

# THE *October 1, 2002* STANDARD BEARER

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# Saved by Grace Alone

*"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."*

Ephesians 2: 8, 9

**G**race. A most wonderful and most humbling truth. Grace saves. It delivers one from the greatest evil and misery and makes him a partaker of the greatest good.

Saved from the greatest evil. The greatest evil is to be spiritually trapped in the powerful grasp of the wages of sin. Sin earns death. Every sin must be punished, and the punishment for each is certain death at the hands of the just and holy God. God punishes sin with death (Gen. 2:17). This is as it ought to be, because sin is always a violation of God. The only correct response the holy and just God can give to each violation of Himself is to punish sin with death. This death is spiritual (the inability to do anything good and the in-

clination only to do evil), physical (the cessation of earthly existence), and eternal (the endurance of divine wrath in hell forever). This is the greatest evil and misery. Grace saves from this great misery.

And to be saved is to be made a partaker of the greatest good. The greatest good is to be as God and to be with God. It is to be made beautiful as God is beautiful. It is to be able to fellowship with the living God Himself. It is to know God, to hear Him, and to talk with Him. It is to know that God is with you — always — and that thus you are always with Him. It is to be spiritually alive, that is, always conscious of His blessed presence and able to want to please Him. This is the great good. Grace gives us this great good.

The inspired apostle spoke about this greatest evil and this greatest good in the earlier verses of this second chapter of his letter to the Ephesians. He had said that the greatest evil is to be dead in trespasses and sin (v. 1). He then explains this spiritual death as being physically alive but able only to do evil. He writes that it is to be imprisoned in the constant pressure to walk according to the un-

godly world. It is to follow the devil himself, whose power is evidenced in his constantly leading men into disobedience (v. 2). Spiritual death is the truly horrible experience of doing whatever you can think of (the desires of the mind) and whatever your flesh wants (the desires of the flesh) — and then to be so deceived that you believe that this is wonderful and right (v. 3). In these verses Paul makes it clear that this spiritual death characterizes not only the heathen ("ye"), but also the Christian ("we").

The greatest good Paul describes as being made spiritually alive ("quickened") with Christ (v. 5). It is to be born again with the very life of Jesus Christ Himself, so that He is in you. Then this greatest good consists of one being raised with Christ (v. 6). It is to be so in Christ and with Him, that you share in His resurrection from the dead. A spiritual resurrection takes place in believers — they are justified before God. Still more, union with Christ takes believers into heaven with Him. When Jesus ascended into the realm of the heavenly, then those in Him receive spiritual blessings in heavenly places (v. 6; 1:3).

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This is what it is to be saved.



How is it possible that those dead in sin can be saved?

Paul has already pointed to God for the answer: "But God..." (v. 4). The possibility of salvation is found either in God or in those who are saved. Paul looks away from the saved and looks up to God. It is the rich mercy of God, which mercy is based on great, divine love (v. 4). Rich mercy derived from everlasting love.

Now in our text the apostle is inspired to point to another attribute of God at work in making it possible for spiritually dead sinners to be brought into living communion with God. It is grace. "By grace are ye saved."

Grace is the attitude of undeserved favor, which becomes an active power to save. Grace is an action of God which arises from His beautiful character. (The root meaning of the Hebrew word for grace is "beauty.") This beauty of God becomes an attitude of favor and love. When the object of God's gracious attitude is unworthy and sinful, then it is an unmerited favor and stands diametrically opposed to obligation. If it is by grace, then there is no obligation. If God is obliged to save, then it would not be by grace. Grace is that favorable attitude in action. It is that redemptive power which delivers from the great evil and imparts the spiritual blessings which make beautiful. The objects of divine grace are made beautiful as God is beautiful.

Grace is the fountain out of which God makes the chosen, wretched sinner to be beautiful.

Salvation is not God's response to something in us. It is "not of yourselves." The word "grace" excludes that. The only reason spiritually dead creatures could now be alive is because of the grace of God. Paul personally experienced that it was by grace, and only by grace, that he was a Christian.

Gracious salvation is entirely of

God and in spite of us. We have no right to salvation. When God's mercy, love, and grace are the source of salvation, then in the ages to come the exceeding riches of God's grace are shown (v. 7). God is shown, not man. The first three verses of Ephesians 2 demonstrate clearly that we deserve nothing but eternal hell. The next four verses powerfully exalt God for giving liberally of the exceeding riches of His grace.

Gracious salvation is not God's response to something in us. The only reason spiritually dead sinners could ever be saved is the grace of God!



That one is a Christian gives one no grounds whatsoever for boasting. In truth, it forbids all human boasting. This is precisely the emphasis of this text. It is "not of yourselves." It is "not of works." If it were of ourselves or of our works, then we could and would boast. But it is grace, "lest any man should boast."

Grace excludes boasting! It makes human boasting impossible. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith" (Rom. 3:27). Salvation comes out of grace, which means that there is absolutely no grounds for being proud of oneself. It is grace alone. If salvation is by anything other than grace, or if anything is added to grace, then there is reason to boast.

