

# THE *April 15, 2002* STANDARD BEARER

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# The Blessed Peacemakers

*Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.*

Matthew 5:9

**T**he text before us speaks of that which seemingly occupies the mind of every man. On every side there is heard the cry for peace. There are wars and rumors of wars. When wars end, the world rejoices. That is understandable, for the burden of war is very heavy for those who must suffer under it. In that light everyone would want to be a peacemaker.

Jesus, however, in this text is not speaking of a peacemaker who tries to end wars. Only a child of God, a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, can be a peacemaker. The peace this citizen of heaven seeks is different from the peace of which man commonly speaks. The child of God should not get carried away with the world's idea of peace.

The scriptural idea of peace must be seen as a relationship within God Himself, a relationship

of perfect and eternal harmony within the triune God, which is based upon perfection and love. In Romans 16:20 God is called "the God of peace." He is the God out of whom comes forth perfect peace. That divine peace God was pleased to reveal outside of Himself when He created all things perfect and holy.

Thus, peace is also a relationship which God establishes between Himself and the creature. In I Corinthians 14:33 we read, "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." God created Adam in this relationship of peace. In the original creation there was perfect fellowship between God and man. Nothing separated, nothing created division, between God and His creature. However, a change came when Adam disobeyed the command of God. The act of disobedience, the eating of the forbidden tree, broke the bond of peace. From that moment on, there was war between God and Adam. This war could have but one outcome: man must be punished under the just wrath of God.

But the God of peace reestablished this fellowship of peace. God's way was to send His only-begotten Son, the second person of the Trinity, into human flesh in order that this Son might bear the infinite wrath of God towards His people because of their guilt in violating the peace God had created. In this way Jesus would be the propitiation for our sins. Christ's act of perfect obedience unto death justified God's people. That justification through the cross of Jesus becomes the basis for peace once more between God and His people. This is beautifully stated in Romans 5:1: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Because in Christ the guilt of the sins of God's people is removed, they enjoy peace with God again. Once more there is a beautiful, spiritual relationship of harmony in love with God. Only the child of God can really know the wonder of that relationship and have such peace.

This relationship must exist between men mutually also. When two are agreed, they can walk together, as we read in Amos 3:3.

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When two are reconciled through the blood of Christ, they seek each other and help each other. The cause of war is removed, the bonds of fellowship and love are established, and they enjoy peace together.

What a difference there is between this peace and that which the world seeks. It is a very serious error on the part of the church if she thinks that she can find common ground with the world in the area of seeking peace. In the recent and present wars, those who are called Christians united hand in hand with the wicked in seeking peace. After the terrorist attacks, church-goers and non-church-goers alike prayed together for peace as if they were one in heart. One can certainly see the rapid advances of the antichrist at such times. Under the name of Christianity there are peace parades, and men adopt peace signs and symbols. Yet, the true church and the world have nothing in common when it comes to the question of peace. None really want war, not the child of God either. Yet the child of God does not seek the sort of peace that the world does.

This is evident from the Scriptures. "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked" (Is. 48:22). No matter what the wicked attempt to do, they have no peace. It does not matter what treaties they may sign or what organizations they may establish, the end is always the same: no peace. Something similar we see in Ezekiel 13:10: "Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace...." What the world calls peace, and what many in the churches confuse with peace, is not peace at all.

The mere absence of war does not make peace. In seeking peace, the world seeks two things. First, it seeks to solve conflicts for its own advantage. The world understands that the ending of conflicts will work toward the building of bridges between people and coun-

tries. They begin to establish the sort of world that it has envisioned since the time of the tower of Babel. They want that wound healed. Secondly, it seeks the sort of unity that can be established against God and His church. The world is interested not only in stopping wars, but in doing so in order to concentrate its attention upon the destruction of the church. The peace desired is that of Revelation 13, when the antichrist can come and establish his own glorious kingdom to the physical hurt of God's children.

In light of the above it is evident that there is no common ground between the Christian and the world in seeking peace. Each one seeks a different thing. There is never any real peace for the wicked. It is only the citizen of the kingdom of heaven who has peace, true peace. He seeks the peace that is based upon justification, which is basic to any true peace. In peace through justification he can enjoy communion with God and with his fellow saints.

Now, how does the citizen of the kingdom of God go about being a peacemaker? First, a few negatives. Peacemaking must not be confused with the idea of friendliness. Many people can be friendly and can get along well with others. This is not true peace, and these are not peacemakers. Nor is peace equivalent to the ignoring of sins. Some pretend that sin does not exist. They do not raise their voices when the church departs from the truth. They try to obtain peace through silence, but such attempts are vain. Nor does a peacemaker seek what is called "peace at any price." There are those who do not want to "rock the boat" by exposing error. They will countenance the lie, fearing that any sort of opposition will cause trouble. These will be peacemakers by condoning everything. As can readily be seen, this is all contrary to Scripture, which bases peace on righteousness.

In the positive sense, a peace-

maker is one who, being justified by faith, loves God and His Word. This is seen in the fact that he dwells in the consciousness of God's blessing upon him for Jesus' sake. He rejoices in the opportunity of communing with God through prayer. To hear the preaching of God's Word is his delight. This same Word he searches to see what God has to say to His people. In this way he enjoys true peace with God.

This becomes manifest also as he lives in peace with his fellow saints. When a brother sins, he tries to direct him in the proper way to repentance. When the brother hurts or grieves, he speaks words of comfort and assurance. And when the brother needs instruction, he teaches according to God's Word. In this way he seeks proper peace for himself and for other of the saints. He desires each to enjoy the peace which is possible through the reconciliation of the cross of Christ.

And finally, the citizen of the kingdom of God reveals himself as a peacemaker to the world about him. He does not do this by joining peace parades and by seeking the peace that the world wants. Rather, he maintains, in preaching and speaking, the truth that peace comes only through the cross of Jesus Christ. To the wicked he points out that God sent His only Son to deliver His people from their sins, that only through the shed blood of Jesus can there be peace and fellowship with God. Clearly he shows that only when there is first peace with God can there be proper peace among men. He further points out that unless men have peace with God through Christ, all their efforts toward establishment of peace on earth are vain. Only through proper repentance and spiritual conversion can any enjoy the peace that surpasseth understanding.

To be such a peacemaker is blessed, for such shall be called the sons of God. They are, first of all,



sons who are adopted by God through the blood of Jesus Christ. They now have the right to call God "Father" and to believe that they shall receive of Him their inheritance: eternal life. They are also sons by virtue of a new birth. By the power of the Holy Spirit they are spiritually born again, so that they are not only legally sons, but they also look like sons by reflecting the virtues of their Father: true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.

The fullness of this blessedness will be enjoyed finally and fully in heaven. There the children of God shall dwell before the Father without sin and without corruption. There they shall see Jesus Christ their Lord and rejoice in perfect peace.


But already now we are called the sons of God. The beginning of

salvation has already been worked within us. Already now we enjoy the benefits of sonship, such as intimate fellowship with God and His rich blessings. Our Almighty God cares for and preserves us, His sons, through all our days here below.

And this blessedness is certain. God does not first find peacemakers and then make them sons. No, Scripture indicates clearly that there is none who is a peacemaker in himself. That is simply not the nature of the depraved sinner. But God makes peacemakers through His Son Jesus Christ. These are then assured of their sonship because of God's work within them. A true peacemaker can be assured that he is called a son of God.

Therefore the citizen of the kingdom of heaven must live as a peacemaker and as a son of God.

Often this sonship is not seen. Children of human parents can often shame their parents through their actions. The same is true spiritually. How often do we not reflect characteristics of the wicked by abusing God's holy name, by seeking those things which are here below (earthly possessions as ends in themselves, and wicked entertainments and pleasures). And again, how do we not foolishly use our time and talents. Such ought not to be seen in sons of God, in peacemakers.

Positively, we should reveal in conversation and walk what we are. Clearly it must be seen that we belong to God through Jesus Christ. In this way we will honor the name of our Father in heaven and seek His glory. Seeking this spiritual peace, we may then be assured that we are sons of God. 

## Editorial

# "He Shines in All That's Fair" (and Curses All That's Foul) (3)

**E**ven though the reasons for Dr. Mouw's embrace of common grace are his perception of good in the world of the ungodly, his feelings of delight and pity regarding the abilities and the woes of the wicked, and his conviction that believers must cooperate with unbelievers in the building of a good culture, he does appeal to one biblical text in support of his belief. He also refers to two significant passages in the Reformed confessions. Before we consider his arguments from the apparent good of the ungodly, from the Christian's pity for the distressed idolater, and from the involvement of believers in culture, we must look at Mouw's

biblical and confessional proof for common grace.

### A Prominent Text in the Common Grace Controversy

The one text of Scripture that Mouw adduces in support of common grace is Luke 6:35. This is a text that has played a prominent role in the controversy over common grace in Reformed circles. Defenders of common grace have always appealed to it as one of the clearest, most powerful proofs of a favor of God to the reprobate wicked. The text reads: "But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye

shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." The text is part of the passage beginning with verse 27 in which Jesus calls His disciples to love their enemies.

Dr. Mouw interprets the text as teaching that "God has a positive, albeit non-salvific, regard for those who are not elect, a regard that he asks us to cultivate in our own souls" (*He Shines in All That's Fair*, p. 82). Mouw thinks that the "unthankful and ... evil" to whom God is kind are all humans without exception, particularly those men and women whom God has eternally reprobated (p. 83).

Dr. Mouw is certainly right when he insists that the text requires believers to love their unbelieving enemies. For all we know, they may be reprobates. They hate us, curse us, and persecute us. They are our enemies on account of our confession of Christ. They need our prayers, that they be converted and saved.

I hope that Dr. Mouw does not suppose that as part of their opposition to common grace Protestant Reformed people deny that they are to love their unbelieving neighbors. He leaves the impression of this misunderstanding. Having quoted Herman Hoeksema to the effect that *God hates His reprobate enemies*, Mouw appeals to Luke 6:35 as teaching that *we* must love *our* unbelieving enemies (p. 83). That we must love our neighbor, whether Christian or non-Christian, is not the issue. The question is: Does God love His reprobate enemies? Specifically, the question is: Are the unthankful and evil who are the objects of God's kindness in Luke 6:35 *reprobate* persons?

