanting.

## Pre 9/11 CAIR "Moderation"

What are some of the activities of CAIR that provoke the anxiety of many in the West? Following are a few examples of CAIR actions that have contributed to this concern prior to the attacks of September 11, 2001:

■ CAIR was founded by Hamas supporters Omar Ahmad, Nihad Awad, and Rafeeq Jabar. Remember, Hamas is the Muslim organization that has repeatedly denied Israel's right to existence, using suicide bombings and other acts of terrorism to demonstrate the point.<sup>4</sup>

■ In the late 1980s the future CAIR board member Ihsan Bagby stated that Muslims "...can never be full citizens of this country [United States, ck] because there is no way we can be fully committed to the institutions and ideologies of this country."<sup>5</sup>

■ Organizations that fund terrorism also fund CAIR. "The Saudi-based Islamic Development Bank (IDB) gave CAIR \$250,000 in August 1999. The IDB also manages funds that finance suicide bombing against Israeli civilians by providing funds to the families of Palestinian 'martyrs.'"<sup>6</sup>

■ "CAIR even includes at least one person associated with terrorism in its own ranks. On February 2, 1995, U.S. Attorney Mary Jo White named Siraj Wahhaj as one of the 'unindicted persons who may be alleged as co-conspirators' in the attempt to blow up New York City monuments. Yet CAIR deems him 'one of the most respected Muslim leaders in America' and includes him on its advisory board."<sup>7</sup>

■ "CAIR consistently defends other militant Islamic terrorists too. The conviction of the perpetrators of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing it deemed 'a travesty of justice.' The conviction of Omar Abdel Rahman, the blind sheikh who planned to blow up New York City landmarks, it called a 'hate crime.' The extradition order for suspected Hamas terrorist Mousa Marook it labeled 'anti-Islamic' and 'anti-American.'"<sup>8</sup>

■ "...in 1998 CAIR was able to get National Public Radio to blacklist Steven Emerson for his efforts in uncovering the terrorist organization Hamas in the United States. When Jeff Jacoby, a columnist at the Boston Globe, protested the in-

volvement of CAIR in the affair, it launched a letter-writing campaign against him."<sup>9</sup>

■ "Prior to September 11...CAIR protested the U.S. designation of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Hezbollah as terrorist organizations.... CAIR had even started to organize street protests against news organizations that dared report on the history of militant Islam, going to the point of lambasting anyone who referred to 'fundamentalist Islam' or to the concept of jihad in Islam as guilty of 'defaming Islam.' ...(CAIR) also condemned the August 1998 retaliation against Osama bin Laden in the aftermath of the bombings of two U.S. embassies in Africa."<sup>10</sup>

Little wonder, then, that some question CAIR's real motivation and purpose. They reason that the purported moderate goals of CAIR and the means they use to employ them can also be used to coerce the West by means of threats of lawsuits and violence to advance Islam and silence the opposition. But that was then (pre 9/11). What about now (post 9/11)? Has the 9/11 debacle had any effect on CAIR's activities and rhetoric?

#### Post 9/11 CAIR "Moderation"

Although it is true that CAIR officially condemned the 9/11 attacks, much of their subsequent activity leads one to question their sincerity. Read on to find out why.

■ Serge Trifkovic informs us that CAIR has been "busy airbrushing their past record.... They used to keep archives of all their past public statements, activists' speeches, etc. on the web, but after September 11 most of them have mysteriously disappeared."<sup>11</sup> The question is, why have they done this? Do they have something to hide? Don't they want the West to know the facts mentioned above under the heading "Pre 9/11 CAIR 'Moderation'"?

■ CAIR continues to have links

to proven Islamic terrorists. Daniel Pipes provides numerous examples, including: Randall Royer, CAIR's civil rights coordinator, who was charged with helping Al-Qaeda and the Taliban fight American troops in Afghanistan; Ghassan Elashi, founder of CAIR's Texas chapter, who was convicted in 2004 of illegally shipping computers to designated state sponsors of terrorism; and Rabih Haddad, a CAIR fundraiser, who was arrested and deported from the U.S. for financing Al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations.<sup>12</sup>

■ Nihad Awad, executive director of CAIR, sends red flags flying when he says, "Mosques are not only centers for spirituality; they are now bases for political and social mobilization."<sup>13</sup> Under the cir-

---

1. R. Cort Kirkwood, "The Gathering Storm," *The New American* 23 January, 2006:26.

2. Council on American Islamic Relations, from <http://www.cair-net.org/default.asp?Page=missionAccomplishedHow>.

3. Council on American Islamic Relations, from <http://www.cair-net.org/default.asp?Page=missionAccomplishedHow>

4. Daniel Pipes and Sharon Chadha, "CAIR Founded by 'Islamic Terrorists'?" *Front Page Magazine* 28 July, 2005, from <http://www.danielpipes.org/article/2811>.

