

THE *November 15, 2005* STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Volume 82 ◆ Number 4

Thankful for Thanksgiving

"Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms."

Psalm 95:2

Thanksgiving Day! A fit time to come before His presence with thanksgiving. He is Jehovah, the living God, the sovereign of heaven and earth. His presence is the presence of the great God, the great King above all gods. His presence is the presence of our covenant God!

He it is that has made us. He it is that has made us to be hungry and thirsty. He has made us to be hungry for the nourishment that is found in common, earthly bread. He has made us to be thirsty for the sustenance that is found in water. He has made us to be dependent creatures. He has made us dependent upon the things of this earth, earthly food and drink. In making us dependent upon these earthly things, He has made us dependent upon Him.

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

For Jehovah is a great God, a great King above all gods.

He has made the earth and all that it contains. He regulates all the ways of the earth according to His heavenly ordinances. He causes the passing of the years with their seasons. He makes the rain to fall upon the earth, both the dew and the drenching rain. He makes the sun to shine upon the fields, warming the moist earth. By those means He makes the seed to sprout, the plant to grow. He has made, by the continued supply of rain and sunshine, the bud to form and the fruit to develop.



Man observes that work of God. Depending upon that God-instituted order and regularity, man has gone into his fields. In them he sows the seed. The seed grows. He waters and cultivates. Into the pasture he sends his cattle. He labors in the orchard spraying, pruning, and cutting. He does so not for tomorrow. He does so not for next week, or next month. He does so for the harvest, months away.

After the passing of those months, at the God-appointed time,

men enter into the field to harvest. By the work of God, there is a crop now to be harvested. Man puts forth his hand and gathers to himself a crop. He combs the field with a corn picker or combine. He sends forth laborers into his orchards. He rounds up his cattle out of the pastures for the slaughter. He brings into his garner an abundant harvest.

Man's heart is filled with gladness. He has bestowed labor, hard labor. He has watched over his investment with some anxiety, wondering about its outcome. Now that he has gathered, he feels at ease. There is success! Now he can look at the fruit his labor has brought forth. He has gathered his sheaves with happiness.



Now, where is God? Where is Jehovah? Where is this great God? Where is this great King above all gods?

God, the great King, has been there. He has been there through the whole process. He has given the earth the rain to moisten the lands and the sun to warm the fields. He has caused the seed to germinate and the plant to sprout.

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He has made it to mature, and fruit to ripen upon that plant. Even more, He has given man the ability to discern the times and the seasons, and what to do in those times and seasons. He has given man the strength to act in harmony with that wisdom.

God is there! God is there abundantly! God is there thoroughly!

But God is not there in grace!

He is not there in grace when the farmer, the orchard owner, and the rancher have ignored Him. His earth, His rain, His sunshine, His power, His gifts of the powers of mind and body — all these they have used. But they will not acknowledge His presence at all. His gifts they have used, but Him they refuse to acknowledge. With their hearts and minds, they push God far from them.

The same is true for the multitudes who eat and drink. They have labored and they have purchased. They will eat and drink much on Thanksgiving Day. But they, too, will not acknowledge God, though God be ever so near to them, giving them the very mouthfuls they consume and the power to consume. But they do not acknowledge God's absolute sovereignty and glory. They may pay Him lip-service, but with their hearts and minds they push Him away.

Therefore they eat wrath with every bite. With every sip they drink condemnation to themselves. Their fullness is very emptiness. Their happiness will shortly give way to depths of sorrow, loss, and pain.



How important, how necessary, are these words: "Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms."

Let us come before His presence!

Let us set before our minds the majesty and the glory of the one

true God. Let us know Him according as He has revealed Himself in His Word. Let us speak among ourselves His truth, that He is God alone, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us confess Him to be the sovereign God, the Creator of heaven and earth. Let us remember Him, that He is the God of our salvation, its Author and Finisher. Thus let us come before His presence with great reverence and deepest humility. Let us confess our sinfulness and our weakness, that we are nothing but wretched sinners without Him. And let us confess that in Him, with Him, we have everything!

Before His presence we come!

With thanksgiving!

Let us come before Him to ascribe to Him all His work. Let us confess His gift to us of the earth, His gift of rain and sunshine in their appointed measures and times. Let us speak of His gift of seed, of flocks and herds of cattle and sheep. Let us know His gifts of strength and knowledge to men, to prepare the soil, to sow the seed, to raise and tend these flocks and herds. Let us understand His work, to bring an abundance of fruit from that human labor. Let us acknowledge His gifts of strength and labor to bring food upon our tables in abundance. Let us confess that our strength to prepare and eat come to us from His hand.

Let us make a joyful noise before Him with psalms!

Thanksgiving speaks of abundance. We take in these good things that God has given to us. We take it in by our mouths, and into our stomachs. We make ourselves full with the abundance of the field and flock. But that is never enough. That can never produce thanksgiving. It can never bring about a joyful noise before Him with psalms.

We take in that good from God's hand far deeper. We take it into the depths of our hearts. We make our hearts full of the knowledge of God. We fill our hearts with the knowledge that His hand has supplied us this abundance!

Then from our hearts we make a joyful noise before Him with psalms. From our hearts we offer up to our God true, spiritual worship. Our noise with psalms is then the sound of joy. With loud acclaim we declare the goodness of God to us. We come before His presence with thanksgiving! With joy we sing psalms. We exalt the royal majesty and sovereign glory of God.

Here is the happiness and joy of our public worship on Thanksgiving Day, carrying out the word of this Scripture.



Then we find even greater cause for thanksgiving to our God.

That greater cause for joy is found in our thanksgiving itself.

To make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms is far greater cause for joy than being filled with every good thing of this world.

To be thankful to God is far greater cause for joy than receiving the abundance of all the earth. To make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms is far greater cause for joy than being filled

with every good thing of this world.

Why?

Because our thanksgiving itself is the wonderful gift of God's grace within us!

That thanksgiving is not natural to us. By nature we are no different than those who eat, who are filled with every good thing of the earth from God's hand, and yet ignore Him altogether. By nature we are no different than those who eat and drink to the full, and yet partake in every bite and swallow of the wrath of God.

His grace has made the difference — all the difference in the world! His grace has opened our

blind eyes to see His work in providing this earthly abundance. His grace has brought His work down into our hearts. His grace has made us thankful in our hearts. His grace brings us before His pres-

ence with thanksgiving. His grace brings us to make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms.

God's grace is why He receives us into His presence. His grace is why He delights to hear our joyful noise unto Him.

For that grace, let us come before His presence with thanksgiving. For that grace let us make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms!

Let us be thankful...for thanksgiving! 

Editorial

Rev. Kenneth Koole

On Site Reflections on Hyper-Calvinism and the Free Offer (3)

Last issue (Nov. 1, 2005) we provided a list of some five characteristics drawn up by a certain Phil Johnson, which he designated as earmarks of hyper-Calvinism. We indicated that we intended to return to a couple of matters found in that list with its explanations. We do so now.

The first item is Johnson's claim that to deny that God has any sort of love for the non-elect is hyper-Calvinism (his point 5, if you recall). Our response is, since when? Evidently since the WMO men decided it should be counted as such.

Be that as it may, of greater interest to us is that in Johnson's explanation of this 'error' he mentions the name of A.W. Pink as representative. As well Johnson should. We appreciate his honesty in this regard. This was Pink's position. But even Pink a *hyper-Calvinist*? And yet this is how the WMO (well-meant offer) men must label him. For all Pink's speaking of "Christ being freely offered" in his opposition to the Gospel Standard hyper-Calvinism of his day, he was not free-offer man.

In associating Pink with this above-mentioned 'error,' Johnson tries to be as gentle with Pink as possible. Understandably so. Pink is a writer of impeccable Calvinistic credentials, and to the popular

mind is as closely associated with true Calvinistic soteriology as one can get. And no one can deny that Pink has been used as a powerful tool of God for good in the lives of untold Christians. How many do not testify that they were lifted out of the deceptions of Arminianism and even outright unbelief by reading Pink's magisterial volume *The Sovereignty of God*?

What is of interest, in the first place, is how Johnson words his point 5, namely, God having no sort of love for the *non-elect* (*sic!*). But this is not the word Pink used. He used the word "reprobate," as in, God having no sort of love for the *reprobate*.

This, we reiterate, is significant, this avoidance of the word "reprobate" by those committed to the WMO. It indicates something amiss with their Calvinism, and that in fact the free offer really will not allow them to be so 'true' to Calvin and Calvinism as they claim. This comes out in the Banner of Truth's recently republished version of *The Sovereignty of God*. As Johnson himself is all too well aware, Pink's chapter on "The Sovereignty of God in Reprobation"

was lifted and removed from the book.

Even apart from the question of honesty in republishing books of the deceased and deliberately altering (via omission) what they have written (especially a man of Pink's integrity and convictions), another just as serious question raises its head, namely, what right do those who deny the decree of reprobation, as any number of the promoters of the WMO have and do, have to the claim of being the faithful representatives of Calvinism in its purest, truest form?

The answer should be self-evident, we think.

And now the real point, why this stumbling over reprobation, this *decretum horribile* ("terrifying decree"), as Calvin himself characterizes it? The answer? Because it stands in flat contradiction to the WMO, as any sensible man (rational human being) knows. Any new convert who has sat under free-offer

preaching and then might come across this doctrine in Pink's book would realize it too and begin to ask some hard questions.

And so, Calvin's doctrine of

... what right do those who deny the decree of reprobation have to the claim of being the faithful representatives of Calvinism in its purest, truest form?

reprobation (which is to say, Paul's and the Scripture's) is jettisoned. Commitment to the WMO with its "God desires and yearns for the salvation of everyone" compels them to do so. For all their claim of being able to live with logical contradictions in biblical doctrines (calling them "paradoxes" and claiming that irrationality in some instances is the very mark of orthodoxy), the tension between reprobation and the free offer evidently is one "apparent contradiction" that even their commitment to irrationalism chafes against and cannot live with. So, out goes reprobation. It is their "Shibboleth."

But is this "historic Calvinism," and can those who reject reprobation claim to be its faithful keepers? The question remains.