Defenders of common grace assume that the unthankful and evil who are the objects of God's kindness in Luke 6:35 are all men without exception, thus including those whom He reprobated. Assuming this, they do not bother carefully to explain the last part of Luke 6:35 in the light of its context. It is enough that they cite it. But this begs the question. All agree that God is kind to unthankful and evil people. What needs to be proved is that God is kind to *all* humans who are unthankful and evil. More specifically, what needs to be proved is that God is kind to unthankful and evil *reprobates*.

### What Manner of Kindness?

Plainly, Luke 6:35 cannot bear the interpretation given it by the defenders of common grace. This interpretation is that God is kind to reprobate unthankful and evil men with a non-saving, common

grace kindness. As Dr. Mouw puts it, God's kindness in Luke 6:35 is a "positive, albeit non-salvific, regard for those who are not elect" (p. 82). But the text teaches the *saving* grace, or kindness, of God toward unthankful and evil people. The word that is translated "kind" is the Greek word *chreestos*. This word is used of God elsewhere in the New Testament in I Peter 2:3 and in Romans 2:4. In I Peter 2:3, where the King James Version translates the word as "gracious," the word refers to God's kindness in saving His elect. "As newborn babes," regenerated believers are to desire the sincere milk of the Word, "if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is *gracious* (Greek: *chreestos*)." In Romans 2:4, the King James Version translates *chreestos* as "goodness": "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the *goodness* of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Inasmuch as this goodness, or kindness, of God leads one to repentance, it is a *saving* kindness, not a common grace kindness.

The one use of the word to describe the attitude of the saints likewise shows kindness to be a saving perfection. Ephesians 4:32 exhorts church members to be "*kind* one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." The expression of kindness is forgiveness of sins.

If the unthankful and evil in Luke 6:35 are reprobate men and women, the text teaches that God is kind to them with a *saving* kindness, or grace. He saves these unthankful and evil people, leading them to repentance and forgiving their sins.

That the kindness of verse 35 is saving grace, not a common grace kindness, is established by verse 36: "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." In the love and kindness that we must show to our enemies, we are to be merciful. Our mercy re-

flects the mercy of our Father. Although the objects of our Father's mercy are not explicitly stated in verse 36, there can be no doubt that they are the same unthankful and evil persons who are mentioned in verse 35. God is merciful to the same persons to whom He is kind, and His mercy is the supreme manifestation of His kindness. But the divine mercy is such a pity of God toward sinners as yearns to deliver them from their sins and from the misery of their sins. Mercy is not a mere desire to give a wretched sinner some rain on his corn field, or a pork chop on his plate, or even a happy marriage.

If the unthankful and evil of Luke 6:35 are all humans without exception, including especially the reprobate, the text teaches far too much for the defenders of common grace. It does not teach a meager "positive, albeit non-salvific, regard for those who are not elect." It teaches a robust kindness that wills to save them. It teaches a pity toward them that yearns to redeem them.

This understanding of the kindness of God in Luke 6:35 is demanded by the preceding context, verses 27ff. There is a relation between our love for our neighbors and God's love for the unthankful and evil. Our love reflects His love: "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful" (v. 36). Like Father, like children: "But love ye your enemies ... *and ye shall be the children of the Highest*" (v. 35). In our love for our enemies, we are to pray for them, that is, pray for their salvation: "Pray for them which despitefully use you" (v. 28). This implies a sincere desire on our part for their repentance and salvation. If now the kindness of God that we reflect is a kindness toward all without exception, including reprobate men and women, God too must sincerely desire the repentance and salvation of all without exception. But such a kindness, or grace, is not common grace, "a non-salvific



regard for those who are not elect." It is saving grace.

### Who Are the Unthankful and Evil?

Scripture denies that God is kind and merciful to unthankful and evil reprobates, having compassion on them in their misery, willing their salvation, leading them to repentance, and forgiving their sins: "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.... Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth" (Rom. 9:15, 18). Scripture teaches that the Christ of God, carrying out the will of God who sent Him, refused to pray for all men without exception. Thus, He showed that He did not sincerely desire the salvation of all without exception. He prayed only for those whom the Father had given Him out of the world. "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine" (John 17:9).

The meaning of Luke 6:35 is that we Christians are to love our neighbors, including our enemies. These enemies are unbelievers, non-Christians, who are hostile toward us because of our confession and discipleship of Christ. They may well be reprobate enemies, although we hope that our prayers and kind behavior may be useful to win them to Christ.

In loving our enemies, we reflect the character of our Father. Like Father, like children. For God is kind to unthankful and evil people. He is not kind to *all*

unthankful and evil people. Nor does Luke 6:35 say this. But He is kind to people who are unthankful and evil. These are the elect in Christ, "the children of the Highest," who now are called and privileged to show the marvelous goodness of their heavenly Father in their own attitude and behavior toward their enemies.

We were the unthankful and evil when in kindness He set His love upon us in the eternal decree of election.

We were the unthankful and evil when in kindness He gave up His own Son for us in the redeeming death of the cross.

We were the unthankful and evil when in kindness He translated us by the regenerating Spirit into the kingdom of His dear Son.

And still we are the unthankful and evil when daily, in kindness, He brings us to repentance, forgives our sins, preserves us in the faith, and shows us a fatherly face in Jesus Christ. For, although by His grace we are also thankful and holy, we have only a very small beginning of this thankfulness and holiness. How unthankful we are for the love of God to us in Jesus Christ! And this is evil! This is a great evil!

*He Shines in All That's Fair* appeals to one text in support of common grace: Luke 6:35. But this text does not teach a common grace of God. It teaches a saving kindness of God. If the unthankful and evil in the text are all humans without exception, the text teaches that the saving grace of God is universal, a doctrine that the rest of Scripture denies, a doctrine that the Reformed confessions condemn, and

a doctrine that Dr. Mouw repudiates.

Since this is a text that all defenders of common grace thoughtlessly appeal to, others as well, it may be hoped, will now reconsider their use of it in defense of common grace and, perhaps, their defense of common grace itself.

### A Particular "Common Grace"

I idly wonder whether the defenders of common grace ever recognize that their interpretation of Luke 6:35 fails even on the assumptions of the theory of common grace. Suppose that the kindness of the text is a common grace kindness of God. In this imaginary case, God's kindness is His loving desire to give everybody a comfortable physical life, nice material things, and earthly happiness, as well as His actual bestowal of all this upon everybody.

God is not kind in this way to all unthankful and evil people. What about the millions of children born into poverty, famine, sickness, and abuse? What about the hundreds of thousands born with dreadful handicaps of body and mind? What about the millions wracked with pain, crushed with burdens, broken with disappointments, desolate with despair, terrified by fears, destroyed by war?

Is God kind with a common grace kindness to all unthankful and evil people? Is He thus kind even to most unthankful and evil people?

I do not see it.

His supposed common grace proves to be as particular as His (real) saving grace.

— DJE 

## Letters

### Fellow Members of the Body of Christ

**A**lthough I am a member of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), I find your magazine to be

a wonderful source of biblical truth and doctrine. But I wanted to comment on your editorial "A Temptation of the PRC" (*Standard Bearer*, March 1, 2002). I am a young man

of only 24, so I have not fully researched the history of the common grace/particular grace controversy between the CRC and the PRC. But I want to point out that there are



still Christian Reformed churches today that are true to the Word of God and that profess the Canons of Dort. Not all Christian Reformed churches view “the biblical, confessional doctrines of predestination, limited atonement, and irresistible grace” as a dead letter. To make such broad statements is not only foolish, but unbiblical, especially when there is sufficient proof otherwise. I love the doctrines set forth in the Bible, and because of that I will stay in the CRC to “fight the good fight.” If this is spineless in the eyes of the PRC, so be it. I view the members of the PRC as fellow members of the body of Christ. It would be a blessing if the PRC did the same.

*Micah VanMaanen*  
Member, Calvin CRC  
Rock Valley, IA

#### Response:

**T**he question is not whether members of the PRC regard members of the CRC like yourself as members of the body of Christ. We do. The issue is the true church as clearly distinguished by the three marks, according to Article 29 of the Belgic Confession.

Specifically, is the CRC as a de-

nomination of churches more and more displaying the marks of a false church in spite of the urgent and not un-loving warning of her concerned, but despised, daughter, the PRC? Does the CRC as a denomination of churches reject the authority of Holy Scripture, e.g., concerning the real, historical days of Genesis 1 and 2 and concerning the exclusion of females from office in the church (1 Tim. 2, 3)? Has the CRC as a denomination of churches committed herself to a gospel-message of universal, inflexible grace? Does the CRC as a denomination of churches corrupt the sacraments, both Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, by allowing the openly unbelieving and ungodly to use them, e.g., men and women living impenitently in unbiblical divorce and remarriage, that is, adultery? Does the CRC as a denomination of churches refuse to discipline renowned heretics and others living in public sin, although she refuses to repent of her sin of wickedly deposing and excommunicating men whose offense was that they defended the truth of sovereign, particular grace, namely, the founders of the PRC? The answer to all of these questions is yes.

I gently remind you that it was not the PRC who cast out the members of the CRC as unworthy to be members with them of the body of Christ.

I confess that I do not see Christian Reformed churches defending the Canons of Dordt against the attacks in the CRC on the doctrines of the Canons. Where are the writings? Where are the protests? Where are the “here-we-stand” battles of the Lord on the floor of classis and synod?

You remain in the CRC to “fight the good fight.” Your zeal is commendable. The editorial to which you respond brings to your attention the necessity of your first battle. An ordained minister in the CRC wrote publicly in the official magazine of the CRC, the *Banner*, denying the fundamental article of the Canons of Dordt: election as the eternal, sovereign, particular decree of God. He wrote in flagrant violation of his subscription vow never “publicly nor privately [to] propose, teach, or defend the same [disagreement with the Canons], either by preaching or writing.”

What will you do about it?

— Ed. 