5. Pipes & Chadha, "CAIR Founded by 'Islamic Terrorists'?"

6. Pipes & Chadha, "CAIR Founded by 'Islamic Terrorists'?"

7. Daniel Pipes, "CAIR: 'Moderate' friends of terror," *The New York Post* 22 April, 2002, from <http://www.danielpipes.org/pf.php?id=394>.

8. Pipes, "CAIR: 'Moderate' friends of terror."

9. Alvin J. Schmidt, *The Great Divide* (Boston, Mass. Regina Orthodox Press, Inc. 2004), p. 250.

10. Serge Trifkovic, *The Sword of the Prophet* (Boston, Mass. Regina Press, Inc. 2002), pp. 270-271.

11. Trifkovic, p. 272.

12. Daniel Pipes and Sharon Chadha, "CAIR Founded by 'Islamic Terrorists'?"

13. Schmidt, p. 254.

cumstances the term “mobilization” has ominous overtones.

■ CAIR continues to intimidate those who try to expose the uncomfortable truths of Islam. CAIR demanded an apology from *National Review* and the removal of the book *The Life and Religion of Mohammed* from the sale list by National Review’s Book Service because it explained why “Mohammed couldn’t possibly be a true prophet.”<sup>14</sup> Apparently it makes no difference that the book expresses the truth about Islam and its prophet. What appears to matter to CAIR is how they can limit what the public knows about Islam and its prophet. The sad result of this case was that *National Review* caved in and removed the book. Robert Spencer opines, “...it is a victory for those who don’t want Americans to know uncomfortable details about Muhammed. Unfortunately, jihad terrorists know these elements of the life of Muhammed quite well and are imitating them. Ignorance of them will only make us more vulnerable.”<sup>15</sup>

■ Spencer reports another incident of CAIR intimidation, this one involving a radio station. In this case Infinity Radio suspended its talk-show host Michael Graham for remarks about Islam that revealed that the Koran justifies the practice of Muslims lying to non-Muslims. About this Spencer notes, “If CBS and CAIR get their way, the American people will be denied the ability to act in the interest of their own self-preservation—by not being allowed to investigate and discuss the roots of Islamic violence and terrorism. And that, in turn, will lead only to increased vulnerability to new terror attacks, more virulent than any we have seen up to now.”<sup>16</sup>

■ Following the 9/11 attacks one would have expected a “moderate” Muslim organization (which CAIR claims to be) to do all in its power to distance itself from the perpetrators of the despicable deed. Yet Ibrahim Hooper, Director of Com-

munication of CAIR, refuses to explain “...why CAIR refused to endorse a rally against terror, sponsored by ‘Free Muslims’ and 80 other supporting organizations.”<sup>17</sup> Would it not be legitimate to ask CAIR about their lack of an Anti-terrorism Department and Anti-terrorism Hotline that Muslims would be encouraged to use to expose terrorist operations and operatives?

### Evaluation of CAIR

The evidence strongly suggests that CAIR is a resident Islamic organization whose *expressed* goal is the fostering of a proper understanding of Islam, while at the same time sanitizing real Islam and CAIR’s real purposes. In the process CAIR seeks to limit what non-Muslims are allowed to know about Islam. A quote from *World* magazine puts it rather succinctly:

In CAIR’s formulation, all true Muslims are peaceful and serene, and any Christian who doubts that is a bigot. Indeed, while CAIR has issued numerous statements over the years naming evangelical “Islamophobes” and criticizing “Christian leaders ...engaged in deliberate distortion of the (Quran) and Islamic beliefs,” it has never in its press releases criticized by name a single Muslim cleric calling for holy war against America and the infidels. It’s as if the fundamentalist movement that threatens to take over the entire Muslim world doesn’t even exist in CAIR’s world.<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps the most telling evidence supporting the contention that CAIR has less-than-noble purposes is its own action with respect to a defamation lawsuit it launched against an organization that calls itself AntiCAIR (ACAIR). In the still-pending suit CAIR claimed damage by six statements about CAIR published on ACAIR’s website. Interestingly, during the process of the litigation, CAIR filed an amended motion in which it no longer retains four of the original six statements it had earlier con-

demned as libelous. Those statements include the following: 1) “(CAIR is an) organization founded by Hamas supporters.... 2) CAIR was started by Hamas members.... 3) CAIR...was founded by Islamic terrorists. 4) (CAIR) is partially funded by terrorists...”<sup>19</sup>

Of significance is the fact that the statements were dropped from the suit only after ACAIR lawyer Reed Rubinstein responded to CAIR’s lawsuit with an extensive and well-informed set of discovery requests and documents. Apparently CAIR realized that with the admission of ACAIR’s information in court their claim against ACAIR concerning those statements was lost. That being the case, CAIR has made some significant admissions about itself. Apparently the statements are true after all.

While it may be true that CAIR does not speak for all, or even most, Muslims in the West, there is no question that CAIR does carry the most clout. It is hard to know to what degree CAIR’s way of thinking reflects the thinking of all Muslims in the West, but it sometimes appears that the real “moderate” Muslims are too intimidated to speak for fear of the repercussions. History would suggest that they fear (along with many others who dare to question CAIR and Islam) with good reason.

To be continued... 

---

14. Robert Spencer, “Calling truth ‘Islamophobia,’” *Human Events* 4 April, 2005:12.

15. Spencer, p. 252.

16. Robert Spencer, “Infinity Radio Muzzles Truth on Islam,” *Human Events*, 15 August, 2005:17.

17. Mychal Massie (16 Aug. 05), “We have right to know truth about CAIR,” from [http://worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE\\_ID=45799](http://worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=45799).

18. Bob Jones, “TRUTH OR CAIR,” *World* 22 March, 2003:16.

19. Pipes and Chadha, “CAIR Founded by ‘Islamic Terrorists?’”

# Am I My Brother's Keeper?

## Brotherly love

**I**f ever there was what might be called a "winged word," to Cain belongs the drab honor of having brought such an age-defying word across his lips.

Almost all the history of the world lies between him and us, and still it seems as though his evil exclamation: "Am I my brother's keeper?" translated in many hundreds of languages, ever yet grows in significance, and still more cutting than ever forces an entrance for itself into the inner chamber of our heart.

In that heartless, shocking exclamation, Cain was so offensively honest.

Sin was yet too short a time on earth; it had just come up; it had not yet had time to make itself unrecognizable in its *deceptive* garb.

As it sprang up in the poisoned heart, so poisonously did it come to the outside in the word.

Applied to one's neighbor, sin was the disturbance of love, the breaking of the tie, the tearing up of all spiritual coherence.

Abel was there, and Cain was there, and these were two individuals loosely placed alongside of one another. As the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim lay each by itself over against the other, so stood these two men, in the mind of Cain, as two powers over against each other.

Abel did not need to be concerned about *him*. Why then should he in turn be concerned about *Abel*? Were he to do away with Abel, the chances would stand better for him, Cain. And so he slew the man who stood over against him. And after that murder, being asked where Abel was, Cain carries the evil heart upon his tongue, and recklessly and brutally he puts the counter-inquiry: "Am I my brother's keeper?"

This question implies radically and plainly the denial that we belong together; the denial of the love that must bind us together; the stopping of the mouth to the voice of the *one* blood that calls in all that is called man; the unraveling of our whole race upon earth; the triumph of egoism.

And since this struggle of egoism provoked by Satan against the love that God pours out in our hearts returns every day, in every age, and goes on between man and wife, between parents and children, among friends and relatives, between rich and poor, between him who offers wages and draws them, in brief in all the broad field of social life, therefore Cain's exclamation has lasted through the ages. Therefore either as defense or as accusation, this exclamation has been repeated among people at all times. And even now, as egoism ever lifts its head more boldly, that "Am I my brother's keeper?" becomes more and more the motto that divides the main streams of our time.