The second item we come back to is the use of the term "offer" or "gospel offer." As stated last time, our concern is with the charge by the WMO men that those who deny the free offer deny that one can speak of any kind of offer in the gospel in any sense. If such is not an explicit charge in every instance, yet such is the impression that is plainly, and, one might conclude, even deliberately left.

Johnson does this. He writes:

Deliberately excluded from hyper-Calvinist "evangelism" is any pleading with the sinner to be reconciled with God. Sinners are not told that God offers them forgiveness or salvation. In fact, most hyper-Calvinists categorically deny that God makes any OFFER in the gospel whatsoever.

And then Johnson brings this up again in his "Type-3" brand of hyper-Calvinism (in which section he brings in the name of the PRC). Writes Johnson, "Type-3 hyper-Calvinism is based on a denial that the gospel makes *any 'offer' of Christ, salvation, or mercy to the non-elect.*" (Italics mine — kk.)

This must not be allowed to stand unchallenged. The reason is, if such is true we would be unde-

niably hyper-Calvinists. After all, the Reformed creeds do use the word "offer," and any number of stalwarts of old spoke of the gospel offer and of Christ being offered to all in the gospel. As is well known, the *Canons of Dordt* themselves read:

"It is not the fault of the gospel, nor of Christ offered (sic!) therein, nor of God, who calls men by the gospel and confers upon them various gifts, that those who are called by the ministry of the Word refuse to come and be converted..." (Third and Fourth Heads, Art. 9).

Maurice Roberts does the same in another article further down the site (also

printed in *The Banner of Truth*, Aug.-Sept. 2005). He writes of two kinds of objections to the free offer, the second being "From those who claim that God in the gospel does not give a sincere offer (sic! — kk) to any but to the elect." This he labels as "Dutch-American Hyper-Calvinism" associated with H. Hoeksema and the PRC in America. He then lists a number of things that he asserts follow from our insistence on a particular rather than a general promise. Representative of this list is his assertion that we claim, "It is not proper for a preacher to 'offer' Christ promiscuously to a mixed audience of Christians and non-Christians." And this when the *Canons* speak of "the gospel, [and] of Christ offered therein." So, it would seem "as obvious as a cow" that our opposition to the WMO means we do not even square up to our own most Calvinistic and Reformed creed. What else can one conclude — "hypers"!

The fact is that we do not "categorically deny" that one may speak of any offer in the gospel whatsoever. What we object to is the free offer of the gospel. And that is something else again.

We do not deny that Christ is and can be offered in the gospel preaching in a proper sense. In the gospel offer of which the *Canons* speak, Christ is set forth before all as the one sacrifice for sin, God's Savior from wrath. Christ Jesus is trumpeted as the revelation of God as He graciously wills to have mercy upon sinners. We are authorized to declare to every man in the gospel, "Jehovah is a forgiving God. Turn ye unto Him and

He will have mercy upon you. Everyone who turns to Him seeking salvation and forgiveness in Christ Jesus' name shall find it. He has never turned one such seeking, sorrowing sinner away yet, and I can

assure you, He is not about to begin now. Repent and believe, and thou too shalt be saved!" This is the true gospel offer. In these terms Christ crucified and risen is to be set forth for the consideration of all, of everyone without exception to whom the gospel comes. You can even throw in a "Whosoever will, let him come!" We would not mind at all. Really! If Scripture says it, say it, by all means — to all. You are free, yea, called to do so.

One wonders how much more "promiscuous" one must be to have a good reputation these days!

But this is not what is meant by the "offer" anymore these days. It has been hijacked by the WMO of the gospel, giving men license to use language that neither the apostles nor the fathers of Dordt used. This is why we tend to stay away from the use of the word altogether — people hear the word "offer of the gospel," and think "free offer."

The free offer authorizes preachers to speak of the God who has in love elected just some to salvation as yet also wanting and wishing for the salvation of every sinner, yearning for their salvation with all His divine heart (cf. *The*

*You can even
throw in a
"Whosoever will,
let him come!"
We would not
mind at all. Really!*

Banner of Truth, Aug.-Sept. 2005, p. 41). In the end, the free offer authorizes men to say to every hearer in God's name (be they Herod, be they Judas Iscariot), "God loves you. Yes, Christ died for you!"

This is the language of the WMO. It is sheer Arminianism. It is precisely this language that occasioned the writing of the Canons of Dordt to begin with, in defense of true Calvinism and the gospel. And yet, according to the promoters of the free offer, such language is now to be considered the very "marrow" of Calvinistic gospel preaching. Astounding!

This brings us to the third matter of interest to us, namely, the practice of the WMO men of using the terms "paradox" and "apparent contradiction" when called upon to defend the contradictory statements that the free offer compels them to make.

It is not our intention at this point to examine this at any length. We simply want to get clearly before the reader's mind just how deep and serious this contradiction goes. We set it in bold relief; the free offer comes down to this — the Jehovah God whom we are to preach has told us that He desires in deepest, most tender sincerity (willing and wishing and longing for) the salvation of every sinner, (and we are to tell everyone that); but at the same time He has determined to withhold from the majority of sinners that one "thing" without which He knows full well they cannot be saved, namely, His good and Holy Spirit.

So, the God we preach desires and yearns for the salvation even of the reprobate sinners, (yes, deeply, sincerely), but at the same time He has no intention of giving them the Holy Spirit, whom He alone can give them — and without whom they must perish.

And yet this God is sincere in His professed desire to save every sinner?

This is the incongruity with which the WMO leaves one. You

may call it a paradox if you will, and then claim that what the free offer foists on Calvinist believers are only "apparent contradictions," but the fact is that even a blind man sees that what the free offer calls into question is the very sincerity and character of the sovereign God. This, in the end, is what is so troubling about the free offer of the gospel.

Significantly, nowhere in the apostles' preaching in the book of Acts do you find them, as they utter calls to repentance and salvation, explaining the warrant for obedience to this call in terms of God's love for everyone or Christ having died for "you all." If indeed such utterance does belong to the very marrow of the gospel, surely one would expect it to loom large in the apostles' preaching. But, not so. The reason is that there are other ways of "offering" Christ and preaching the gospel call with its sweet promise than resorting to such Arminian language, namely, by using language that is compatible with a sovereign Shepherd seeking His own given Him by the Father from all eternity.

The fact is that the marvel that God's saving love is a predestinating love ought to have more bearing on what one says in the preaching and gospel call than simply a refraining from preaching an overt "free-willism" (and therefore I am Calvinistic and Reformed). Surely it ought also to have a bearing upon how one preaches the very heart of the gospel as well, namely, the love of this almighty, saving God and Christ's atoning death and suffering. This distinctive note and 'color' the free offer removes.

Before concluding, we bring up one more issue, namely, the matter of sovereignty and responsibility. The WMO men charge the critics of the free offer with wanting to put too much emphasis on the sovereignty of God in salvation, and not enough on the responsibility of man. In other words, the WMO men claim that they, for the

sake of balance, put equal emphasis on the responsibility of man.


We find this a curious and telling charge and position — and not simply because this has always been the charge of Arminianism against Calvinism, "Your emphasis on sovereign predestination destroys man's responsibility," though that too.

The question is, what do the WMO men mean by "emphasizing also the responsibility of man"? The word "responsibility," as it stands, is an ambiguous word. It can refer to one of two things — either to the "accountability" of a man (holding one accountable for his wrong), or to the "ability" of a man (his ability to respond — the part man must play).

Do the WMO men really mean to say that we as "hyper-Calvinists" do not emphasize the "accountability" of man for his sin enough? They know that not to be the case. If it is one thing those labeled as "hypers" have emphasized it is man's accountability for sin (completely responsible through Adam and by wicked choices). What does that leave us with? Evidently, according to the WMO men, we do not stress the "ability" of man enough. But they do? For the sake of balance there should be a little more emphasis on unbelieving, spiritually dead man's *ability*? And this is Calvinism true to Calvin and the Reformed faith?

We will be so bold as to say that that is exactly what they are saying, though the word they use is man's "responsibility." We know, they may not want to say this, but this is what they are left with.

The WMO brethren may want to examine a bit more closely their defending the WMO in the interest of "placing more emphasis on man's responsibility."

Next time, D. V., we will consider the WMO and gospel preaching as various scripture passages are brought to bear upon the issue. 



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The Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary opened its doors for the 2005-2006 school year on Monday, August 29. Two first-year students were welcomed, Nathan Dykstra (Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church) and Cory Griess (originally from Loveland, CO Protestant Reformed Church and currently a member of the Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in West Michigan). Heath Bleyenbergh is in his second year. Heath is a member of Hope PRC and was born, baptized, and raised in the PRC of Edgerton, MN. Nathan Langerak, a third-year student, is a member of Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI and a son of Hope PRC. The two seniors, Andrew Lanning and Clayton Spronk, are serving six-month internships in First PRC Grand Rapids and Byron Center PRC, respectively.

God in His goodness and faithfulness gave to the seminary and churches an able successor, the Rev. Ronald L. Cammenga, to Prof. David J. Engelsma for the chair of Reformed Dogmatics and Old Testament Studies.

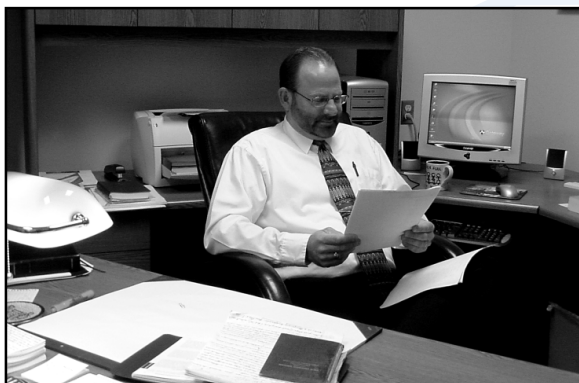
The annual convocation of the seminary and the installation of Rev. Cammenga into the office of Professor of Theology were combined in a worship service at Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan on Wednesday, August 31. Prof. Engelsma conducted this service and preached the sermon, and Prof. R. Dykstra read the Form and gave the charge to the new Professor.