*Marking the Bulwarks of Zion*

*Prof. Herman Hanko*

# Luther and the Right Wing of the Reformation (3)

## Introduction

**S**trictly speaking, the title of this article is not correct. That part of the Anabaptist movement, often called the Right Wing of the Reformation, of which we speak in this article was not found much in Germany and was not, therefore, the object of

Luther’s immediate concern. Luther had to deal with the more radical branches of the Anabaptists. The movement of which I now speak was born in Switzerland and was the primary concern of the Swiss reformers, particularly Zwingli, Bullinger (the reformer of Basel), and Calvin. I include an

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article on these Anabaptists under this general subject in order to treat all the Anabaptists together. And, indeed, all branches were *Anabaptistic*, for all repudiated infant baptism. That all repudiated this doctrine of infant baptism indicates that all held certain views and all shared some important identifying characteristics. But these are subjects for later in the article.

The branch of Anabaptism of which I now speak was not the radical Anabaptism of the Zwickau prophets, Thomas Münzer, and John of Leyden. These Anabaptists did not go about stirring up rebellion against government, preaching a divine revelation independent of the Scriptures and coming through dreams, visions, and other forms of divine illumination. They held more or less to what one author calls a work of the Spirit which enlightened reason and informed reason with Scripture. Nevertheless, special revelations by means of the inner speaking of the Spirit were never far from their thinking.

Menno Simons was the leader of this movement, and that sect called Mennonites is directly traceable to Simons' teaching.

### Early Swiss Anabaptism

The early Anabaptist movement in Switzerland had its own share of radicals, and Thomas Münzer visited Switzerland to spread his views. In fact, the more peaceful movement, of which Menno Simons later became a leader, arose out of the more radical Swiss brand of Anabaptism. Nevertheless, the movement of which we now speak was not characterized by the excesses found in Germany and the Lowlands. The Peasants' War never spilled over into Switzerland. The millennial ravings of Melchior Hoffmann and John of Leyden were but distant rumblings. These Anabaptists were characterized more by a simple piety and a rigid morality.

The chief issue within the Zwinglian movement which gave

rise to Anabaptism was the issue of the baptism of infants. There were men in the Swiss Reformation who repudiated this doctrine. Zwingli tried to convince them of their error in private conferences but did not succeed. A public disputation was held by order of the magistrates on January 17, 1525. Zwingli answered the arguments of the Anabaptists but failed to persuade them. In February the first instance of rebaptism took place. At a private worship service an Anabaptist named Blaurock asked another of the group, Grebel by name, to baptize him on confession of faith. This was done, and Blaurock in turn baptized all the others at the meeting.

The Swiss authorities banned Anabaptist teachings, and, when the Anabaptists refused to obey, they were imprisoned and sentenced to death by drowning. Six were actually drowned between 1527 and 1532. Drowning was chosen as the means of execution because of the cruel irony of baptism by dipping: "Those who dip shall be dipped." Such persecution followed the movement as it spread throughout Europe.

### Anabaptism in the Netherlands and Menno Simons

Anabaptism in the Netherlands, and really throughout Europe, owed its more definite form to Menno Simons and his work. He was born in 1496, the son of a dairy farmer in Witmarsum, Netherlands. He had a fairly good education and became quite versed in the church fathers. He was ordained a Catholic priest, but, as was true of so many priests, he ignored his parish duties and spent his time in drinking and playing games of chance.

In the course of his life, he began to have doubts about the truth of transubstantiation, the Romish doctrine that the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper actually became the body and blood of the Lord. In his studies of the matter,

he began to move in the direction of the Zwinglian position, that the Lord's Supper was more a memorial ceremony than an actual sacrament. Pondering these subjects also brought about his conversion, and he now forsook the priesthood, abandoned his wicked ways, and turned to the cultivation of a life of holiness.

But his deviations from the doctrines of the Reformation did not end with his acceptance of Zwinglian views on the Lord's Supper. He soon came to agree with the Swiss Anabaptists on the repudiation of infant baptism. The tragedy of Münster (the destruction of the city and of John of Leyden and his followers, who tried to set up an earthly kingdom of Christ) made a deep impression on him, partly because he lost a brother in the massacre.

Because he had adopted a position which was contrary to the magistracy's decisions to support the Reformation, he became an itinerant preacher who was forced to wander about from place to place, preaching and baptizing in secret. He was a hunted heretic. During the years of his wandering, he married a woman named Gertrude and had three children with her. They endured the sufferings which were his lot. He wrote many books during these years of wandering and in them defined the position of this branch of Anabaptism. He died peacefully at the age of 66.

The chief emphasis of these Anabaptists was very much similar to the mystics who were so influential in the Lowlands and of whom we have spoken in an earlier article. Their concern was that formal worship of God and formal piety which was so often contradicted in people by their outward life of worldliness and carnality. These Anabaptists, therefore, as the mystics before them, emphasized the new birth, the inner life of fellowship with God, and the sanctified walk of the believer in the world.



## Anabaptist Errors

There can be, of course, no error in such emphasis on piety if it is placed within a biblical, doctrinal framework. This the Anabaptists failed to do. They erred, first of all, in not avoiding the pitfalls of mysticism. It is not only the extreme radicals who relied on inner illuminations. This same subjectivism characterized all branches of Anabaptism to a greater or lesser degree. Such emphasis on subjective experience resulted in a certain mistrust of and even scorn for outward observances required by Scripture, such as formal worship services, the preaching of the Word, the sacraments administered according to their true intent as means of grace, and well-defined church government. Their wrong legacy is carried on today among the Mennonites, a sect named after Menno Simons.

But, secondly, they erred in other crucial doctrines of the faith. While there is undoubtedly some disparity among individual Anabaptists, generally speaking, this sect repudiated forensic justification, which Luther taught, as being a barrier to godliness. They had a strong aversion to predestination and the bondage of the human will apart from grace.

One major area was their denial of the true nature of the incarnation of our Lord. They taught that Christ formed His own human nature, independent of Mary's human nature, though He formed His human nature in Mary's womb. Our Confession of Faith (Article 18) refers to this serious error in these words:

Therefore we confess (in opposition to the heresy of the Anabaptists, who deny that Christ assumed human flesh of His mother) that Christ is become a partaker of the flesh and blood of the children; that He is a fruit of the loins of David after the flesh; made of the seed of David according to the flesh; a fruit of the womb of the Virgin Mary; made

of a woman; a branch of David; a shoot of the root of Jesse; sprung from the tribe of Judah; descended from the Jews according to the flesh; of the seed of Abraham, since He took on Him the seed of Abraham, and became like unto His brethren in all things, sin excepted; so that in truth He is our Immanuel, that is to say, God with us.

The detailed description of Christ's work of taking on Himself the flesh of His mother emphasizes how seriously our fathers took this heresy of the Anabaptists.

The error for which they are best known is their denial of infant baptism. One can find reasons why these Anabaptists repudiated infant baptism. They claimed that the New Testament Scripture contained no proof that infants are to be baptized. The New Testament proved only, in their judgment, that baptism had to be on the grounds of confession of faith in Christ, something possible only for an adult. This argument is still the chief argument of Baptists today.

But there were various historical reasons also for their repudiation of infant baptism. The Anabaptists saw that the establishment of a State Church (something common to Lutheranism and Calvinism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) led to the establishment of churches which were filled with unbelievers, unregenerated people, worldly and carnal people, people who practiced religion only in an outward way. They feared that a State Church did not discipline as it ought.

This had two or three consequences. Anabaptism claimed that infant baptism was hopelessly tied to the idea of a State Church, that, in fact, infant baptism was an innovation of the Romish Church, as Rome stretched its influence over the whole of Europe and set itself up as ruler in civil affairs as well as ecclesiastical matters. Infant baptism had to be repudiated along

with all the other Romish trappings that had choked true spiritual life in the religiously dreary Middle Ages.

A State Church, in its very nature, according to Anabaptists, encouraged formal religion and discouraged true piety. Thus a church ought to be composed of believers only. This ruled out children, who could be incorporated in the church only upon confession of faith.

Thus Anabaptists struggled for a "pure church," that is, a church in which were to be found believers only. This idea is still inseparably connected to Baptist thinking in our day, and Baptists will usually argue for their position on the grounds of a pure church idea.

The Anabaptists may have been and almost certainly were right in their view that a State Church necessarily led to churches full of unbelievers in which no discipline could be practiced effectively. But their appeal to church history was dead wrong. Characteristic of all Anabaptism was their great sin of leaping over fifteen centuries of church history to return to the church of the apostles. Rome had many evils, but one of them was not their practice of infant baptism — even though Rome may have baptized infants for the wrong reasons. Anabaptists are wrong when they claim that infant baptism is an innovation of Rome. The fact is that infant baptism was practiced by the post-apostolic church throughout its entire history. There were those who tried to cling to the "pure church" idea later espoused by Anabaptists and who therefore baptized believers only; but they were the sects condemned by Scripture and history alike.

The Anabaptists really knew that the church always practiced infant baptism. And so they ignored all these centuries of the church's history to return to the apostolic era, during which, they thought, their views prevailed. This is a serious error, which char-

acterizes the Baptist movement to the present. By ignoring these centuries of church history, Baptists ignore the work of the Spirit of truth in the church and His mighty work of guiding the church into the truth, revealing the riches of the truth to every generation, forcing the church to develop that truth by living out of the past and depending on the church in the past, and moving on into the future with the heritage of the truth as its legacy. Preaching on a creed, even the Heidelberg Catechism, is unthinkable to a Baptist.

Anabaptists and Baptists cut themselves off from the unity of the church throughout history. This is serious and has serious consequences. It means that Anabaptism is really individualistic in its thinking and has no conception of the organic relationships between the saints of all ages. No wonder that Menno Simons denied predestina-

tion and total depravity. No wonder that he became basically Semi-Pelagian in his thinking. No wonder that a great deal of the Baptist movement has continued along these same lines.

The Anabaptists sinned grievously in splintering the Reformation and separating themselves from the reformers. They sinned yet more grievously in separating themselves from the entire New Testament church in their futile effort to return to the Apostolic Age. But this also meant that Anabaptism really had no use for the church in the Old Testament. To this day the church in the Old Testament is a conundrum to Baptists. So they made separation between the Old and New Testaments, and, as a result, had no conception of the biblical proof for infant baptism as baptism took the place of circumcision. The unity of Scripture was denied. Some

form of dispensationalism is inevitably the result.

This very evil was the starting point of the Swiss reformers in their apologetics against Anabaptism. These reformers soon recognized that the error of Anabaptism was the repudiation of the unity of Scripture. From their battle with Anabaptistic error emerged the budding doctrine of God's everlasting covenant of grace, a doctrine which forms the soul of genuine Reformed theology.