On one hand there is egoism, with its cool calculation, not regarding the brother and aiming only at oneself, and seeing nothing else in man, as slave of wages, except a machine that grew of itself,

which is used, and after use is thrown aside.

But on the other hand there is the social power of love, which unites and weaves together; which deems no human suffering foreign to itself; which seeks the brother to devote oneself to him; and which in man, never forgetting God's creature, is ever mindful of the holy ordinance of God that we should be a guardian angel to our brother, a responsible protector, a *brother* in all the rich meaning of the word.



With this struggle, however, this strange feature is encountered, that in this brother-protection there is continually, and in all sorts of ways, mention of the *more far away brother*, while the brother *near by* is scarcely noticed.

Originally, and in the strict sense, your brother is only he who with you is born from the selfsame father and mother.

From the beginning the brother-bond is a *domestic* bond.

Your real, your nearby, your full brothers do not live apart from you in the world, but with you under the same roof-tree, sitting down with you at the same table, sharing the same life with you.

And see, while everyone is full of zeal about searching out his brothers among the heathen by missions, and honoring his brothers among his compatriots, and assisting his brothers among the working classes, and comforting his brothers among unfortunates and sufferers, it is as rare as a white raven when, even in preaching, you hear the children of the same family admonished and urged to the practice of brother-

---

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

and sister-love among themselves.

This is deemed superfluous. This needs no more to be said. This sort of brother-love the family cherishes of itself: It plants itself along by self-sowing. To press this matter were a preachment of what everyone already knows.

And while as bitter fruit of this silence this love among brothers and sisters frequently leaves oh so much to be desired, there is abundant talk of a general, far-reaching, all-embracing brother-love, with never a thought, that though it reaches very far, at the same time it becomes more and more estranged from itself, till what in origin and essence *brother-love* is, almost no one any longer understands.



Is not this the wrong way?

Between *brothers after the blood* occurs in Cain and Abel the quarrel of fatal egoism. The saying: "Am I my brother's keeper?" is meant of a brother after the flesh. Only taken in the relation of blood is the expression "brother" *real*. In every other realm it is merely *metaphoric*.

God Himself established the home, and in that home the life that is lived together, there to give rise to the brother-bond, there to have brothers live together, there to cherish brother-love.

In such a household sin first attacked brother-love in its main artery, and the blood of Abel, whom Cain, his brother, murdered, still calls from the ground unto God.

And while thus, not in sound and word but really and truly, brother-love has been instituted of God Himself as a power *in the home*, in order, when it turns into strife of brothers, from the home to bring curse and judgment upon the world. In our imagined wisdom we are full of talk about all sorts and all degrees of brother-love, and meanwhile at the home-hearth, where it ought to be fos-

tered and cherished, not to forget, but scarcely ever to reckon with it.

Yet here also God's ordinances suffer no resistance.

In a land with a people where family-life flourishes, and in that flourishing domestic life the tie also between brothers and sisters strongly draws, from this friendly home-life a binding power of love will go forth upon all society.

While on the contrary, in a land and with a people where home-life languishes, and brothers and sisters suffer life together as a burden, in order as soon as possible to part and to estrange from one another, there also in society at large the bond of love will lose all blessing-dispensing operation, and the whole social system will be dominated by cold egoism.



At least all such parents as have brought their children to Holy Baptism ought to understand the seriousness of their calling to cherish among their children, from the very beginning, in the early stages of self-consciousness, that love of blood, that brotherly attachment and affection.

Not after the evil rule "every one for himself and God for all," but according to the voice of blood, in which speaks God's holy ordinance, that even the young child may perceive that he exists and lives *with* others, *for* others, and also for the sake of others.

For though it is true that even when training is deficient, blood still draws, and that with serious sickness or in case of loss by death, even in most neglected families this natural brother-love is still wonderfully evident.

Yet over against this stands the fact that actual life continuously menaces that brother-love; that all sorts of interests continuously put brothers and sisters against one another; and that from these seemingly insignificant domestic quarrels between brothers and sisters

an impression goes out upon character, which presently bears fruit in envy of heart, in bitter, evil words, sometimes in actual ill-treatment.

Also among brothers and sisters the proverb holds true, that it is not all gold that glitters. And though followers of Christ may pride themselves on a richer home-life, yet he deceives himself by accepting semblance, and blindfolds himself to reality, who imagines that in our Christian households the spirit of Cain never entered and brother-anger was never known.