Currently Prof. Cammenga is completing his studies for the Master of Theology (Th.M.) degree at Calvin Theological Seminary. He plans to begin teaching a class or two, D.V., in the 2006-2007 school year. May God richly bless the brother as he and his colleagues, Prof. Russell Dykstra and Prof. Barrett Gritters, "...commit the truth to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (19 Tim. 2:2).

The retirement of Prof. Robert Decker and Prof. David Engelsma in the next year or two means that in the past decade we have witnessed the installation of an entire new faculty. May God give these men grace to be faithful in maintaining the truth of the Reformed faith in the Protestant Reformed Churches.



Prof. David Engelsma,
retiring Dogmatics professor



Prof. Ronald Cammenga settling into his office

Robert D Decker

An Orthodox Professor (1)*

Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

Titus 1:9

Introduction

The purpose of our special worship service is the installation of the Rev. Ronald Cammenga into the office of professor of theology in the Protestant Reformed Seminary. This office is included in the authoritative position in the church described in Titus 1:9. The passage gives the qualifications and work of a “bishop” (v. 7). A bishop in the New Testament is either a minister or a ruling elder, and the special office of professor of theology is a distinct aspect, or function, of the office of a minister. The professor is a minister whom the churches appoint to the special task of ministry that consists of training men to be ministers of the gospel and, in connection with this training, maintaining, defending, and developing sound doctrine.

That the professor of theology is in view in the text, with the pastor and the ruling elder, is evident from the task assigned to the bishop: “by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gain-

sayers.” This is certainly the task of the professor of theology.

There is also the phrase translated by the Authorized Version, “as he hath been taught.” Even though this is not an accurate translation, the phrase does indicate that the bishop, who must exhort and teach others, was himself taught by someone. Some other bishop, or minister, taught him. Teaching men to teach the people of God in the congregations is the fundamental idea of a seminary and the task of a professor of theology.

One who teaches ministers to exhort by sound doctrine is certainly required to hold fast the faithful word himself.

Holding fast the faithful word is the requirement of orthodoxy. The bishop is required to be orthodox. Orthodoxy is straight, or right, doctrine, according to a standard. The orthodoxy of the bishop-professor will be evident in his teaching, preaching, and writing. The content of all his teaching will be what the text calls “sound doctrine.”

This qualification, the brother who is installed as professor of theology has demonstrated. This qualification, he is called to maintain. To this qualification, the churches must hold him.

The Qualification

The qualification of the professor of theology that he be orthodox applies obviously and importantly to his doctrine, his teaching. This is what we usually mean when we describe a theologian as orthodox. His doctrine is straight, when compared with a certain standard. To this orthodox doctrine of the

bishop-professor, the text refers when it speaks of his “sound doctrine.” The reference is to his teaching: his classes of instruction in the seminary; his sermons and lectures in the churches; his writing in the *Standard Bearer*, the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*, and books. His teaching is not heterodox, but orthodox.

The apostle calls orthodox doctrine “sound.” “Sound” has the sense of “healthy.” The Holy Spirit has quite a different view of orthodox doctrine than does contemporary Christianity. Contemporary Christianity complains of “stuffy” doctrine, “cold” doctrine, “dead” doctrine. The Holy Spirit speaks of orthodox doctrine as ‘full of life and vitality’ and therefore ‘beautiful and strong,’ as a healthy plant or human is full of life and powerful. Because the Spirit refers to orthodox doctrine as the content of preaching and teaching in the church, the clear implication is that doctrinal preaching is sound, or healthy. Orthodox doctrine is not diseased by being weakened and corrupted by false doctrine.

The content of this orthodox doctrine, which is therefore sound, is comprehensively indicated in the epistle to Titus. Orthodox doctrine is the teaching of salvation by the grace of God alone. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11). “But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abun-

Prof. Engelsma is professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

* The text of the sermon preached at the combined seminary convocation/installation service (for Prof. Ronald L. Cammenga) on August 31, 2005.

dantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:4-7).

Orthodox doctrine is the teaching that the cross of Christ as redemption is the sole ground of our salvation. "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14).

Orthodox doctrine is the teaching that the saved people of God are called to live holy lives. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11, 12).

Orthodox doctrine is the teaching that we are to live in the hope of the second coming of Jesus, who is the great God. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

Orthodoxy of the Heart

This orthodoxy of the professor's doctrine is, and must be, rooted in the orthodoxy of his heart. The man himself must be orthodox. The orthodoxy of his doctrine manifests the orthodoxy of his heart. The qualification of the bishop-professor in the text is that he himself holds fast the faithful word. His sound doctrine is the purpose of his holding fast the faithful word: "holding fast the faithful word ... *that* he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince."

The word to which the professor holds fast is the living utterance of the triune God concerning Himself in Jesus Christ and therefore concerning His gracious salvation of His chosen people. The word is spoken by God *in* the preaching of the word, but it is not identical with the preaching. Titus 1:3 distinguishes the word from the

preaching: "[God] hath in due times manifested his word through preaching." In the preaching of the minister, God speaks His living word. He makes the preaching the vehicle of His own voice.

Titus 1:9 mentions three distinct aspects of the word of God in three different terms. There is the "doctrine" the professor teaches and preaches. There is the body of truths that functions as the standard of all the professor's teaching. This body of truths is the reference of the phrase which the Authorized Version translates, "as he hath been taught." And there is the faithful word that God Himself sounds forth and causes to be heard in the preaching of the gospel.

The distinction between the preaching and the living word manifested in the preaching is important. It indicates the importance of the preaching of the gospel. In the preaching, God manifests His own living word, which alone is powerful to save. The professor of theology, whose work is the training of men to preach, must be convinced of the importance of preaching.

At the same time, the distinction between preaching and the living word in the preaching guards against any exaltation of the preacher. It is not he and his speech that save, but the word of God in the preaching.

The text affirms that the word of God in the preaching is faithful. Not the preacher, not the professor, but the word is faithful. The word is reliable and trustworthy in everything it says, whether information about creation, or instruction about sexual purity and marriage, or the promise of eternal life to those who believe. Because this living word of God is heard in the preaching, also the preaching of the word is faithful, when the preaching is in harmony with the standard of Scripture.

To this faithful word, the professor holds fast. This is the quali-

fication for office. He holds fast to it by embracing it by faith in his heart. This faith loves the living word of God concerning Himself in Jesus Christ and concerning His gracious salvation of His elect people. The professor holds fast to the word, because the word has laid hold on him. The word has captured and captivated him, not so much as a grand theological system (although it is a grand theological system), but as a word of marvelous grace in the cross of Christ to the professor himself as a guilty sinner.

Captive to the word, the professor holds fast to this word. He will not let it go for theological novelties. He does not attempt to adapt it to modern thinking. His adherence to the word does not waver. His love for the word does not cool.

Holding fast to the word is the fundamental qualification for the office of professor, as it is the fundamental qualification for the office of pastor and the office of ruling elder. For holding fast to the word is basic to the professor's task of exhorting and convincing. How can he exhort the church, particularly the seminarians, and convince the gainsayers if he himself does not hold fast to the word?

A professor of theology in a Reformed seminary must have many qualifications. There are the spiritual qualifications mentioned in Titus 1:6-8: "blameless, the husband of one wife," and the rest. He must have special gifts that make him capable of the science of theology. In his *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht*, H. Bouwman speaks of the qualification of a professor of theology that consists of the "power of mind to penetrate into the depths of God's revelation and to order their knowledge systematically and methodically." But this is paramount, that he is orthodox with an orthodoxy that has its root in his holding fast the faithful word in his heart.

(to be concluded) 

Table


The table is an outstanding picture of the rich life God's people enjoy within the covenant. It is where the lord of the house feeds family and friends, and they share sweet communion. In the covenant home, "children [live] like olive plants round about thy table" (Ps. 128:3). The Old Covenant house of God prominently featured a pair of golden tables (Ex. 25:23ff.). In the New Covenant, the congregation gathers regularly to worship at the Lord's table. Covenant life, Christ promises, is "that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom" (Luke 22:30). And those who profane the Lord's table profane His covenant (H.C., Q & A 82).

Considered by itself, the table, as the Greek word *trapeza* expresses, is simply a four-footed thing. Its real significance is better indicated by the Hebrew word *shulcan*, which means a thing sent out, and refers not so much to the table itself as to the bounties extended upon it. The importance of the tabernacle's tables was derived from the twelve loaves of bread and dinner utensils set on one, and the seven-branched candlestick set on the other (Ex. 25:23-40). Their significance was essentially the same as the bread and wine of the Lord's "spiritual table," where "Christ communicates Himself with all His benefits to us, and gives us there to enjoy both Himself and the merits of His sufferings and death: nourishing, strengthening, and comforting our poor comfortless souls" (B.C., Art. 35).

The table is the preeminent place where the lord of the house extends his blessings in grace. These bounties are rich. The table "should be full of fatness" (Job. 36:16). Those who ate at Solomon's table lacked nothing (1 Kings 4:27). The Lord's table is where "we shall not want" because "our cup runneth over" (Ps. 23:5). It is a table He owns, and the prerogative to distribute its blessings are His. He determines who eats there. Welcome are family whom the Lord of the house has begotten (Ps. 128:3) or friends whom the Lord in-

vites as if they were His sons (2 Sam. 9:7-13; 1 Kings 2:7). Enemies are excluded. Blessed is the man, then, for whom the Lord graciously prepares a table in the presence of such enemies (Ps. 23:5)!

It is nothing new that unthankful children complain about the food father earns and mother prepares for the family table. Unbelieving Israel asked, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? (Ps. 78:19). And when the Lord prepared a table, they said it was contemptible (Mal. 1:7). So also today, when impenitent and hypocrites born into the church despise the provisions of the Lord's table, that which should have been for their welfare becomes a snare (Ps. 69:22; Rom. 11:9). Attendance at the table requires fidelity to the lord who furnishes it. The prophets of Baal ate at Jezebel's table because they were beholden to her (1 Kings 18:19). The misery of David was deepened when a friend who ate regularly at his table turned traitor (Ps. 41:9), an act fulfilled when King Jesus said, "the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table" (Luke 22:21). The friends of Jesus "cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and the table of devils" (1 Cor. 10:21). Those only are allowed at His table who "are displeased with themselves for their sins, yet trust they are forgiven them...by the suffering and death of Christ; who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and to amend their life" (H.C., Q & A 82).