The Heidelberg Catechism says it all when it defines the church: "The Son of God, from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to Himself by His Spirit and Word, out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith; and that I am, and for ever shall remain, a living member thereof" (Question and Answer 54).



*Taking Heed to the Doctrine*

*Rev. Steven Key*

## *Saving Faith — an Assured Confidence*

**W**e have seen from Scripture and the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 7, that the activity of saving faith consists of two elements, a certain knowledge and an assured confidence. Having considered the certain knowledge of faith, we turn our attention now to the element of confidence.

Both aspects of saving faith are seen in the apostle's confession in

II Timothy 1:12b: "...for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." He not only says, "I know whom I have believed," but he adds without separation, "and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." The latter is the hopeful trust in a faithful Friend.

### **Blessed Fellowship with God**

Once again we see here the application of the beautiful truth of the covenant.

The covenant is that bond of fellowship and perfect love within the triune God.

God extends that arm of fellowship to embrace all those who are in Christ Jesus. He does so by taking them into His own covenant life and having fellowship with them. That is the heart of the Christian life.

The activity of faith is the activity of my own consciousness whereby I am aware of that fellowship and for that reason have a heartfelt trust in my Sovereign Friend. Confidence in God means that I am assured that He loves me.

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When it comes to the relationship in which you and I stand to the living God, trust is not a natural activity. You don't trust someone who appears to be looking to kill you. By nature we are afraid of God, and for good reason. He is the Holy One, the terrible God who reveals Himself in His righteous wrath against all sinners. He is righteous in the execution of His justice. And His wrath is revealed against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men (Rom. 1:18). We see it all around us. And should we not be afraid of Him? After all, we too are sinners, no better than any single individual around us.

Let us look at this realistically a moment, as a matter of our own experience as children of God. How important is this heartfelt trust!

You and I who have been given faith are called *believers*. But how often we show ourselves unworthy of that name!

We all know Scripture's description of a believer. A believer is one whose heart thirsts after the living God, who seeks the glory of God. His treasures and his thoughts are in heaven. Having experienced much forgiveness, the believer is full of mercy to all those around him and who sin against him. Having been often deceived by his own heart, the believer trusts it not (Jer. 17:9), but lives by faith in the Son of God. He is dead to the world, dead to sin, dead to self, but alive unto God. Prayer is his breath, and the Word of God his food.

But when I examine myself and my own experience, how different the description often appears! Don't you find the same thing? Though I know that communion with God is my highest privilege, I often don't exercise that privilege as if it is the highest privilege. Have you ever had the good intention of picking up the Bible, conscious that it provides instruction in righteousness and the comfort

that we all need, and yet find yourself picking up the daily newspaper instead?

We know that all on this earth is vanity, and yet our actions so often put us in the company of those who have their portion here in this world.

We believe that God works all things together for our good, and yet our worry and anxiety indicate that we think the opposite is true. So little is our faith!

What is this assured confidence, this heartfelt trust?

The Heidelberg Catechism, standing before the open Bible, defines it this way: It is the assured confidence "that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sin, everlasting righteousness, and salvation, are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits."

Do you see how wonderful that is?

God speaks to us whom He has grafted into Christ! He speaks to me! By His Holy Spirit and through His gospel He speaks to us!

In the gospel He tells me of His love for sinners, elect in Christ Jesus. He does.

But I must have more than that. I must have more than the preaching of a general gospel. Of what comfort is it to me to know that God loves elect sinners? I must know that He loves *this* sinner, that He loves *me*. I must know that all this remission of sins applied day by day is for *me*. I must have the confidence that God loves me, that He gave His only begotten Son to save me.

When I have that confidence, then I will immediately join the apostle in his confession, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

### **An Essential Part of True Faith**

This confidence is an essential part of true faith.

Often the question has been asked whether or not assurance belongs to the essence of faith. The Reformed faith, as expressed in the Heidelberg Catechism, gives an unmistakably affirmative answer.

That is also II Timothy 1:12.

As an essential part of his faith, Paul committed to his Lord a precious deposit. He committed *himself* to Him, body and soul. He committed himself, being persuaded that God is faithful.

Christ's merits stand steadfast before the heavenly Father. That remission of sin, everlasting righteousness, and salvation that He obtained for me can never be taken from me. As I confess my sins before God, one thing I know: All my sins have been blotted out in the blood of my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. And therefore in all my weakness I long to live unto Him.

Does this mean that there are no struggles in the Christian life, no doubts, no fears? Not at all.

Scripture frequently points us to the reality of those struggles that mark our own lives and that have characterized the saints throughout the ages. The devil, after all, does not cease to pester us. And our own sins serve to hinder our experience of that assured confidence of faith. Look at the life of David, as he gives expression to his own experience in Psalm 32:3, 4, and its blessed contrast in verses 1, 2 and 5. Consider Asaph's struggles, as recorded in Psalm 73 and Psalm 77. We sing those songs from the depths of our own experience.

But those doubts and fears are expressions of our own infirmity (Ps. 77:10). They belong to that unbelief that still cleaves to our sinful flesh, and because of which we cry out with the man in Mark 9:24, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!"

But Scripture also points us to the solution for overcoming those doubts and fears that would lead us to fall from our own steadfast-

ness. "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 3:18).

### **Wrought by God Alone**

This faith, both in its certain knowledge and its assured confidence, is worked in us by God alone. We continue to speak of the work of the Holy Spirit in our salvation.

When we talk about the activity of faith, we must not forget that no sinner comes to Christ until the Holy Spirit first comes to that sinner!

In Ezekiel 37:14 the promise of the Lord comes this way: "And [I] shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live...then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it" — the *it* being the salvation of His people.

Just as the bond of faith is established by God alone in the wonder of regeneration, according to His own will and good pleasure, so it is with the activity of faith.

The Holy Spirit not only works the essence of faith in regeneration. The Holy Spirit also works my conscious believing, the conscious activity of my faith.

He brings that faith in me to conscious activity by the gospel.


We must emphasize that this work of the Spirit is by the gospel. It is true that this work of the Holy Spirit is a mysterious work. But when it comes to the activity of faith, the matter of believing in Christ Jesus, you must never separate yourself from the Word of the Scriptures and true gospel preaching. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God"

(Rom. 10:17).

Pentecostalism, or any other separation of the Spirit's work from the gospel will always lead a child of God to doubt. The only exception would come by ignoring the fact of our own sin. But when you see yourself as a sinner, you must hear the Word of the gospel. Your assurance of faith must have an anchor, the precious promises of God.

Saving faith is wrought by the Holy Spirit through the gospel.

That is comfort.

There is no comfort in saying that faith is our work. The Spirit of Christ calls us to faith powerfully and irresistibly. So we believe. So we lay hold on Him in whom alone is salvation. And so we stand as the handiworks of God's sovereign, particular grace, partakers of the life of Christ. 

*Day of Shadows*

*George M. Ophoff*

## *The Types of Scripture (8)*

**W**e have seen that the shadows of the old dispensation were indeed accompanied by Messianic revelations — that is, by the spoken word, describing the very objects and events that were prefigured by the shadows. There are two questions which may now be raised. Was it but an enlightened few who were expecting Him who would demolish the head of the serpent, or was the advent of the man of Jehovah an event to which

the believers in general were looking forward? Another question is whether or not the believers of the old covenant were empowered to detect in the shadows any reference to the one whose coming had been announced.

### **Old Testament believers' comprehension of Messianic prophecies**

Our answer to the first question may be brief. Although the Scriptures nowhere explicitly state that the expectation of the promised Shiloh was the portion of the believers in general, yet it must not be supposed that it was but a select few who received the grace necessary to enable them to glory in the triumph of truth and of righteousness over the forces of sin. Common to all believers is a thirst

for righteousness and a desire to be delivered from the body of this death. The divine announcement "I will set enmity," and "It shall bruise thy head," was, we may feel assured, heavenly music in the ears of every saint of the old covenant. This and similar announcements must be regarded as so many lifelines thrown out, which those who realized that they were lying in the midst of death eagerly grasped. The faith of such personages as Eve, Noah, the patriarchs, and Moses did not differ, essentially, from the faith of the believers in general. As these prayed, praised, hoped, rejoiced, and struggled, so did they all. They were all looking for a city which hath foundations whose maker and builder is God. And such words of Jehovah as "The scepter shall not depart

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from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be" — such words became the property of the church and served as a course of comfort to every saint.

### Old Testament believers' ability to link prophecy and symbol

The other question was whether the believers of the old covenant were wont to read in the shadows any reference to Him whose coming they were expecting. To confine ourselves to the rite of expiatory sacrifice, did the believers regard this rite as a prophetic symbol of the sufferings and death of Him upon whom they were focusing their hopes? In answering this question we shall set out by stating the three rudiments of the Jehovah religion thus far brought into relief. They are: 1) Our help standeth in the name of Jehovah; 2) There can be no remission of sins without the shedding of blood; 3) The Man of Jehovah, the Shiloh, will prevail over the malice of the serpent. The question is, whether the ancient believer regarded the sacrificial victim as a prophetic symbol of the sufferings and death of the Messiah. In other words, was the believer of the old covenant taught to associate the shedding of blood with the promised Shiloh? Was he made to see that, according to the arrangement of God, the Man of Jehovah must bear the iniquities of His people?

It is a fact that in the very first revelation made unto man concerning the Messiah is found a reference to His sufferings. It was asserted that the serpent should bruise the heel of the seed. Then, too, the book of psalms are interspersed with lively descriptions of the ill treatment afforded Him by the antagonist. Psalm 22 is exclusively Messianic. The distress to which the poet in this lyric gives expression shall also be the portion of the Messiah. "Be not far from

me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death" (Ps. 22:11-15). Some of the details of the psalm are applicable to Christ only. "For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture" (vv. 16, 17).