And therefore put aside the idea that brother-love is a planting that cherishes itself and can spare your tender interest.

On the contrary, this tender plant is menaced by many evil insects and poisonous mold; it frequently lacks life-quickening light and cherishing summer-warmth; it threatens so often to wither in summer-drought or to grow numb from cold — that it cannot blossom except it is watched, directed, purified, and protected by a solicitude that never denies itself.

That solicitude is parental duty toward children, but also duty of children among themselves, especially of the older to the younger, of sisters toward their brothers.

Not least this last.

For does not experience teach that in the same family the tie among sisters is far stronger than the tie which ought to unite the brothers?

Comparatively speaking, one hears so much more frequently of *brother-anger* than the whisper of *sister-anger*.

This is because sisters are shielded by the home-life, walk less ways of their own, and thereby are less rivals of each other, while their brothers soon go out into the world, and are by nature more disposed to choose paths of their own.

For that reason mutual sister-

love, and their love toward their brothers, exerts an influence of such inestimable advantage to brother-love in the family.

That in this respect also our young daughters might understand their calling.

Of God's church we sing: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Ps. 133).

But that it might be *spiritually* true, and God grant that spiritu-

ally it might ever become more true, before all things else, the claim remains inviolate, that family-life, from which the spiritual image is taken, should exhibit such dwelling together of the sons of the selfsame family. 

## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### School Activities

Give high school students five days off from school during the spring and chances are they will head straight for a warm locale with lots of water. While we are sure that some students from Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, MI did just that during last month's spring break, we can also report that a group of 27 classmates, along with 10 adults, chose instead to travel to Biloxi, MS for a week to help with the rebuilding effort after damage caused by Hurricane Katrina. Each student was expected to raise the amount of \$125 to go toward expenses for the trip in addition to anticipated expenses for meals, lodging, and transportation cost of about \$5,000, which the group hoped to raise through private donations.

Students of Covenant Christian School in Lynden, WA invited parents and friends to come to school Wednesday afternoon, April 19, at 1:45 for a softball game with the Junior High. Covenant planned to hold games every Wednesday afternoon at the same time until the end of the school year.

April 5 Rev. J. Mahtani, pastor of the Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL, gave a chapel speech for the students at Heritage Christian High School in South Holland, IL on "Speaking the Truth."

---

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

### Congregation Activities

In the May 1st issue of the "News" we reported that the Building Committee of First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI recently closed on the purchase of a new parsonage directly adjacent to their church building. To finish that thought, we can now also tell you that First's Building Committee has since accepted an offer for the purchase of their other parsonage on Tekonsha. First may retain possession until July 15.

All members of First in Grand Rapids, MI were encouraged to join their Junior Adult Society for an evening of fellowship and caroling to their congregation members at Raybrook Christian Rest Home, Holland Home, and Sheldon Meadows. Plans were to sing Psalter numbers, in addition to Good Friday and Easter songs, to these members on April 18.

Members of the Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI were asked in a recent bulletin if they were interested in discussing God's Word and having fellowship in the home with members of their church family? If they were, then they were asked to consider participating in Summer Bible Discussion Groups. Anyone 18 or older, single or married, were invited to sign up for these once-a-month meetings beginning June 25.

The Choir of the Hudsonville, MI PRC presented their annual Easter concert on Sunday evening, April 9. The collection taken that evening was for the Midwest Prot. Ref. Secondary Education Society.

An Easter concert was given by

the Trinity Men Singers and the Trinity Women's Choir at their church in Hudsonville, MI following their Good Friday worship service, April 14.

The congregation of the Wingham, Ontario, PRC held their Good Friday worship service at 10:00 on April 14. Following their worship service the congregation also enjoyed a singspiration, part of which featured the catechism children singing Psalter #318.

Pastor-elect Dennis Lee was ordained and installed into the ministry of the Word and Sacraments on Friday evening, April 7, at the Edgerton, MN PRC. Rev. D. Overway, pastor of the neighboring Doon, IA PRC, led the worship service. He preached from God's Word found in II Timothy 4:1-2. Also present were Rev. S. Key, who read the form for Ordination, and Rev. A. Brummel, who participated together with the other two ministers in the laying of hands on Pastor-elect Lee. Rev. Lee now becomes the twelfth pastor to serve the Edgerton congregation. The following Lord's Day, April 9, Rev. Lee preached his inaugural sermon entitled "A Sweet Savor of Christ," out of II Corinthians 2:15-17. May the Lord grant to Rev. Lee a fruitful ministry in the Lord's vineyard.