We, who are God's friends, and especially we who are lords of the house, should take heed lest our own family tables become simply a four-footed thing. The table should be guarded as the Lord guards His. Spiritual family and friends are welcome. The unbelieving and rebellious have their own tables. If our children are to be olive trees around the table, they should be planted there and not uprooted as soon as high school starts. The fatness of our table should not be simply roast beef and mashed potatoes. Wisdom urges the simple to gather at her table to receive understanding (Prov. 9:1-4). Wise lords of the house gather their family at the table to feed them the fatness of Scripture. In this way only will the table remain a rich blessing of covenant life. 

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■ Honorary Degree for Canadian Hero??

We seem to be digging very deep, scraping the bottom of the barrel, to come up with Canadian heroes these days. At least that is the case with the senate committee of the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario. Let's see — who would be a worthy recipient of an honorary doctorate of laws degree? The obvious choice: notorious Canadian abortion activist and law-breaker, Dr. Henry Morgentaler!

In 1968 Morgentaler opened Canada's first freestanding abortion clinic in Montreal. Over the next twenty years he opened abortion clinics in other provinces, and he was repeatedly arrested and charged with conspiracy to perform an abortion. In 1974 he served ten months of an 18-month prison sentence. He was repeatedly tried in the courts, and in 1985 he appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada. In 1988 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled the federal law forbidding abortion unconstitutional. Morgentaler has built eight abortion clinics across the country.

Three months of protest and division led up to the climax as the University of Western Ontario presented this honorary degree to Canada's abortion rights advocate, Henry Morgentaler. Tony Gossnach, assistant editor of *The Interim*, Canada's Life and Family Newspaper, reports in the July 2005 issue:

The University of Western Ontario resembled more an armed camp under siege than a place of higher learning when Henry Morgentaler's honorary degree

roadshow rolled into London, Ont., June 16.

At least five dozen police officers ringed the area around the university's Alumni Hall as Morgentaler received the honorary doctor of laws degree before about 1,200 graduates and their relatives. Outside, police and security officials erected metal barricades along the laneway about 50 metres from the hall doors to keep out about 600 protesters taking part in the Campaign Life Coalition-organized demonstration, as well as along the heavily traveled Western Road.

Morgentaler was evidently escorted in and out a back door to avoid confronting the protesters.

The day capped months of rancour and maneuvering both within and outside the university community, as plans were unveiled to bestow the recognition on Canada's most notorious abortionist. More than 12,000 people, including many students and alumni, had signed an internet petition against the award and some estimates have placed the loss to the university treasury, through lost donations and bequests, in the tens of millions of dollars....

...The university's administration remained intransigent to the end, however, and even greeted Morgentaler with glowing words as he stepped forward to accept the degree....

...Morgentaler, as has been his custom in public speeches, referred again to his and his family's experiences in Nazi concentration camps and trotted out his well-worn claim that the abortion of unwanted children has lowered the crime rate and led to a caring and safer society. In an earlier interview in the *Globe and Mail* newspaper, he told reporter Caroline Alphonso: "I do believe, even if it may not sound modest, that I deserve this degree."

The hundreds outside Alumni Hall took issue with that boast. At least six UWO professors — four in full academic regalia — joined the protesters. Professor David

Stanford, of the Department of Statistical & Actuarial Sciences, bemoaned "the current of political correctness" that is pervasive at Western and said it was "extremely sad" that his university would choose to honour an individual such as Morgentaler. He said it was necessary to stand in solidarity and witness to life. Speaking from personal experience, he noted that his sister almost killed herself three decades ago from grief over an abortion she underwent.

Philosophy Professor Thomas M. Lennon, who has worked on campus for 37 years and received numerous awards of his own in that time, said he "couldn't fathom the intentions of the university" and characterized the Morgentaler honour, as "a silly political event." He noted that whereas his association with Western was once a source of pride, it is now one of shame.

He also said he was disappointed by the insensitivity shown by the university's administration at the moral stance of a significant segment of the student population.

Sociology Professor Paul Whitehead predicted that because of the backlash, he didn't think the university "will make a stupid decision like that again." He added he felt bad for the students and parents who didn't want to be present for the controversial event....

Many young people were evident among the throngs outside the barricades, joined by those toward the middle and older ends of the spectrum, as well as by representatives of entities such as Campaign Life Coalition and Show the Truth. The latter group's explicit images of aborted preborn babies prompted one radio reporter to tell his station during a live broadcast: "These graphic signs are difficult even for a crusty old guy like me to look at."

A new pro-life group, London-based Truth and Love for Life, caused a sensation when about a dozen of its young members

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showed up garbed in funeral black and carrying a wooden casket topped by a tiny pair of shoes and a banner proclaiming that more than two million unborn Canadians have been killed by legalized abortion. Media cameras swarmed the group for images...."

May we never cease to be horrified and sickened by the abomination of legalized abortion. "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jer. 1:5).

■ Sunday Best

In his regular Saturday column in the "Spirituality and Ethics" page of the April 2, 2005 *London Free Press*, Rev. Bob Ripley writes with his characteristic wit from his perspective in the liberal, mainline United Church of Canada. But in his inimitable way, he makes some very pertinent observations with regard to an aspect of worship that is frequently not taken very seriously nowadays. His column is entitled, "Lamenting the Demise of the Sunday Best." Think about it!

Sunday best used to be your best duds that you wore on Sunday.

Saturday night was for polishing shoes between supper and Lawrence Welk. Black paste. Stiff brush. Buffing cloth for that saintly shine.

The next morning it was coats and ties and dresses and hats. But no more.

Welcome to casual Sunday.

In churches, mosques and synagogues, worship is casual. Saints wade into a sea of denim, distinguished only by the fading of the fabric and the label on the pocket.

In some California sanctuaries, you might think you were on the set of a Gidget movie, singing hymns between Moondoggie and the Big Kahuna....

And some preachers, including this one, have been known to swap outfits, depending on the style of worship. Praise band or

robed choir? Pick your pants.

I still lean toward the suit and tie. There's a trace of Saturday shoe polish coursing through my veins.

Many Christian ministers don't care what you wear. After all, Jesus of Nazareth had only one garment and it was gambled away by Roman soldiers.

I wouldn't want anyone to stay away from worship because they thought a suit and tie were de rigueur.... Still, I mourn the death of the idea of Sunday best....

Certain professions have cast off formal attire faster than others. Members of Parliament still dress up in the house, and lawyers wouldn't dream of showing up in court in anything else. But otherwise, casual Fridays are now a seven-day norm, with ties as rare as rotary phones.

How do we justify our disheveled appearance when photos of Depression-era bread lines show men attired in suits and hats, maintaining an air of dignity despite ubiquitous despair?

I continue to hold to a fast-fading formality against the casual quicksand. There are tons of T-shirts and sweats in my closet, reserved for times when I expect to sweat — like mowing the lawn or writing a column.

In the quest for comfort, we have lost the glamour of a not-so-distant time when you dressed up for an event that called for refined attire, like meeting someone special.

God included.

Yes, today's worship has increasingly gone casual. Especially in services seeking to appeal to baby-boomers and Generation Xers, the goal seems to be to make those in attendance feel comfortable. Casual dress is often one aspect of that. In *Reformed Worship* (p. 32), Prof. B. Gritters comments regarding a local newspaper report covering a new mega-church that showed a young man in jeans, tennis shoes, and a sweatshirt, proclaiming: "This makes me feel good: I'm comfortable here; that's why I'm here." Rev. Rick War-

ren, author of best-selling *The Purpose Driven Life*, pastor of Saddleback Church in southern California, typically preaches while wearing a Hawaiian shirt and sandals.

But we must also examine ourselves in this regard. We certainly would never contend that God goes casual for summer worship. With air conditioning nearly everywhere — in homes, vehicles, and church buildings — casual dress is not a matter of relief from the heat of the day. Yet one sees some dress shirts with ties replaced with golf-style shirts. And in some cases dresses, or skirts and tops, become more casual and/or immodest, revealing more and more skin. Modesty in dress ought always to be observed, but especially in the divine worship services. To my mind a good rule of thumb is that my appearance (clothing, hair style, jewelry, etc.) in the worship service ought not draw attention to me. Nothing in my appearance ought detract or distract from the focus on the worship of the living God.


The biblical principle involved here is "reverence" in public worship. In worship we come into fellowship with the living God, who alone is great and greatly to be praised! Prof. B. Gritters puts it well in his pamphlet "Public Worship and the Reformed Faith":

If the angels, without sin, cover their faces in the presence of God and cry out, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory," how can we worshippers, who remain sinners our entire life, do anything less than come into His courts with reverential awe?...

Understanding this principle, the Reformed believer will not come to worship dressed casually, but in his best. Understanding this, the Reformed pastor will not promote a casualness and carelessness in worship. Understanding this, the Reformed believer will pray for grace to come into God's presence with a reverent fear.... They are going to meet their King!

Indeed, reverence is a matter of the heart. God requires not a mere outward formality in dress.

But reverence is reflected and revealed in many ways, one of which is our dress in worship. May God give us wisdom and discretion in

selecting appropriate attire for worship. Let's wear our "Sunday best." 

Search the Scriptures

Prof. Herman Hanko

The Charter of Christian Liberty (3)

An Exposition of the Book of Galatians: Paul's Defense of His Apostolic Credentials (1:1 - 2:14)

Address and Blessing

Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) and all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia.
Galatians 1:1, 2

The attack that the Judaizers in the Galatian churches made on Paul's apostolic credentials was a vicious and subtle attack. If it could be proved to be true, Paul's credibility was undermined and the gospel he had formerly taught the Galatian churches was a counterfeit gospel, or, at the very least, a gospel that had no divine sanction. Only apostolic doctrine was from God.

Although the office of apostles ceased with the death of the apostles, the same or similar tactics are frequently used by heretics who wish to introduce heresy into the church of Christ. Rather than

attack the truth head on, something too obviously wrong to be deceiving, they resort to efforts to destroy the credibility of the leaders in the church. Or they attack the leaders as old and decrepit, no longer sound of body and mind. They may brand those who defend the truth as narrow and intolerant, given to sectarian isolationism, and promoting ideas that have not the sanction of the worldwide church of Christ.