With respect to such Scriptures the question arises whether the poet was aware of the fact that he was being used by the Spirit to describe the sufferings of Him whose kingdom Jehovah would establish forever. It cannot be otherwise than that the poet knew that his utterances applied to this particular offspring of his. David was aware of the spiritual and moral ties binding him to the promised seed. The promised Shiloh was to be a man according to God's heart, devoted to the cause of Jehovah, dreaded and hated therefore by the antagonists of God. Ordinarily the experiences of one follower of Christ are the experiences of every follower. They all share a common lot in this world, Christ and His body. The lyric poet, stationing himself upon his own experiences, beheld from this elevation the suffering Christ placed within his range of vision by Jehovah. At the dawn of grace it had been revealed to the church that the serpent

would bruise the heel of the seed. This became the favorite theme of the prophets of Jehovah.

It had also been revealed unto the woman that her seed should bruise the head of the serpent. This, too, was a theme which the prophets of the Lord delighted to elucidate. Prompted by the Spirit they often engaged in depicting the triumph of the Messiah. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh.... Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath.... Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Ps. 2:1-9). "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand,

until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.... The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. The Lord at thy right hand shall strike

through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the nations, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries" (Ps. 110:1-6). "And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked" (Is. 11:4).

The lyric poet, stationing himself upon his own experiences, beheld from this elevation the suffering Christ placed within his range of vision by Jehovah.

The Messiah will set Himself against the opponents of God. That indicates that He loves truth and righteousness. Such being the case, He will judge the poor with righteousness and argue their case. "And he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth.... And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins" (Is. 11:3-5).

Let us say a word about the Scriptures quoted above. It is a well-known fact that the rationalist looks down with disdain upon the God of the Old Testament. This God, so he avers, is a monstrosity, an unnatural production. His opinion is based chiefly on those Scriptures which assert that the Lord's Anointed shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, that the wicked shall perish, and that the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs. To the believer who has entered into the sanctuary of God, however, these psalms are precious. And that, not because he takes delight in the misery and woe of the wicked as such. Far from that. He knows the sorrow of the apostle Paul — a grief which comes to the surface in the following Scripture: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:1-3). For another reason are such Scriptures a source of great comfort to him: they assure him that, not the loathsome forces of darkness, but God, light, truth, justice, and righteousness shall gain the ascendancy. The wicked shall perish. (The prophets of that day, we notice, did not suggest that it was the *sin* of the wicked that Jehovah hated, not the wicked *themselves*. The latter is a

notion of the exponents of the theory of common grace of the twentieth century A.D.)


The theme, then, to which the prophets of the first period of the old dispensation often applied themselves was the struggles or the sufferings and the triumph of the Messiah.

Now, once more the question: Were the prophets of the old covenant wont to associate the blood of the sacrificial victim with the Messiah? Did the church of the old dispensation perceive that the sufferings of the servant of Jehovah, the bruising of His heel, would have atoning value? Did they read in the rite of expiatory sacrifice any reference to the man of Jehovah, whose griefs and triumphs they depicted? Were they able to link together prophecy and symbol? Did they recognize the sacrificial victim as an image or symbol of the suffering Messiah?

Fact is, the only book of the Old Testament which ascribes to the sufferings of the Messiah atoning value is the book of the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah was the only prophet who asserted that "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed... and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquities of us all." In vain do we search the psalms for any such statements. This means that we have no objective proof for asserting that the church in the first periods of the old dispensation associated the shedding of the blood of the sacrificial animal with the suffering Messiah. In other words, there is no objective proof for the assertion that the church in the first epochs ascribed to the sufferings of the Messiah atoning value. The church, then, for at least many centuries, evidently did not detect in the rite of expiatory sacrifice a reference to Christ. It was Isaiah who was taught by the Holy Spirit to link together 1) God, 2) the Servant of

Jehovah, and 3) the blood. This, to be sure, may be regarded as the grand triumph of prophecy.

This does not mean, however, that faith in Christ was no requirement in the days of the old covenant. Let us quote from a former article (#4). "The salvation of the elect of God of the old covenant is perplexing to many. Were the devout, so it is asked, capable of looking beyond the lamb to Christ? This, we reply, is a matter of conjecture. Nevertheless, the salvation of the just of the old covenant was altogether permissible. It was a contrite, brokenhearted sinner who cast himself upon the mercy of Jehovah, realizing that the mercy with which he desired to be satisfied was a just, though unmerited, mercy. What was there preventing God from granting such a one the desires of his heart? God could show this one mercy, and pardon his sins. He could do so without lowering Himself in the eyes of His moral creature. For He had taken care to demonstrate unto them that sin somehow must be atoned for and His mercy merited. It was not for nothing that blood played so prominent a part in the typical transactions of the old dispensation.... [By means of the blood, Jehovah] trained His people to expect all from Him — salvation and the means.... Having passed through the course of training insisted upon by Jehovah, the believer of the old covenant perceived that Jehovah alone can save. He saves, however, in conjunction with blood, not the blood of the animal, but the blood which Jehovah would provide. Now, Christ is God and blood, the latter signifying the human nature in which God suffered and died for His own. In fine, the Old Testament believer was empowered to lay hold on that which constitutes the very heart and soul of redemption, Jehovah and blood."

In this sense did the shadows direct the believer to Christ. 



# Tried by Fire

*For thou, O God, hast proved us:  
thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.*

Psalm 66: 10

**T**he physical, material parts of creation undergo radical transformations when exposed to fire or extreme heat. Impure gold is dull in appearance but is transformed by a process involving intense heat, making it shimmer and shine with great brilliance. A strip of magnesium metal is gray and shiny, but when exposed to intense heat it transforms into a white, powdery ash. A lush, thriving forest is blackened and seemingly stripped bare when struck by forest fire, only to grow anew. Steel loses its characteristic ability to provide support and bear weight when exposed to great heat. Recall a proposed reason for the collapse of the World Trade Center Towers — intense heat from burning jet fuel weakened the strength of the steel beams so they could no longer support the weight of the building! Many physical and chemical changes occur to substances when they are subjected to intense heat.

The radical transformations that occur in matter when it is exposed to great heat are especially exemplified in the steel-making process. Intense heat is used in the steel industry for the purpose of refining and shaping steel. Steel, which is mostly iron atoms mixed with a small percentage of other

atoms, is placed within a heat-resistant container called a crucible. The steel that is in the crucible is placed in a furnace and exposed to intensely hot flames. As steel is heated within the furnace, the atoms of the steel move more and more rapidly till finally they no longer remain in the orderly positions they once did as a solid. Now, with atoms in a disorderly arrangement, the steel exhibits properties characteristic of substances in the liquid state. In the presence of great heat (approximately 1600° C; 2900° F) the steel melts. The liquefied steel is poured into casts to make particular shapes to be used as instruments, tools, or other raw materials.

In addition to melting the steel, heat is used in other ways to alter the properties of steel. If the steel is heated and then cooled quickly (called tempering), the atoms within become arranged in such a way that it makes the steel tougher, harder, and less liable to crack — often used in cutting tools or in gears in heavy machinery. If the steel is heated and then cooled slowly (called annealing), the steel will be softer and more bendable — often used in making iron railings, nails, or sheets. In this situation the steel is softer and more flexible because as the heated atoms cool slowly they have more time to arrange themselves in a special arrangement that actually allows the metal to be more flexible than it was originally. Thus, we see how an artificer can use heat to manipulate steel or other metals as the need requires. One purpose for a metal may require great heat and a lengthy time in the furnace, and another purpose

for a metal may require little heat and less time in the furnace. Therefore, we see the role that intense heat plays in the molding, shaping, and refining of metals in order to fit them for the artificer's desired purpose.

As fire is important to specific, radical transformations of matter in the creation, particularly in the refining of metals, so, too, it is an important picture that God gives us of the "fiery trials" that He places upon us. God places each of us, His beloved children, within a "crucible" to expose us to various afflictions or "fiery trials." These trials may differ in degree of intensity as well as duration. Just as the degree of heat a metal is subjected to is determined by what the artificer wants to do with the metal that is placed in the fire, so, too, God's crucible heats us according as we have need. Each child of God has his own particular and specific impurities and weaknesses that God purges from him. God, like the artificer, applies to His beloved children particular and unique afflictions to purify them and prepare them for their unique place in this life and the life to come. For some of us it is very sore afflictions; for others it is "lesser" afflictions. It may be afflictions for a lifetime or for a moment. Yet, in each case the goal is the same for all of us — we flee from sin and are drawn closer to God that the glory of Christ might shine in us more fully. A radical change must take place within us, requiring the intense heat of fiery trials so that we may be laid bare, stripped of our own selfish dependence, in order to seek all we need outside of ourselves and to rely on

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



God alone. "And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they might offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness" (Mal. 3:3).

Scripture uses the analogy of the purification of silver and gold by heat or fire to picture how God purifies us, His people. Gold or silver is purified or refined by being placed within a furnace in which great heat (up to 1100° C; 2000° F) is applied to the compounds. Mixed with the gold or silver are other minerals and impurities. The extreme heat makes the gold or silver turn into its liquid form. The other minerals and impurities will often combine with oxygen molecules in the air (oxidation), forming compounds that float on the top of the molten gold or silver, called dross. The dross is skimmed off the top, leaving a relatively pure sample of gold or silver. The gold or silver that remains is now more valuable because, free from impurities, its true beauty and unique properties are brought out.

And so, we are spiritually purified. "Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; *I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction*" (Is. 48:10). We, as children of God, have Christ within us, and only because of that can we abide the fire. We have the beauty of the new man within us. But yet, there is within us an old man of sin from which evil deeds arise that must be crucified and destroyed. Although God has in principle purged us of sin in Christ by His work on the cross, nevertheless, in this life we are always affected by our old man of sin from which "spring daily sins of infirmity, and hence spots adhere to the best works of the saints" (Canons V, 2). Thus, God's work of salvation includes a daily conversion — a daily mortification of the old, "and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without

spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal" (Baptism Form).

God uses His crucible, His furnace of affliction, to burn away all that would impede us in our devotion to Him. Many are the earthly cares and desires that distract us from our calling to seek first the kingdom of God, to dwell in communion with Him, and to trust in Him alone. In love, our heavenly Father brings cancer upon us. We are humbled for we see our frailty. We learn to recognize that our only help is in God, not in our health or physicians, but in God alone. In love, our heavenly Father brings material losses upon us: our job is terminated, our income is limited because of economic conditions, our home burns to the ground, our crops are destroyed, or our nation is ravaged by crime or war. These afflictions teach us to trust in God, not in our riches, not in our resources, not in our intellectual ability or work ethic, but in God alone. In love, God brings upon us difficulties in the home: sick children or the death of a loved one. All these "fiery trials" strengthen our faith in our heavenly Father, who loves us dearly.