An Easter choir program and singspiration was held Sunday evening, April 16, at the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA.

### Evangelism Activities

Members of the Lynden, WA PRC were encouraged to invite family and friends to a lecture

1894 Georgetown Center Dr.  
Jenison, MI 49428-7173

## THE STANDARD BEARER

PERIODICAL  
Postage Paid at  
Jenison,  
Michigan

sponsored by their Evangelism Committee on April 6. Prof. H. Hanko spoke at the Lynden, WA PRC on the topic "Federal Vision," an issue that is causing many problems in many Reformed churches today.

### Mission Activities

**A** boat trip on the River Logan, or as Rev. A. Stewart called it, the Titanic Boat Tour on the Logan River, was enjoyed Easter Monday by the members of the Covenant PR Fellowship in Ballymena, N.I. Weather permitting, plans also called for a picnic lunch afterwards at Crawfordsburn

Country Park. Rev. Stewart was also scheduled to speak to a year 12 religious education class at Ballycastle High School on April 6.

In an ongoing church construction update from the Covenant PR Fellowship, we learned recently that they now have received permission to connect their building site to the city sewer.

### Young People's Activities

**T**wo of our churches' Young People's Societies, the Young People from the First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada and the young people from the Hull, IA

PRC, recently sponsored Pop Can Fund-raisers — Edmonton on April 1 and 22, and Hull on April 22. Edmonton's young people collected over \$580.00 on the fund-raiser of April 1 alone. That's a lot of bottles and cans to turn in.

### Minister Activities

**R**ev. M Dick declined the call extended to him to serve as the next pastor of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC.

Rev. R. Kleyn received the call "to come over and help" the congregation of the Covenant PRC in Wyckoff, NJ as their next pastor.



## Announcements

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With great joy and thanksgiving to God, our parents and grandparents,

#### PHILIP and JOYCE KRAIMA,

celebrated their 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on April 29, 2006. We, their children, thank God for giving us God-fearing covenant parents who raised us up to love and honor Him. We also thank our parents for the love, care, and godly instruction they have always given us and for the godly example they have been to us over the years. It is our prayer that God will continue to bless and preserve them in the coming years. "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts" (Psalm 145:3, 4).

- \* Rev. Martin and Tricia VanderWal  
Catherine, Cameron
- \* Arthur and Andrea Kleyn  
Ruth, James, David, Daniel

Jenison, Michigan

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 10, 2006, our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents,

#### EDWARD and BARBARA CAMMENGA,

celebrated their 55<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. As a family, we thank God for the many years He has given them together. It is our prayer that God will continue to bless them in the years He may yet give them together. We give thanks for the faithful covenant instruction, the godly example, and the Christian love they have always shown to us. "The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion; and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel" (Psalm 128:5, 6).

- \* Prof. Ronald and Rhonda  
Cammenga
- \* Dr. Randal and Kim Cammenga
- \* Rev. Ronald and Nancy Hanko
- \* Tim and Sandy Sale
- \* Robert and Shelley Cammenga
- \* Thomas and Cherie Cammenga  
33 grandchildren (one grandson,  
Daniel, in glory)  
15 great-grandchildren

Holland, Michigan

### CALL TO SYNOD!!

Synod 2005 appointed Faith Protestant Reformed Church, Jenison, Michigan the calling church for Synod 2006.

The consistory hereby notifies our churches that the 2006 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, June 13, 2006 at 8:30 A.M. in the Faith Protestant Reformed Church, Jenison, Michigan.

The Pre-Synodical Service will be held on Monday evening, June 12, at 7:00 P.M. Rev. Bruinsma, president of the 2005 Synod, will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the consistory before the service.

Delegates in need of lodging should contact Mr. Richard Flikkema, 7807 Coachman Lane, Jenison, Michigan 49428-8377. Phone: (616) 457-3730.

Consistory of  
Faith Protestant Reformed Church  
Richard Flikkema, Clerk.