Such tactics are the easy way to bring heresies into the church and to defend them when they begin to take root. It happens that those who teach the error that the preaching of the gospel is grace to all that hear brand the defenders of sovereign grace as hyper-Calvinists who hold to a position rejected by most of the church world, are unconcerned about the salvation of the unsaved, and unable to preach the gospel beyond the confines of their own church. In this way the credibility of the truth is undermined without the heretics having to face the biblical texts at issue.

Paul took the charges made against him very seriously and began his defense of his apostolic credentials in the first statement of the epistle. One can only imagine the

impact this had on the churches of Galatia and on those in these churches who denied his apostleship. Imagine the minister on a Sunday morning announcing to the congregation: "Beloved, we have a letter this morning from the apostle Paul. It reads, 'Paul an apostle, (not of man, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead).'" And this was only the first roar of the cannon which was to fire many more shots.

The Addresser

While we sign our names at the end of letters that we write, one writing a letter in the days of the apostle introduced himself at the very beginning. So Paul does in all his epistles; so also here.

He does not use only his name, but he refers to himself as an apostle, and as an apostle who received his apostolic credentials from God through Christ. The very word "apostle" means "one sent with a commission." It is for this reason that the word "apostle" can be and is used in a wider sense in the New Testament. In II Corinthians 8:23, Titus and other helpers are called "apostles," although the AV, rightly distinguishing be-

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Previous article in this series: October 1, 2005, p. 9.

tween the helper and the apostolic office, translates the Greek word for apostles with "messengers." The same is true of Philippians 2:25, where Epaphroditus is called "your apostle" (where the AV reads "your messenger"). By implication, James the Lord's brother, not one of the twelve, is called an apostle in Galatians 1:19.

The men who held the apostolic office, however, were 13 in number. They were the original disciples less Judas and plus Matthias and Paul. They held the office because they had been sent by, and thus received their commission from, the risen Lord *directly*. It was this apostolic commission that gave to their teachings divine authority. In writing to the Ephesians, Paul describes the church as having been built upon the foundation of the prophets and the apostles, with Jesus Christ the cornerstone (Eph. 2:20). Divine teaching was through the office of prophet in the Old Testament and apostle in the New.

The Judaizers were, therefore, confronted with a dilemma: they either had to admit that the doctrine that Paul had taught when the Galatian churches were organized was the truth of God, or they had to challenge the apostolic credentials of the apostle. They chose the latter, for they would not submit to the truth.

There was a certain "legitimacy" to their argument, which made it seem like sound reasoning to those who are easily turned away from the faith: Paul was not one of the twelve who had been chosen by the Lord when He was on earth; he had not been commissioned by the Lord during the Lord's earthly ministry and after His resurrection when He appeared to His disciples; and Paul had, in fact, been an enemy of Christ who had been instrumental in persecuting the church and killing saints of God. How, so the Judaizers argued, could such a man be an apostle?

All these objections Paul will answer in the course of his lengthy defense of his apostleship. But, for the present, Paul asserts emphatically that he is an apostle, not from man nor by man, but from the Lord Jesus Christ and from God the Father.

The argument implied in this terse statement is clear. Paul insists that he held an office that he had not received from man. It was not true that the church of Jerusalem or Antioch had given him his office. Nor was it true that he held some sort of sub-office, conferred on him by other apostles. It was not even true that his office came by means of man. Ministers, elders, and deacons receive their office from Christ, but through the means of the church and thus "by means of man." Perhaps the Judaizers were willing, graciously, to admit that Christ conferred on Paul the office that he held, but through the church. This too Paul emphatically repudiates. He did not receive his apostolic credentials through the agency of the church.

He received them directly from Jesus Christ. Christ — directly, through no other agency. Christ did so when He stopped Paul on the road to Damascus, and when He appeared to Paul in the wilderness of Arabia and gave him infallible apostolic doctrine (1:16, 17. See also II Cor. 12:1-4). He was as much an apostle as were the twelve, and he had authority equal to theirs.¹

Paul insists, therefore, at the very beginning of his epistle, that his apostolic credentials are genuine, equal with those of the other apostles, and in order. His doctrine is divine. And, further, what he writes in this epistle is, word for word, given him by infallible inspiration. The Galatians must receive it as such.

Paul received his apostolic office "through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead."

The word "and" must not be taken in the sense that there are two means by which Paul received

his office and two sources of his apostolic authority: God and Christ. The word "and" in Scripture frequently relates the two nouns connected by it in different ways. One example would be Jesus' word "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). The meaning is: "I am the resurrection *because* I am the life." The same is true of Jesus' claim to be "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 16:13). Here too the meaning is: "I am the way *because* I am the truth; and I am the way and the truth *because* I am the life."²

Paul received his apostolic office from the triune God, the Sovereign and Lord, the Redeemer of the church. The triune God accomplished His eternal purpose and plan through Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God in our flesh, who suffered and died, rose again from the grave, and is ascended into the

1. We will not argue the often-debated question whether Matthias was in fact an apostle. Some argue that Peter was his usual self, precipitous and rushing ahead of the Lord, in his advice to the 120 to choose another apostle. Peter made a mistake, and Matthias was in fact no apostle. But the fact that the event is recorded in Scripture (Acts 1:15-26) without censure indicates that Matthias was indeed "numbered among the twelve." If it is argued that with the addition of Paul, the number of apostles becomes thirteen instead of twelve, it ought to be observed that the number of the tribes of Israel was, with two sons of Joseph made tribes, also thirteen. Further, in the list of the tribes recorded in Revelation 7:5-8, while twelve tribes are mentioned, Joseph is counted as a tribe along with his son Manasseh, while Dan and Joseph's son Ephraim have no place in the list.

2. Scripture contains many such expressions, which are figures of speech called hendiadys. We use the word "and" in similar ways in our own daily conversation. We may say, for example, "I am going to the store and I am going to buy five pounds of sugar." We mean: "I am going to the store *in order to* buy five pounds of sugar."

highest heavens as the Head of the church. Everything that God does in the salvation of the church is, therefore, done through Jesus Christ. So God appointed apostles in the church by whom God gave infallible truth, through Jesus Christ. Paul's appointment is divine in origin and came through the exalted Christ.


Added are the words "who raised him from the dead," because the triune God raised Christ. Scripture uses both expressions: "God raised Christ," and "Christ arose." It makes no difference, for Scripture uniformly identifies Christ with God,³ for Christ is God's own Son, truly God, but God with us. The resurrection is the key point here because God accomplished His purpose for His church through the triumphant resurrection of Christ as the seal of Christ's perfect work of redemption and as the exaltation of Christ as the Head of the church. Christ rose for the church; He is exalted that the church might receive His blessings; He is ascended on high as "the way, the truth, and the life"; He brings Himself to the

church by His Spirit and through apostolic doctrine contained in the sacred Scriptures. This Christ spoke to Paul *directly*, commissioned him to be an apostle, and now comes to the Galatian churches, through Paul's infallible writing with that before which the churches of Galatia had better bow for their soul's salvation.

Added to Paul's mention of himself as the addresser is the expression, "And all the brethren which are with me." We cannot be sure specifically to whom Paul refers, because we do not know the area in which Paul was residing when this epistle was written. There were "brethren" where Paul was, some of whom may have been co-workers. Paul adds that these brethren join with him in sending the epistle, not because they helped him compose it — he uses the first person "I" throughout the epistle — but because he has discussed the problems besetting the Galatian churches with his brethren and co-workers. He wants the people in Galatia to know that the contents of the letter he is about to write has the sanction of those with him.

That is so only because this is the only gospel that he has ever preached, that he will continue to preach, and that is the gospel of the church of Jesus Christ.

Addressees

The letter is addressed to the church of Galatia. As we said in the introduction, these are the churches that were established on Paul's first missionary journey. They undoubtedly included churches in the surrounding area in central Asia Minor, for Paul consistently used the cities or towns mentioned in his writings as centers from which the gospel went out into all the region. We know, for example, that although Ephesus alone is mentioned in connection with Paul's work in that area, other churches, mentioned by Christ in Revelation 2 and 3 (Acts 19:10), were established in western Asia Minor. 

3. See, for example, John 10:28-30, where to be in the hand of God is the same as to be in the hand of Christ, for Christ and His Father are one.

Guest Article

Rev. Steven Key

The Biblical Basis and Goal of Christian Education (2)

Having considered together in our last article the basis for Christian education, we now turn

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The substance of this article was the keynote address given at the Officebearers' Conference of Classis West in Randolph, Wisconsin, on August 31, 2004. The speech has been adapted by the author for publication in the Standard Bearer.

Previous article in this series: November 1, 2005, p. 57.

our attention to the goal and fruit of such dedicated instruction of the church's children.

The Goal

In the instruction of our children we strive toward the goal of a well-rounded and God-glorifying education.

Education is the imparting or acquiring of knowledge.

Now I would call your attention to Proverbs 1:7. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowl-

edge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

That text tells us that the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge. You notice, it does not define that knowledge. Rather, it assumes that there is but *one* knowledge. It is important that we understand that.

God counts but one knowledge.

When you boil all things down, when you take every subject of study known to man, and take it right back to its root, you will find

that there is really only one knowledge, one reality behind all things and from which all things flow.

For that reason there is also but one knowledge that every Christian teacher must find absolutely necessary to impart to his or her students.

That knowledge is a knowledge of three things and the proper relationship between those three things. The contents of all knowledge must be God, the world, and myself; and those three in their proper relationship one to another. Take every area of study, and every aspect of life, and that is the essence of what you must know. Because therein lies the reality of all things.

If you have knowledge, you can answer these questions: Who is God? What is He like? What does He do? What is His relationship to all things? How does He stand in relationship to the heavens and the earth, to the creation, to the happenings of this present time and historically? What is His relationship to me?

Moreover, if you have knowledge, you can answer the questions: What is the world? Where did it come from? Where is it going? What is its relationship to God?

And then we turn to our own place, and we face the questions: Who am I? Who are you? Where did we come from? What am I doing here? Where am I going? What is my relationship to the other creatures? What is my relationship to God?