Though often times we may rebel against such trials, for their immensity can weigh heavily upon us, we must see in these trials the purpose for which God has designed them. "But he (chastens us) for our profit, that we might be partakers of holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12: 10-11). The trial of our faith has a purpose or goal — that we might be complete, stronger in the faith, bearing righteous fruit. When we are placed in God's crucible we are purified

— the old man is more put off and the new man in Christ shines forth more clearly. As we read in I Peter 1:5-7, we are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

When we, by the grace of God, are able to view our troubles as necessary for our salvation, then we even see them as a cause for joy. We take comfort knowing that God does not afflict His people without reason, though we may not always be able to see it. For our faith, which is far more precious than gold, must too be tried with fire — the fire of affliction. Gold is submitted to the fire in order to separate it from its dross, and again in order to determine its purity. Likewise, God's purpose in the "trying" of our faith is twofold. In the first place, it works to purge sin from us, for we are placed within God's crucible that through affliction we may be rid of any unbelief and the dross of our faith

may be taken away. Over a whole lifetime of being placed within God's crucible through many afflictions, we only begin to glimmer and shine. We have but a small beginning of the new obedience in this life.

Secondly, the purpose of trials is to give the child of God a sense of approval, a guarantee, that He which has begun a good work in us will accomplish and complete it. Our faith has been proved; it is genuine and shall endure till Christ appears again. God is the author of our salvation — justification,

*Over a whole lifetime  
of being placed  
within God's crucible  
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to glimmer and shine.*




sanctification, glorification — from beginning to end. It is solely God's work and His work shall endure. It alone can withstand and pass through the fire. Through the intense "fiery trials" the new man within us is preserved and endures, while the old man perishes and is consumed. Thus, we carry on boldly, for though ultimately everything in this life leads to the destruction of our external man and death, we look upon Christ in order to see glory and praise in our troubles. And that glory will be fully seen at the "appearing of Christ."

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown

of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (James 1:12). Rev. Herman Veldman explained the passage of James in this way:

"James does not refer here to the trial of our faith, but to the results of that trial. Our becoming approved refers to that condition of the Christian wherein his true spiritual character is revealed as purged from all foreign elements. Silver and gold are tried, approved by fire in the sense that they are purged of all impurities, so that their beauty and true character may shine the more brilliantly. So also the Christian is approved. Many foreign elements cleave to the Christian's conscious walk and manifestation. The ap-

proved Christian is he who, when cast into the furnace of affliction, is being purified, so that the imperishable character of his faith shines the more gloriously, as purged from all carnal and sinful elements" (SB, Volume 23, p. 189).

We must see afflictions in this positive light. God by His grace upholds us within His crucible so that we may become more beautiful, reflecting the beauty of Christ within us, and be brought into closer communion with our Father. May God give us patience in the "fiery trials" that He sends us, in order that we might see the loving hand of our Father molding us, making us "perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1:4). 

When Thou Sittest in Thine House

Abraham Kuiper

## No Vain Repetition of Words Family Prayer

**W**e read in Matthew 6:7: "And when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."

Does Jesus mean by this that every prayer must be *brief*, and that a somewhat *longer* prayer already by itself is judged on account of its length?

Certainly *not*.

For in John 17, the Savior Himself has set a pace in sending upward an extensive prayer; moreover, the Evangelists tell how sometimes for hours together Jesus

continued in prayer. Also in the Old Testament, Solomon's prayer, for instance, at the consecration of the Temple can by no means be called short.

And yet by His warning against the "vain repetition of words" Jesus certainly means to say that too great length injures prayer. For He adds the elucidation that the heathen "think they shall be heard for their much speaking"; and the prayer which He himself puts in the lips of His disciples is one of not three minutes.

Yet it is not difficult to straighten out this seeming contradiction, provided you but put the emphasis upon this "vain repetition of words," which is presently followed by "their much speaking" (Matt. 6:7).

If you observe this, you will see that Jesus has nothing to say about the duration of your prayer, not about the length of it, but that He objects exclusively, and very definitely, to the *verbosity* of your supplications, at least insofar as those words are nothing but "vain repetitions," or, as we would say, a concatenation of hollow sounds.

This evil crept in with all heathen forms of worship. They kept up prayer, but they had lost God; and so their prayer was bound to be devoid of that earnest character of outpouring of soul and of real supplication.

Consequently their prayer became formal, a duty which they performed. He who was most proficient in this counted for most pious; hence that muttering of endless prayers, every time repeated

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again, and this of course had nothing in common with real prayer, while with them it passed as such.

From the heathen world this formal service of prayer had gradually crept in.

And against this Jesus warns.

Ye children of Abraham, do not follow the heathen in this. Keep yourselves from desecrating the holiest that is given us on earth. No muttering of vain sounds. Let your prayer be real *prayer*.



And yet this warning of Jesus has failed of the mark; and formal, verbose, and long drawn-out prayer has passed from Israel and from the heathen world over into the church of the new covenant.

In the churches of the Reformation this is not as bad as in the churches of Rome; but yet with us also this evil undeniably cankers on, be it in different form.

The Church of Rome uses few long prayers. Her prayers are mostly short, and sometimes even very short. And in this we might learn of Rome.

But Rome's fault is that she lets the same prayers be prayed too much and too often one after the other. One knows the paternoster. A string of beads with a crucifix attached. And by these beads one counts how many paternosters, Ave Maria's, and angelic hails, etc., have been prayed.

However well intentioned this might be, it is bound to assist mechanicalness, and so it does. One begins seriously and with good purpose. But soon the thought of prayer is lost. The mouth mutters, but the eye wanders. And long before the task is ended, the latest trace of real prayer is utterly gone. Something that in Romish countries is even seen in the priests, who, seated in all sorts of means of conveyance, aside from their other religious literature, also say their prayers, and thereby noticeably make the impression that the spirit indeed is

willing, but the flesh weak.

This gives rise to a false religious sense, as though it merely implies the act of having prayed, and not the outpouring of soul before God.

And so it is again *words*. A repetition of *words*. A verbosity which is vain.



Yet, well as it may be to have our eye clearly open to this shadow side of Rome's practice of prayer, it would be self-righteous if we were to imagine that Jesus' warning against vain repetition of words had nothing to say to us Christians of the Reformation.

The contrary is true.

Our practice of prayer suffers pitifully from heterodoxy, and in many ways is tainted with sin.

We of the Reformation aimed high. Even too high. And this in a twofold way. First, that we almost always use *free* prayers, and few written prayers. And again that the demand is put not only to the minister of the Word, but also to every elder, to every deacon, and to every father in his family, to offer, what is called *prayer aloud*.

This is aimed high, because all leading in prayer is high art, and one which brings great temptation with it.

To pray aloud is something self-contradictory. To pray is to deepen oneself in fellowship with the eternal being; and to pray aloud is to practice fellowship with people around us. And so it comes to pass, that one truly prays earnestly and zealously, but forgets those who are around him, and so makes them to be listeners to *his* prayer, rather than that he prays with them and for them. While on the other hand the leader in prayer thinks so much about the people for whom and with whom he prays, that he forgets to think of God, and so prays not at all. In which latter case the great temptation arises that he who leads oth-

ers in prayer becomes ambitious to make "nice prayers," and so is more anxious how he may please his fellow worshipers by his prayer, than how his prayer may be acceptable *unto God*.

This temptation is for, oh, so many an unblest fountain of all sorts of sanctimonious and Pharisaic show.

How often you see that when such people pray for themselves alone, they are so quickly done. It then lasts but for a moment. But when there are others present, or when they lead them in prayer, it seems as though their prayer has no end. Everything must be brought into it. The same things must be repeated and repeated under other forms. It all carries the impression, even upon those with whom they pray, that they but want to show how long and earnestly they can pray.

This needs by no means to be always sinful intent. There are those who in ordinary conversation are always dreadfully prolix. There are those who, especially in prayer, find it difficult to come to an end. There are those with whom, especially in prayer, through lack of self-control, tediousness has become a second nature.

But with due respect for all this, there is always this sin in it, that they ask too much what *people* will say about it, and too little whether *God* will take heed of their supplication.

"To be heard of men" makes them lose their reward with God.

An evil to which sometimes some ministers of the Word have so habituated themselves that it cleaves unto them till their death.



If you would be on your guard against this, there is but one efficient means, and that is that you *exercise* yourself in prayer.

One thinks that a child can pray. And so he can. But a child prays as a child, because he thinks



and speaks as a child. But when you have become a man, you should put away childish things and learn to pray as a *man*.

And this is a glorious, but also a very difficult art, which is not acquired by praying aloud too soon before others, but upon one's knees before God.

Many would find it impossible, like Jesus, to spend hours together in prayer.

One has so little to say in his prayer simply because all day long he has thought so little of God. Because even in prayer one has so little fellowship and communion

with the Eternal. And also because one feels so little his own deep need and lets the love of fellowship operate so faintly in behalf of others.

Many make even no transition.


They fall on their knees. They pray. They are done. And immediately life resumes its ordinary course.

And that should not be. There must be a transition. One must first inlive in the glory of the sight of God's majesty, that by the indrinking of that glory the flower bud of the soul may open.

And only he who has so *learned*

to pray by himself in private, and continuously persisted in this practice till at length he entered into it, will be able later on so to pray aloud that it remains real prayer with him.

But to pray in public requires still something else.

Namely, that in the fellowship of those who pray with you, you lose yourself; that you carry their need on your heart; in a priestly way enter into their life; and as having become their interpreter with God, from the heart and soul of all, for them and with them, you call upon the Eternal. 

## Dating and the Deep Blue Sea ... and the Way of Christ (2)

### The Way of Heathen Dating

**T**here is mystery in the wonderful way of a man with a maid. Wise men say, "Who can know it?" (Prov. 30:18, 19).

There is theology, good and sound doctrine for the godly way of a man with a maid. It is ours. God has graciously given it to us. It is God's covenant. It is marriage. It is godly fathers giving their daughters in marriage. It is godly men and women, when they are spiritually mature, committing themselves with their parents and in the church to a sacred endeavor and relationship. It is a holy way, every step of the way, which shall be, God willing, and God helping the parents, the men, and the

maids, for godly beginnings of covenant marriage, covenant homes, and for the godly seed.