Knowledge, all knowledge, stands before those questions concerning God, the creation, and self, and the relationship among them. To give the correct answers to such questions is to be the purpose of all instruction.

With respect to the realm of education, we can measure the process by placing it up against its approach and its methodology in teaching exactly this knowledge.

Some of our young people as-

pire to the teaching profession. It is critically important that they understand this very point. They aren't going to be taught this perspective in college, any college. But if our teachers do not have this biblical perspective, and if they do not labor to take *this* approach in their teaching, they fail.

Let us also notice that the purpose of that knowledge, according to the parallelism presented in our text, is to impart wisdom.

Wisdom is a spiritual virtue.

We must not confuse wisdom with "common sense." Many unregenerated men and women have common sense. Some regenerated people seem to have very little in the way of common sense. But no unregenerated person has wisdom.

Wisdom belongs only to those who stand in a living relationship with Jesus Christ — because wisdom is fundamentally a matter of the heart.

Knowledge, as we have said, is an understanding of the reality of things — God, creation, man or self, and the relationship among the three.

Wisdom, on the other hand, is a question of the attitude that we take concerning that which is truth. The one who is wise bows before that which God reveals in

His Word and applies that knowledge to every aspect of life. In contrast, the fool rejects the reality.

Wisdom sees the application of biblical truth to a particular aspect of life and walks accordingly. That is a fruit of knowledge — not automatically. One may know, and still walk foolishly. But when God works His grace in the hearts of His people and gives them wisdom, He does so as a fruit of knowledge. A man who is devoid of knowledge can never be wise. He who does not know reality can-

not assume the right attitude over against that reality.

Wisdom presupposes knowledge. But Christian education has its purpose not only in the imparting of knowledge, but in the imparting of *wisdom*. Knowledge is not an end in itself. Knowledge must have this purpose, that we apply the truth in all our life.

You can readily understand how important this is to our children.

Our children need wisdom in order to put into practice their Christian faith. We need wisdom in order to pray. We need wisdom in order to make the important decisions in our youth. Wisdom is above all things necessary for our youth to establish proper Christian relationships. Wisdom must govern their decisions concerning dating and marriage. Wisdom must govern their job selection, and the obedience to the callings that God has given them. It requires wisdom to walk in obedience to God as a young woman, as a young man. Wisdom is required in the decisions that we must make from day to day all our lives long.

Again, such wisdom is the fruit of that knowledge of which we spoke earlier, knowledge that stands before the reality of all things. Our goal in teaching our children

is to impart to them knowledge and wisdom, with all our instruction being bathed in prayer, as it were, recognizing that we are only instruments in God's hands.

There is much more that we could glean from Proverbs 1:7, but to stay within the constraints placed upon me, I would direct your attention once again to Psalm 78, and particularly verse 4.

Psalm 78 emphasizes that all that instruction finds its focus in God.

We notice that the instruction

Wisdom belongs only to those who stand in a living relationship with Jesus Christ — because wisdom is fundamentally a matter of the heart.

we are to give the church's children is instruction in all the works of God, all of which show "the praises of Jehovah, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done."

All the education that we give our children must be God-centered. They must see the God whose name is Jehovah, who has established His everlasting bond of fellowship, His covenant, with the people of His good pleasure. He saves His people for His own name's sake, that they should walk as His people in all their life, to the praise of the glory of His grace.

They must see His praises. That is what we mean when we talk about emphasizing the glory of God in education. To see His praises, to glorify Him, is to ascribe to Him the full weight of all His attributes, and to recognize Him in all His works.

In much of education today, even Christian education, God doesn't even receive mention. Man is given all the credit and is the focal point in the textbooks and instruction and study. God's Word and work is ignored. That must be absolutely unacceptable to us! For us as a Protestant Reformed people and for our children, God must be seen — and I speak with awe — as the heavyweight that He is. That is, all His works and all His claims are weighty, and serve His weighty purposes.

"The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. His work is honorable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever" (Ps. 111:2-3). *All the works of the Lord call for praise — all of them.*

If in the days of the psalmist such instruction was important and the calling urgent, how much more so today. Life is so much more complex. Wickedness is dressed so much more brilliantly and in such

beautiful words and colors. Our children come into contact with a world thousands of times larger than the little Hebrew boys and girls saw. Radio, television, books, magazines, cars, and planes bring the world much closer to us and bring us much closer to the world. And the only way, the God-ordained way, for our children's survival and spiritual growth is the way of showing them His praises and the wonder works of grace He has done. That must be the better part of the well-rounded instruction we are called to give.

Such a God-centered focus in education also impresses upon our children a calling. Knowing God as God, the Creator, the Lord of all, and *their* Lord for Jesus' sake, they learn to recognize God's sovereignty and to live in the consciousness of His covenant with us.

In the third volume of the *Standard Bearer* you will find reprinted a sermon on Deuteronomy 6:7 that Rev. Herman Hoeksema preached in Fourteenth St. Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan, in 1916. In that sermon, the theme of which is "Christian Education," he pointed out that the basis for Christian education is that we are a covenant people who serve a covenant God. And God's covenant embraces all of life. He is Lord over every sphere of life. Hoeksema said,

His precepts cannot be excluded from any sphere. Therefore, Israel had to educate His children only in His precepts. Not in one part of life the precepts of the Lord, and in another part these precepts excluded, but in all life, these precepts acknowledged. And thus also with our preparation for that life. Not the precepts of the Lord in one part of the edu-

cation and another part nothing to do with this law of God. But all our education permeated with the precepts of the Lord."

I am unashamed of the truth as taught in our Protestant Reformed Churches. By God's grace I am convicted of that doctrine. I want it to govern my life. I also want that truth to govern the lives of our children.

For our children to receive an education in isolation from the doctrinal truths that we profess to hold dear is detrimental to their spiritual health and welfare. For what does such education do? It makes the heart and core of the Christian faith an abstraction to every day life! The truth of the covenant, not applied to our daily life and education, becomes an *abstraction!* That we must not have!

Let us teach with our eyes on the goal — a well-rounded, God-centered education of covenant children, and therefore an education that embraces the truth of the covenant.

The Fruit

So there will be seen (and, by God's grace, in no little degree *is* seen) in our Protestant Reformed Schools and instruction an inevitable and blessed fruit.

It is obvious that such instruction is not primarily for the sake of getting ahead in the sense that this world speaks of getting ahead.

But this instruction serves the children of God. Where this is the instruction given to the church's children, we shall see

solid church members, godly husbands and wives, parents who themselves have a heart for teaching *their* children the wondrous works of God. Those who are single will show themselves as those whose primary calling in life

All the education that we give our children must be God-centered.

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is to serve God and His church in all things.

Such well-rounded instruction will serve our children, that they may be good citizens of the nation under whose government they are ruled, paying their taxes for God's sake, and showing proper respect for those who govern, also obeying the laws of the land.

With such well-rounded instruction our sons will serve well their employers, laboring as before God's face. And those who in God's providence become employers will give unto their employees that which is just and equal, knowing that they also have a Master in heaven. And so we could go on demonstrating the fruits of this education in our daily lives.

So this covenant instruction, passed on from generation to generation, is the means whereby each succeeding generation learns to set its hope in God and to keep His commandments.


God has ordained that He will

save His people in the line of generations, and that the means whereby this salvation will be preserved in the line of generations is instruction in the mighty works of God and in His Word — also as His Word sheds light upon every aspect of our existence. When God enjoins us so to teach our children, we have the sure Word of God that such instruction will bring to manifestation God's wonder work of grace in the generations of His people.

You understand that we also have here a solemn warning. If we fail to instruct our children in the law of God and all His works and praises, we can never expect the covenant to continue in our generations either. Asaph mourns this only too obvious fact when he looks at Ephraim, who, according to verse 10, "kept not the covenant of God and refused to walk in his law." Verse 11 is set forth as the reason for their departure. They "forgot his works, and his wonders

that he had shewed them." In other words, they did not instruct the church's children in their midst.

When we think of what God gave for us, even His own Son, shall we not give of ourselves and of our possessions for the church's children, our generations and those to come?

May God take from us all self-centeredness that detracts from the godly instruction of these children and from the praises of our God! May He fill us with the consciousness of the gospel, that our hearts may overflow with thankful adoration. Then, though we labor with weakness and sorrow, and though we see our failures with respect to this awesome calling, even so we may be confident that God will surely realize His covenant in this generation and in that which is to come. That is His promise, even until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose Word stands sure and in whose name we preach and teach. 

In His Fear

Rev. Richard Smit

In Awe of Thy Word

When explaining how Psalm 119:161 teaches us to read and study Scripture, the Reformer Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556) wrote:

I would advise you all, that come to the reading or hearing of this book, which is the Word of God, the most precious jewel..., that ye bring with you the fear of God, and that ye do it with all due reverence, and use your knowledge thereof, not to vain glory or frivolous disputation, but to the honour of God, increase of virtue,

and edification both of yourselves and others.¹

For his allegiance to Scripture above all and for his Reformed convictions, Thomas Cranmer was persecuted and finally burned at the stake in 1556 during the reign of Queen (Bloody) Mary of England. Cranmer lived and died in the truth of Psalm 119:161, "Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word."

As many of us have begun another season of formal Bible study, we do well to prepare ourselves to read and study Scripture with the same holy awe.

◆◆◆ ◆◆◆ ◆◆◆

An awe of God's Word stands upon the foundation of the truth that the Word of God is His inspired Word. God breathed out His Word through sanctified men upon the printed page. God by His Spirit moved them to write down His Word exactly, word for word, until the whole of Scripture was finished when the book of Revelation was completed. The result of this wonder of divine inspiration over hundreds of years in the Old and New Testaments is that the Scriptures are entirely God's Word. Because they are His Word, they are infallible, without mistakes and errors. Although the Scriptures were

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written down by God in human language through the hearts and hands of over forty human writers, the Scriptures remain God's Word.