Wise men say of that theology for the godly way of marrying: "Let us learn it!" And "Let us do it!" "Let us apply this wonderful truth to our way of men with maids!"

Fools say bah. They are the wicked. They want no Bible. They have no sacred theology. They serve not God. For them, culture rules. And hormones. And the god Fun. And they, in *their* way of man with maid, do learn and do the way of heathen dating.

So you have among the heathen (those are the fools) this thing called "dating." It is a monster. She is monstrous. And that, of course, is why I believe we should do away with her.

Know her? Ever seen this monstrous heathen dating? Here she is:

Half-formed. Two unmarried young or not-so-young people pairing off, going "steady," but *not ready* for marriage.

An Idolater. These two *focusing first on themselves* and not on God.

Cripple. Two who claim to have fallen in love and to see stars, but who are not seeing straight, *not walking* in love.

An Evolutionist. The beautiful, the brawny, the buxom, the bio-engineered ... pairing off *first*. Sons and daughters of Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-Cain going hand in hand down the hall, and off into the sunset. The others left lonely and longing at their lockers.

A Feminist. Women acting strange — taking the initiative, making moves, calling up, asking out, flattering, coaxing, teasing.

An Adulteress. Proverbs 7 women.

An Emasculator. Men showing off, being bulls. Cowards really. Anything but Men.

The Entertainer. Fun. Monstrous dating is all about this. Fun, being entertained, being stimulated drives dating. Dating is a beach.

Physical. Heathen dating is this in all but 90 year olds dating. And more and more physical as the night goes on and the months and years go by.

Long. The monstrous is very long. Either with one or multiple partners the dating goes on and on and on. For no one knows what he is doing.

Unruly. She's on her own, this monstrous heathen dating! Parents especially — let her be! Two's company. Mom and Dad are the unwanted, rule-making, stifling crowd.

Voracious. Consuming everything in her path. A destructive, gluttonous thing, this monstrous. Super-involving our emotions. Taking our bodies into her stomach. Biting off our souls. A maid for a morsel. A man for a meal. Marriage for dessert. She wants to have them all, her way, and for the elimination from the face of the earth of anything that even looks like a godly way of a man with a maid.

### **A Monster in the House!**

It is quite possible, Grace Life readers, for us to entertain monsters, even unawares. We can even learn from them, and begin to do like them, and even to look like them. Jeremiah warns Israel in chapter ten and verse two of his prophecy that they "learn not the way of the heathen." The implication of the text is, and the history of Israel shows, that the learning of the heathen way was indeed possible, a real threat.

We are not to think the warning is only for intractable and stiff-necked Jews. It is for intractable and stiff-necked *us*. Jeremiah's shot is fired across our bows! We are the people of God to and for

whom Christ is not only promised, but given. We are loved of God. Our love, our delight, is to love God back. Our lifelong desire, our heart of hearts yearning is to sit and to learn at Jesus' feet and to know His rest (Matt. 11:28-30). But we can be rather smug about our Christianity, our being Reformed, *God's gift*. There in our breasts lingers self-righteousness still. Popes tend to rule our bellies. We can show a great care for formalities, and imagine our prayers are sanctified by "thee" and "thou." But we find it an easy thing to be quite casual about knee-bending, heart-baring, *truly-with-God-communing* religion. We preach against the world while worldliness creeps into our souls and lives. And it is a devil's creeping, petty pace by petty pace, day to day, taking us away ... *from our God!*

So prone to lifeless religion and worldliness, we are naturally willing *students* of heathen ways. There is a connection, a rapport, between our sinful minds and heathen philosophies. Heathen joys are our natural loves. It is not difficult for any of us to pass with ease and with honors the course of Heathen Priorities 101 entitled "Me, Myself, and I." We easily can do well in the heathen way of living by the standards of men and not according to the Word of God, the Bible. And heathen customs can easily become our major, and our idols (Jer. 10:3).

Like Dating.

God through Jeremiah fires into the twenty-first century, and into our churches and homes, and souls: *Thus saith the Lord! Learn not the way of heathen ... dating!*

Indeed, there is a great temptation for us to learn this heathen way of dating. And, it is my contention, as you may know (!), that we have learned it quite well.

I say this, you must understand, with regard to our learning in general. In general we are good students of the heathen way of dating. There is among us some re-

sistance still to *all* of the way of heathen dating; we entertain the form, Dating, but are not altogether happy with everything about her. And, because we really do love God and we do love righteousness we try, desperately, to resist Dating's moves and claws. But largely we have learned to tolerate and even to promote this bad way, made it the custom of our men with maids. The Monstrous has come into our homes and churches. And she is indeed having her bad way.

One indication that we have learned the way of the heathen in adopting their custom of dating is this: this Monstrous thing in her Half-Form among us! Many are there among us who do this thing called dating, who are in no wise ready for marriage. And for some strange reason we let them, and even encourage them.

What I mean by people not being ready for marriage is this: that they are not mature enough, spiritually, or they are not yet committed enough to marrying but would rather, or need to, first finish three more years of schooling (high school or college), or they have no means of supporting a spouse and children.

The Bible knows nothing, absolutely nothing, of God's people, male and female, pairing off, going steady, betrothing, or what have you, *except with a view to marriage, and therefore, when they are ready to marry*. Every thing and every one must be *ready*, the timing, the godliness, the circumstance, the provision of God in every way, therefore, *must be evident*, even *before* there is the *beginning*, even, of a godly way of men with maids in God's covenant.

Ready? As ready as Christ when He woos His bride. As ready as the church when she responds to Christ! That is how ready covenant men with maids must be before they travel the way of marrying! Marriage, according to Ephesians 5, being a picture of Christ and His church together, the



way of a man with a maid should portray Christ and His church *getting* together. There must be *readiness*, therefore, when men with maids first begin along the way of marrying. For when Christ comes to take His bride to Himself, He certainly is ready. And He makes His bride ready to receive Him by the prior regenerating and enlivening and enlovening work of the Spirit. He will not come and dally with her for seven years, and play with her, and, then reject her for another. He does not come to her just to get to know her. When He comes to marry, and to call to conscious faith, He already knows them that are His, He has made them ready, and it is the time of their love. Love, Christ knows, and Christ's bride must know, must not be stirred till He please (Song of Solomon 3:5).

Concerning the matter of our covenant people being ready for marriage *spiritually*, before they pursue a mate, I think we would all agree. Our people must be ready in the soul before they look for a soul-mate.

What this means, of course, is that anyone who would proceed along the sacred way of marrying must be and show himself or herself to be men and women of God. There must first be the establishment and cultivation of that verti-

cal, God-and-thou relationship, there must first be the ardent love for Christ, before we have ardent marriage-love for a mortal being, however strong or beautiful that being is. There must be the fruit, abundant fruit of the Holy Spirit *first*, there must be evident responsibility and maturity *first*, before our men with maids *dare*, and before we *dare* let them take even one step toward the matrimonial altar.

Evidence of this *true and mature Christianity in the soul* we have always thought, as Reformed believers, is public confession of faith. The requirement of public confession of faith we have seen as necessary before one can partake of the Supper of our Lord. By this confession of faith one vows before Christ and His church that he or she is a believer, a discerning, mature believer. Upon this confession of faith the rights and privileges of full church membership are bestowed, and the obligations of such membership are shouldered.

But what do we have among us? *The Half-Formed heathen Dating!* We, as parents and churches, have given our young people the privilege of focusing on a relationship which ought to be for marriage, we have allowed them to spend a considerable amount of their time and energy on that, they

have gone out together into the night and night after night after night and year after year *before* they have professed Christ together with the church of all ages.


Now, it may be that we think public profession of faith does not really mean much. Or it may be that we think the "dating" of our young people does not really mean much. If either or both of these are the case then we are *really* good learners of heathen dating! But I am hoping you will agree: both mean *a lot!* And the profession of a relationship with Christ means *a lot more* than and should have priority over and *precede*, therefore, profession of a relationship with Sally or Sam.



Grace Life readers, let us think on these things. And be humble. We have been shot at. But it is not some drunken grumpy writer shooting up the place. There is the warning shot from God's Word. Let us begin to unlearn Dating, to shake off her ungodly yoke. Let us take another yoke upon us, even Christ's. Let us come unto Him, and learn His way of godly marrying.

And know this.

This too is the Word of God.

We and our men with maids shall surely find rest! 

## Report of Classis West

March 6, 2002  
at Loveland, Colorado

**T**he March meeting of Classis West was held in Loveland Protestant Reformed Church in Loveland, Colorado on Wednesday, March 6. Rev. Steven Houck chaired the meeting.

Classis treated a rather lengthy agenda, including two appeals. Both appeals concerned a discipline case in one of our churches

and were treated in closed session. In both instances, the consistory was upheld in its actions in the case.

In other business, a discipline case was carefully considered in closed session and approval was given to the decision of the consistory to proceed to the second step of discipline.

Classis approved Rev. Richard Moore's emeritation request and forwarded his request to synod.

Classis expressed its appreciation to Rev. Moore for his nearly 34 years of faithful labors in our churches and on the mission field as minister of the Word and sacraments. It was noted that Rev. Moore labored during his entire ministry in Classis West. The Lord willing, Rev. Moore will be emeritus at the end of July, 2002.

The church visitors reported on their work and informed classis that they found there is peace,



unity, and love in our congregations and among the officebearers in our consistories. They reported that the consistories are faithfully carrying out their labors and that the churches are prospering under the blessing of God.

Classis approved subsidy requests from three of our churches and forwarded these requests to synod. In connection with this, Bethel PRC informed classis that they will not be needing any subsidy for 2003. Classis expressed its joy that Bethel has at this time become self-supporting.

Classical appointments were granted to Lynden PRC as follows: Rev. Doug Kuiper (April 7 & 14), Rev. Eriks (April 21 & 28), Rev. VanderWal (May 5 & 12), Rev. DeVries (May 19 & 26), Rev. R. Miersma (June 2 & 9), Rev. A. Brummel (June 23 & 30), Rev. Smit (July 7 & 14), Rev. Kleyn (July 21

& 28), Rev. Key (August 18 & 25), Rev. Houck (September 8 & 15), Rev. Doug Kuiper (September 22 & 29). Lynden's consistory expressed appreciation to classis and to all our churches for the overwhelming support and help they have received from the churches, especially with pulpit supply.


Annual elections were also held. **Ministers** elected as delegates to Synod 2002 were Revs. A. Brummel, C. Haak, S. Houck, S. Key, D. Kleyn. Alternates are Revs. M. DeVries, G. Eriks, Doug Kuiper, R. Miersma, R. Smit. **Elders** elected as delegates to synod were Keith Bruinsma (Peace), Bob Mantel (Doon), Henry P. Meulenberg (Redlands), Don Terpstra (Peace), Gysbert VanBaren (South Holland). Alternates are Henry Bleyenburgh (South Holland), Lewis DeJong (South Holland), Glenn Gunnink (Edgerton), Henry Hoksbergen

(Hull), Lammert Lubbers (South Holland).

In other elections, Rev. Kleyn was reappointed to a three-year term as stated clerk; Rev. Doug Kuiper was elected as assistant stated clerk; Rev. R. Smit was reappointed to the Classical Committee; Rev. A. Brummel was elected to a three-year term as a synodical deputy of Classis West, with Rev. Eriks elected as the alternate; and Revs. M. DeVries, C. Haak, S. Houck, and R. Miersma were elected as church visitors, with Revs. A. Brummel and S. Key as alternates.

Classis accepted the invitations of Edgerton PRC to hold its next meeting in Edgerton, Minnesota, on September 4, 2002, and of Lynden PRC to hold the March 2003 meeting in Lynden, Washington.

*Rev. Daniel Kleyn*

Stated Clerk, Classis West 

## News From Our Churches

## Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Young Adult Activities

**T**he Young Adults' Society of the Covenant PRC in Wyckoff, NJ hosted an evening of activities in their church fellowship hall for Christian young adults in their community on February 22. Pizza and refreshments were provided. Covenant's young adults were encouraged to invite their friends and were reminded to bring some games along as well.

Once again this March the Young Adults' Society of the Loveland, CO PRC served as host society for their annual Spring Retreat. This year's retreat was held between March 11 and 14 at the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park. Rev. G. Eriks, pastor of Loveland,

and Prof. D. Engelsma were this year's featured speakers. The theme for this year's retreat was "The Second Coming of Christ." On March 12 Prof. Engelsma spoke on "The Signs of Christ's Coming" and on Wednesday, March 13, Rev. Eriks spoke on "Living in the Hope of Christ's Coming." From all accounts this year's retreat went well. There were no physical injuries during the week and the 50 or so young adults had a nice time in fellowship and in discussing and hearing lectures concerning the second coming of Christ.

### Young People's Activities

**A** Young People's Mass Meeting was held at the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI on Sunday afternoon, March 17. Prof. R. Dykstra spoke on "The Great Divide: The Resurrection of Jesus from the Dead."

The young people of the Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL recently sponsored a soup supper for couples and adults of their congregation. Nothing too unusual about that, but what caught our eye was the added benefit — besides a good meal, there was free baby-sitting. The young people provided this for couples with little children on a first-request, first-served basis. The baby sitter was brought to your home and you had to bring them back later after the meal. A unique idea, one that other societies might consider sometime in the future.

The young people of the Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI have begun collecting pop cans to raise money for a piano for their church.

### Congregation Activities

**T**he Mary-Martha Society of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA recently sponsored a Pie and Dessert

*Mr. Wigger is an elder in the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.*



Social for the express purpose of raising funds for a new church organ.

The Choir of the Hudsonville, MI PRC presented their annual spring concert on March 17 at their church. The choir chose songs that testified of Christ's power over death and of our gratitude for what He has done.

The Men's Society of the Hull, IA PRC invited the men from the neighboring churches of Edgerton, MN and Doon, IA to join them in a combined society meeting on March 18. Discussion was taken from Malachi 2.

A late season ski outing was planned for the congregation of the Randolph, WI PRC. On the afternoon of March 12, old and young alike were invited to meet at their church and from there join together for an evening of skiing.

The congregation of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI was able to enjoy a Church Dedication Program on February 15 upon the occasion of the completion of a major church addition project.

The Building Committee of the Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI reported to their congregation in early February that the house their church purchased on the north side of their property is now ready for church use. The utilities have been turned back on, and improvements to the bathroom have been completed. In addition, the house has been cleaned, painted, and fixed up through volunteer help, to allow their church's Evangelism Committee to use the facility for storage and distribution of pamphlets and other literature formerly contained in the church basement. Two trees that were unsightly and decayed were also removed from the property.

Widows, widowers, and elderly couples of the Hudsonville, MI PRC were invited to join the Jr. Fellowship Society for a night of fun, games, and food on Friday, March 15 at their church.

### Minister Activities

**P**astors and their wives in the Michigan area were encouraged to "come apart and rest awhile" by way of a PR Ministers Retreat held at Maranatha Bible Camp in Muskegon, MI in early February. The various ministers and their wives spent Friday evening and Saturday morning singing, discussing a book, and fellowshiping with one another.

Rev. B. Gritters, pastor of the Hudsonville, MI PRC, received the call from the Grandville, MI PRC to serve as their next pastor. Rev. J. Slopsema declined the call from the Lynden, WA PRC. Their new trio is Rev. R. Hanko, Rev. J. Laning, and Rev. R. VanOverloop. The Byron Center, MI PRC has formed the following trio: Rev. W. Bruinsma, Rev. J. Slopsema, and Rev. C. Terpstra. They were to call on March 27. The Covenant PRC in Wyckoff, NJ formed a new trio consisting of Rev. R. Hanko, Rev. T. Miersma, and Rev. R. VanOverloop. On March 17 they extended a call to Rev. VanOverloop.



## Announcements

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Senior Adult Bible Society of Peace PRC expresses its Christian sympathy to Nellie DeVries in the death of her father,

#### FREDRICK DE VRIES.

May she find comfort in the words of Romans 6:22, 23, "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Rev. S. Houck, president  
Alice Dykshorn, secretary

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of Cornerstone PRC express their Christian sympathy to Tim and Mary Lobbezoo on the death of his father,

#### DONALD LOBBEZOO.

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

Pastor Nathan Brummel, President  
Donald Bruinsma, Clerk

### ADDRESS CHANGE

Please make the following change in your Yearbook:

Rev. Nathan Brummel  
10870 Millard Dr.  
St. John, IN 46373  
Home phone: (219) 365-6892  
Study/Fax: (219) 365-2465

### TEACHER NEEDED

Covenant Christian High School is accepting applications from members of the Protestant Reformed Churches for a teaching position. The school has needs in the areas of Business, Computer Applications, and English. Those interested may contact Mr. Rick Noorman at (616) 453-5048 or Mr. John VanUffelen at (616) 396-8498.

### NOTICE!!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 8, 2002 at the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church.

Jon J. Huisken,  
Stated Clerk



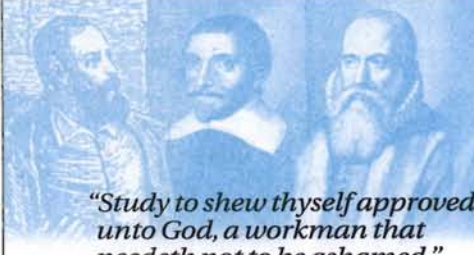
# THE STANDARD BEARER

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## NOTICE

The Evangelism Committee of Grace PRC has begun to record the *Beacon Lights* on audio tape. This is a FREE service to the legally blind. If you are blind or know someone who is and would like to be added to the mailing list, please contact Sam Copple, 659 Lincoln Ave. NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504; phone (616) 774-4132; e-mail: [SamCopple@email.msn.com](mailto:SamCopple@email.msn.com) or contact: Karl Van Oostenbrugge, O-592 Country Lane NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49544; phone (616) 677-2024; e-mail: [KJVO@aol.com](mailto:KJVO@aol.com). All non-blind persons interested in these audio tapes, please contact the *Beacon Lights*.



*"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed."*  
II Tim. 2:15.

To purchase good Reformed literature visit the Reformed Free Publishing Association at [www.rfpa.org](http://www.rfpa.org)



## RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of Faith PRC extend sincere Christian sympathy to Harv and Marilyn Holstege and family in the death of his mother,  
**MRS. JENNIE LANNING.**

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Rev. Kenneth Koole, President  
Trixie Bruckbauer, Secretary

## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With gratitude to God, on April 10, 2002 we celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

**JAY and DONNA LUBBERS.**

We are thankful to our heavenly Father for the years He has given them together and for their faithfulness to one another. We pray that God will continue to bless them and preserve them in their life together.

As a family, we are also truly grateful to God for the faithfulness He has shown to us through their many years of godly instruction, guidance, and love.

"For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).

- \* Ed and Jan Spoelma
  - \* Duane and Sandy Alsum
  - \* Al and Carol Karsemeyer
  - \* Gary and Jan Lubbers
- 18 grandchildren  
2 great-grandchildren

Hudsonville, Michigan

# The Perfect Law of Liberty

Spring  
SEMINAR

APRIL 26-27, 2002

Prof David Engelsma



Friday, April 26,  
7:30 p.m.  
**The Freedom of the Christian**

Rev Carl Haak



Saturday, April 27,  
9:00 a.m.  
**The Place of the Law in the Life of a Redeemed Believer**

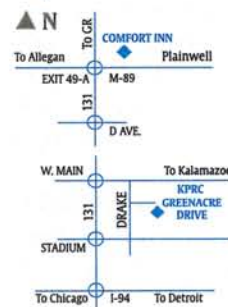
Rev Wilbur Bruinsma



Saturday, April 27,  
11:00 a.m.  
**Preaching Liberty to the Captives**

Plan Now to Attend  
a Weekend of Christian  
Fellowship and Spiritual  
Edification

Conveniently  
located at  
the Plainwell  
Comfort Inn



If you would desire to extend your stay, you are invited to worship with us on Sunday, at the Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church

Sunday, April 28, 2002  
Sunday Worship Services  
9:30 am & 6:00 pm  
Led by Prof David Engelsma  
& Rev Carl Haak

For more info, contact:  
Brad Bruinsma  
Phone (616) 552-8893  
[BandTBruinsma@juno.com](mailto:BandTBruinsma@juno.com)