This means that Scripture is not the product of the cooperative efforts of God and man, nor the response of man to his encounter with God. God did not merely give the general thoughts of Scripture to the writers and let them determine what Scripture would say. God did not inspire the Scriptures through many series of revisions and drafts because of the human factor or influence in Scripture. Rather, we believe that God breathed out His Word upon the pages of Scripture in the original languages completely, infallibly, and word for word. From beginning to end, the Scriptures bear the mark of divine authorship, which even to a physically blind believer is clearly perceived.

The result is that the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ and all the counsel of God in Him is perfectly revealed from beginning to end flawlessly and with an astounding unity. The glory of the Father in the Lord Jesus Christ is perfectly and fully revealed. Yes, when reading and studying our faithful translations of Scripture, we stand before the living Word of God, which shines forth with the glory of our Father in our Lord Jesus Christ. That glory shines forth in all the works of the Father revealed in Scripture, especially in our redemption and reconciliation unto Him in His covenant of grace by the atoning death of Christ. That glory shines forth from the beginning to the end of the Bible.



When the psalmist stood by faith before the glorious Word of God, he stood in awe!

This awe is a holy reverence and godly fear for the Word of God. It implies a deep love for the Word of God and a delight in the riches therein. Yet, in that love for the Word, there is no desire to

bring down the Word from the high pedestal of honour and respect that the Word of God always deserves. There is in this awe a willing submission and obedience to Scripture's authority and rule. Our awe of the Word willingly receives "...all these books, and these only, as holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith...."² In awe of God's Word, we willingly regard and revere Scripture as "...this infallible rule...,"³ which governs our life entirely.

In comparison, then, to all writings and authorities in the earth, the Scriptures occupy a place of supremacy in those hearts filled with true awe. As the believer stands in awe of the Word of God, he does not

...consider of equal value any writing of men, however holy these men may have been, with those divine Scriptures, nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of persons, or councils, decrees, or statutes, of equal value with the truth of God, for the truth is above all....⁴

... when reading and studying our faithful translations of Scripture, we stand before the living Word of God, which shines forth with the glory of our Father in our Lord Jesus Christ.



That recognition of Scripture's supremacy reveals itself in an obedience to the absolute authority of Scripture in all areas of life. The vital importance of this point has been stressed aptly by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema. He wrote:

Every thought must be in submission to the Scriptures, the only infallible rule. All our doctrine and our life must conform to that rule. It is the absolute authority. We must not come with outside evidences and philosophy and science in order to see whether we can make Scripture conform. It is the other way around. This prin-

ciple is important for all the truth and life of the church.⁵

In Psalm 119:161 this unconditional awe of the child of God is placed in contrast to the persecution of mighty princes. For the psalmist, these princes of great authority troubled him and persecuted him because of his godliness and his allegiance to God and His Word. Although the temptation was to break loose from the yoke of Scripture and to give his allegiance to these princes in disobedience to God's Word, yet the psalmist did not yield to that temptation. Instead, his awe of the Word of God remained steadfast. He would obey God and His Word, rather than men. By the grace of God, the Word of God reigned supreme in his heart and life.

Today, the child of God faces similar threats of temptation with respect to God's Word. The be-

liever is pressured to yield to the authority of the great princes of learning and philosophy. Professors of science claim greater authority than the Word of God

on the origin and continuation of the creation. Such judge that the Bible no longer can speak authoritatively on the age of the creation and the length of time in which God created all things, but that scientists and academic learning can speak authoritatively on such matters. As a result, the only awe one

1. Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David* (Peabody, MA: Hendrikson), vol. 3, p. 427

2. Belgic Confession, Art. 5.

3. Belgic Confession, Art. 7.

4. Belgic Confession, Art. 7.

5. Homer C. Hoeksema, "In the Beginning God..." (Grand Rapids: RFPA, 1966), p. 26.

may have of the Bible is one of a good respect, but not of unconditional submission before the Word.

Today, the believer is tempted by church theologians to approach Scripture with a higher critical attitude. We are tempted to approach Scripture as a judge and master, and not to approach Scripture as an unconditional servant and a lifelong student. Higher critics hold that Scripture is a human book by human authors with mistakes. The result for them is that Scripture has little or, in many cases, no authority. Where is the awe in such an approach to Scripture? Where in that attitude is the honour due the Word of God?

For the believer to resist such attitudes toward Scripture results in ridicule and persecution to one degree or another. For maintaining the infallibility of Scripture, the absolute authority of Scripture, the teaching of creation of all things in six 24-hour days, and other historic Reformed truths, one is called simple and old-fashioned. Such awe of Scripture is painted as bondage.

However, such is the present-

day cost of maintaining a holy awe for God's Word. The psalmist David himself felt the personal cost of maintaining a holy awe for God's Word. King Saul persecuted him without a cause. Even though he was persecuted by the king, yet he revered and obeyed God's Word. For example, when David twice had the opportunity to kill King Saul, David refused to do that because God had anointed Saul. David would not disobey God's Word and commandment that they might not kill the Lord's anointed. Even though an enduring awe of God's Word meant more persecution and affliction for David, yet he remained in awe of God's Word by God's grace alone.

The cost for the believer to revere God's Word unconditionally is great. For example, it may cost us jobs, prestige, recognition, and friendships. It may bring refusals for more Reformed evangelism mailings, biting criticism, and being shunned by family and relatives.

The cost for many believers has been great. This holy awe of God's Word cost Thomas Cranmer his life


through the horrible suffering of being burned at the stake.

This awe of God's Word will cost the faithful people of God even more in the last days, as Christ has prophesied.



Does that mean that a holy awe of God's Word is misery and bondage?

Scripture teaches that such a holy awe of God's Word is a life of joy and peace. In Psalm 119:162 we read, "I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil." In Psalm 119:165, we read, "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them." Therefore, approaching Scripture with a childlike reverence and fear, with an ardent love for the riches of God's Word, and with great care in handling the precious jewel of Scripture is the blessed life of spiritual joy and peace.

Therefore, may our Father by His grace for Christ's sake alone grant that as we come to Bible study with our Bibles, our hearts may be filled with an awe of His glorious Word. 

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. Steven Key

The Preaching As a Means of Grace (1)

Having seen that the Holy Spirit works, sustains, and nourishes faith by the use of means, we have noted that the preaching of the gospel is the chief means of grace.

Many times we have heard of the high calling of a minister of the

gospel. It is a calling intricately connected with the salvation of God's people. Isaiah emphasized that tremendous calling when he said in Isaiah 52:7: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"

The blessedness of a faithful

preacher's calling is found in the fact that God is pleased to speak His own Word through him. So He said to Ezekiel His servant, in Ezekiel 3: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me...when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD" (Ezek. 3:17,

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27a). By the Word of the Lord are His people saved.

The Necessity of Preaching

Preaching is essential to active faith in Christ.

The reason for that is because of the impossibility for us to effect our own salvation. The fact is, as Jesus said in John 6:44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." All those who have ever been born again, all those who have ever believed, "were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). God alone changes the heart and life of a man. Faith, therefore, is the act of a man or woman whose heart has been quickened by the sovereign power of the sovereign God.

So we also read in Ephesians 2:8-10: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

When we speak of the faith wrought by the preaching of the Word we must bear in mind the biblical distinction between the power or bond of faith and the activity of faith.

Faith is the living bond with Christ. It is the living connection of our inmost heart with Christ. By faith we are united with Him in a spiritual union.

That is given us in regeneration, when we are born again by the Spirit of Christ. That new birth, according to I Peter 1:23, is something the Spirit gives us apart from the use of means. With that new birth we receive all the powers and all the gifts that we shall ever receive — faith, justification, sanctification; just as when a child is born, that child receives all the talents he shall ever receive — the mind, the will, the desire, natural gifts, even special gifts, say, the gift

of music. All the gifts that child shall receive are his already at birth. They must develop yet, of course, but the powers and the gifts are there.

So in regeneration we are established with Christ by the bond or power of faith. Scripture uses the figure of branches being grafted into the vine. That graft, that connection with Christ, is the bond of faith.

But Scripture also speaks of faith as an activity. When we speak the language of our Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 25, "the Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel," we are confessing that the Spirit works active, conscious faith in our hearts.

Christ, through the bond of faith, says to His people, "You are Mine. You belong to Me, body and soul. You don't belong to the devil anymore; you don't belong to the power of sin. You are Mine. You belong to Me even as I died for you and rose again. You belong to Me as My own possession, cleansed by My blood, righteous in the sight of My Father."

Through that same gift of faith we respond to Christ. We say to Him, "Yes, Lord, I am Thine. I belong to Thee in body and soul, in life and death, forever!" We lay hold of Him and all His benefits. That is faith as it comes to active expression in you and in me. That faith is wrought by means of the preaching of the Word. God uses preaching as a means to work that active faith in us; and He uses preaching and the sacraments to sustain and strengthen our faith.



Romans 10:13-15

Romans 10:13-15 develops this truth.

Notice in Romans 10:13-15, the

Spirit confirms that salvation is dependent upon the preaching. The apostle shows from a threefold perspective the importance of preaching, saying in the first place, "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" To call on Him does not merely mean to worship Him. When you consider verse 13, and that especially in the light of the prophecy of Joel 2:32, where these same words are found, you learn that to call upon the name of the Lord is to call out of the midst of trouble for help. And that trouble in which we find ourselves, having been awakened by the power of the Spirit, is the trouble of our own sin and corruption and death. From the midst of that trouble we cry out for help. And the promise is, Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

But the apostle also says that this calling on Christ — which is a conscious activity — is impossible, unless we believe. Faith is first. By faith we see our trouble. And, seeing our trouble, we call on Christ for help. That is the idea here.

In the second place, the apostle says, "How shall they believe in him whom they have not heard?"

More about the translation in the concluding article, when we discuss the power of preaching as a means of grace. But notice, the proper translation speaks not merely of hearing *about* Him, but hearing *Him*. How shall they be-

lieve in Him *whom* they have not heard? And in the context the emphasis in this act of believing is in the element of trust, of confidence that He shall surely deliver us from our trouble.

To believe on Christ is to rely upon Him for our righteousness. But how can we so believe on Him, if we have never heard Him? Our

God uses preaching as a means to work that active faith in us; and He uses preaching and the sacraments to sustain and strengthen our faith.

righteousness, our salvation, does not depend upon the word of a man. We must be able to say with confidence, "I heard Christ speak to me, saying, Come unto me and rest." It is that calling that causes faith. How shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard?

In the third place, you cannot hear, says Paul, without a preacher. Nor has that changed! There are those who say, "Well, that may have been true when Paul wrote it; but that is no longer true for us. We have our Bibles. At the time of the apostles, believers did not yet have Bibles. We have Bibles. And we have all kinds of writings. It isn't necessary anymore to have a preacher, in order to have Christ." Well, if you mean that it is not necessary to have a preacher in order to know *about* Christ, that is true. But we must not only know about Christ. The devil knows about Christ. We must know *Christ*.

And then do not say, "I can just


as well stay home and read my Bible and gather with my friends in a spiritual discussion, as go sit in church under the preaching." You contradict *Christ*! We can and we do well to have edifying gatherings, where we talk about spiritual things and grow in our knowledge of Christ. But there is not where we actually hear Him.

The same is true with the sacraments. You can sprinkle water on your child at home and you can eat a little bread and drink a little wine. But if your child does not receive more than a little water on the forehead and if you do not receive more than bread and wine, you do not receive Christ. And in fact, you receive His just condemnation for corrupting the sacraments and for defying His injunction to you to come under the preaching of His Word.

I well remember my late seminary professor, H. C. Hoeksema, talking about this subject. He said, "You know, if to come under the

preaching was simply to learn more about God and about Christ and about the Bible, I would just stay home. I probably know as much as any preacher in our churches about those things. But there is something that happens when I go to church. I don't simply hear my pastor telling me about this or that. I hear the voice of Jesus. And that voice I cannot do without."

Let us hear, therefore, with humility, the word of this text, and say, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" How beautiful are the feet, that is, how welcome are they that preach the gospel to us who would hear — not because of what they are, but because *Christ* speaks through them who minister His Word in faithfulness.

Next time, we'll consider the power of preaching as a means of grace. 

Report of Classis East

September 14, 2005
Faith Protestant Reformed Church

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, September 14, 2005 at the Faith PRC. All the churches were represented by two delegates. Rev. R. Van Overloop was the chairman for this session.


The business of classis was,

with one exception, routine. Classical appointments were given to Covenant and Holland. Pulpit supply was also granted for the Pittsburgh mission and for Edmonton.

The exception in the routine business of the day was a consideration of a request to increase censure to the second step for a member of a local congregation. Once the details of the case were heard, classis advised the consistory to

proceed to the second step with this member.

Reports were heard from the Stated Clerk and the Classical Committee. Expenses of classis amounted to \$1,037.43. Classis will meet next on January 11, 2006 at the Hope PRC.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon J. Huiskens
Stated Clerk 

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Mission Activities

There was a farewell program on October 14 in our Hull, Iowa PRC for Rev. Rodney Miersma and Sharon, his wife, whose work as missionary to

Ghana ended with the closing of the field earlier this year.

We also add here that there was a special welcome to Rev. Miersma and his wife to the pulpit and fellowship of the Edgerton,

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

MN PRC on Sunday, October 16. Plans called for the Miersmas to be in Edgerton for four Sundays.

Rev. Angus Stewart and his wife, Mary, report that they had a good trip to Limerick, N.I. on Tuesday, October 11. The speech on "The Blessed Virgin Mary" drew a large audience, and several new names were added to the Covenant Reformed News mailing list. Rev. Stewart also had plans to speak at Harryville Primary School on October 19.

On October 16 the congregation of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI extended a call to Rev. W. Bruinsma to serve as our denomination's new Eastern Home Missionary.

Two elders from the Loveland, CO PRC, Mr. Bob Brands and Mr. Dave Poortinga, left in the middle of October to visit with Missionary-pastor Rev. Tom Miersma and the members of the Covenant of Grace PR Fellowship in Spokane, WA. This visit was part of the regular oversight of the mission field by the calling church and included family visitation with members of the core group as well as opportunities for the missionary and officebearers of Loveland to discuss the work.

Congregation Activities

Rev. D. Kleyn was installed as the eleventh pastor of First PRC of Holland, MI on October 12. The following Lord's Day, October 16, Rev. Kleyn preached his inaugural sermon, choosing to preach from the Word of God found in I Corinthians 1:23, 24 under the theme, "Preaching Christ Crucified."

A Ladies' Bible Study has been formed at the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI. An organizational meeting and a time of fellowship was held on October 19 at 10:00 A.M. This meeting would decide what the ladies will study this society year. Rev. denHartog will lead this Bible study.

We are also happy to report

that one of our vacant congregations, the Loveland, CO PRC, has arranged for one of their former pastors, Rev. G. VanBaren, to supply their pulpit for an extended period of time. We believe the VanBarens will be in Colorado, the Lord willing, from mid-October until the end of the year.

Question — Which one of our congregations schedules two Thanksgiving services each year? If you answered the Lynden, WA PRC you are correct. The consistory there extended a call to worship for their Canadian members to worship for their annual Thanksgiving service on October 10. Any who attended, and we assume some non-Canadian members also did, were invited to stay after the service for a turkey dinner, also at the church.

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of the Loveland, CO PRC was recently looking for volunteers from their congregation willing to correspond with some of their mailing-list contacts that had expressed an interest in having someone from Loveland contact them. Loveland's Evangelism Committee also asked their congregation to invite family, friends, and neighbors to a lecture they sponsored in their church on October 7. Rev. David Overway, pastor of the Doon, Iowa PRC, was the guest speaker. He spoke on the theme, "What Churches Need More Than Anything Today."

School Activities

Supporters of Christian education at Hope PR Christian School in Walker, MI were invited to the annual fall meeting of their PTA on October 13. Rev. C. Haak spoke to those gathered together that evening on the theme, "Getting Our Children Ready to Learn."

Supporters of the Northwest Iowa PR Christian School were invited to join their children at their annual Fall Chapel. It was held on the morning of October 13 and Rev.

D. Overway was the guest speaker.

The Junior class of Covenant Christian High School in Walker, MI invited parents and supporters to attend a Fall Festival on October 8 at the school. This event featured a pig and chicken roast as well as a farmers' market.


Sister-Church Activities

Mrs. Jean Kortering, wife of Rev. Jason Kortering, writes in a recent letter to members of her home congregation, the Grandville, MI PRC, that she and her husband are busy with efforts to help our sister churches in Singapore deal with the death of one of their pastors, Rev. Cheah. The churches there have asked the Korterings to stay for three months, and then the churches will look at the situation again if they need help beyond that. So it is possible that the Korterings may be away through February. Mrs. Kortering writes that she and her husband "wait upon the Lord for whatever opportunities He gives us to be of help in their difficulties."

Minister Activities

Candidate John Marcus accepted the call he received to serve as the next pastor of First PRC of Edmonton, AB, Canada. When Candidate Marcus accepted that call he also declined the call he had been considering to serve as the next undershepherd of the Edgerton, MN PRC.

Rev. A. Brummel declined the call extended to him from the Loveland, CO PRC to serve as their next pastor.

We rejoice with Mr. Dennis Lee in his being declared a candidate in our churches for the ministry of God's Word. This is now possible since the membership papers of Mr. Lee, his wife, and family have been received from the First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore by the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI, thus fulfilling the requirement of Synod 2005. 

P.O. Box 603
Grandville, MI 49468-0603

THE STANDARD BEARER

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Michigan

Announcements

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council of Hope PRC expresses Christian sympathy to fellow officebearer Elder Cal Kalsbeek and to his family in the death of his father,
MR. JOHN KALSBECK, SR.

May the family take comfort from the Scriptures: "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple" (Psalm 27:4).

Rev. James Laning, President
Tom DeVries, Assistant Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With gratitude to God for His covenant faithfulness, we, the family of
ALVIN and PHYLLIS RAU,
announce their 55th wedding anniversary on October 1, 2005.

We are thankful for the many blessings He has given to them, and to us through them. In both their biblical confession and godly example they have been a source of instruction and encouragement to us their children and children's children. As the Lord has preserved them through many trials in past years and shown them His goodness, may He continue to do so in their remaining years. "For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the Lord endureth forever. Praise ye the Lord" (Psalm 117:2).

- ❖ James and Lois Rau
- ❖ Rev. Kenneth and Pat Koole
- ❖ David and Mary Kregel
- ❖ David and Norma Rau
- ❖ Mike and Elaine Rau
- ❖ Steven (in glory)
- ❖ Rosemary (in glory)
- 23 grandchildren (and 1 in glory)
- 18 great grandchildren

Grand Rapids, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 17, 2005, with thankfulness to God, our parents,
RANDY and LINDY LOOYENGA,
celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary. With many thanks to our faithful, covenant God we rejoice with them as they celebrate this special event in their lives. We thank God for our parents and the wonderful, Christian example they continue to show us, and the godly guidance they have shown us for 25 years. May our heavenly Father continue to bless them richly in the days and years that lie ahead. "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations" (Psalm 89:1).

- ❖ Brent and Brittany Looyenga
Calvin
- ❖ Jared and Jeanine Looyenga
- ❖ Kristin Looyenga

Wyoming, Michigan

NOTICE!!

With thanksgiving to a faithful God who continues to supply pastors for our churches, the Theological School Committee announces that Dennis Lee is now a Candidate for the Ministry of the Gospel in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Candidate Dennis Lee can be contacted as follows:

Dennis Lee

4960 Eisenhower Dr.
Hudsonville, MI 49426
Telephone: (616) 669-3406
E-mail:

dennis_and_foongling@yahoo.com

GIVE US THIS DAY

"Give us this day our daily bread,"
Dear Father, I would pray;
Please strengthen me, for without
Thee
I cannot live each day.

"Give us this day our daily bread"
Not only just for me —
In Thy great mercy fill the need
Of all who call on Thee.

"Give us this day our daily bread,"
Tomorrow may not come;
Perhaps another day shall dawn
In Thine eternal home.

"Give us this day our daily bread,"
As Thou hast in the past,
O please supply our every need
So long as life shall last.

"Give us this day our daily bread,"
Not wealth or luxury —
But only that with which to live,
Dear God, so may it be.

Annetta Jansen

Christmas Gift Idea

Gift-subscriptions for first-time subscribers
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are still half price!