Paul presents himself as an example. Prior to his being a Christian he did a great deal of boasting. He was very self-satisfied, self-assured, and self-confident! He writes that he had reason for confidence in his flesh. He was "circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Phil. 3: 4ff.)! But Paul came to see that when he became a Christian, then everything of which he was naturally proud became

suddenly insignificant. No, worse! He now realizes that those things he would naturally be proud of, he now considers to be worse than insignificant and irrelevant. Now he considers them all to be dung and loss, vile and foul.

All humans are inclined to boast in their works. The root of man's fall into sin was pride. Man wanted to determine for himself what was right and what was wrong. He did not want God to determine it. Ever since then the nature of all humans is that they want to boast in what they have done or in what they can do. Jesus spoke a parable "unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous" (Luke 18:9). Man always likes to think that he can earn his way into heaven by doing "many wonderful works," even works supposedly done in Jesus' name. But the only response Jesus gives to such thinking is: "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:23).

By nature we always tend to think of ourselves in light of what we have done (either good or bad). Human nature makes us compare ourselves to other humans (never to God). We quickly think about our accomplishments, religious or otherwise: sports, business, family, cooking or cleaning, etc. On the basis of our accomplishments we build our self-esteem.

However, the gospel of Jesus Christ denounces any reliance on works, pride in works, boasting about works. "And if by grace, then is it no more works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Rom. 11:6). The gospel of salvation by grace condemns every human. It strips us naked and shows us that we are filthy and vile, that there is none righteous, no not one. To introduce works in any sense is what Paul said was a going back to the law (cf. his epistle to the Galatians). If we try to justify ourselves by our works, then we are to be con-



demned, because the best works of man are not good enough to earn any merit in the sight of God.

If in our consciousness of who and what we are we think of our goodness or rely on anything we have done, then we deny grace. We must see ourselves as having nothing of merit before God and men. The correct perspective of good works is that God makes us Christians so we may do good works (confer the next verse). Salvation is by grace alone and it leads to good works; good works never lead to salvation.



We are saved by grace "through faith."

Faith is the God-given instrument through which salvation comes to each of God's elect. First, faith is the bond of living fellowship which connects the Captain of our salvation to each of the elect. Then faith becomes an activity according to which the elect believer experiences his relationship to the Savior. As such it is knowing Christ and trusting in Him for salvation. So salvation in Jesus Christ from the greatest evil unto the highest good is by grace alone through the instrumentality of faith.

The emphasis of our text is that salvation by grace through faith is the gift of God. In every respect it is a gift, given by God to those given by Him to the Son; never is it a gift of man to God. Salvation by grace through faith is a gift of God.

To say that salvation is through

faith is to say that it is by grace. "It is of faith, that it might be by grace" (Rom. 4:16).

This is emphasized because human nature always wants to boast of what it has done or can do. So quickly we take the talents God has given to us and glory in them as if they originated in us. We even tend to boast of our faith. Many want to turn their faith into a kind of work. They say that by believing on Jesus Christ a man saves himself. They will still say that salvation is by grace, but they make faith to be man's contribution to that salvation. Then salvation will be God's work, but a work of God which ultimately depends on man's believing to be realized. Others even make faith a condition unto salvation in the covenant. The covenant is established, they say, with every child of believers (elect or reprobate), and the realization of salvation depends on whether the child believes and accepts. This concept of faith makes the covenant a conditional covenant.

In our text the apostle makes it clear that salvation is entirely the result of the grace of God: "and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Many are the discussions whether the antecedent to "that" is "faith" or "salvation by grace through faith." Let it be understood beyond a shadow of any doubt that salvation by grace means that it is all of grace. If it is my believing which saves me, then I have saved myself. The inspired apostle says that it is not of him-

self. It is "not of yourselves" in any sense. We must never speak of our faith in any way of being of ourselves. Instead we must see faith to be a gift of God (Phil. 1:29). It is God who produces both the will to believe and the act of believing in every believer (Canons of Dordt, III/IV,14).

Faith is not the cause of salvation, grace is. Faith does not save us, Christ does.

That anyone is a child of God is entirely the result of God's work of grace. It cannot be anything else but God's work, in light of what we are by nature, according to the first three verses of this chapter. And in light of what God does to save, according to verses 4 - 7, it has to be only the gift of God.




Grace. Saved by grace. Saved by grace through faith.

It is not of us. It is not because of our works. We cannot and may not boast.

Then what? While the text denies us the right to boast in ourselves, it clearly implies that we may and can and must boast in God. And in God alone.

All the glory for salvation belongs to God. God alone is to be glorified for salvation, for grace, and for faith. Salvation by grace — a beautiful conception of God.

Therefore, "blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." 

## Editorially Speaking ...

**V**olume 79 of the *Standard Bearer*, which begins with this issue of the magazine, is planned to be very much like the preceding volume. The only change of rubrics or writers is that Rev. Garrett Eriks will join Rev. Richard Smit and Rev. Daniel Kleyn in writing the column, "In His Fear." We

welcome Rev. Eriks as a regular contributor.


The staff reappointed all the functionaries of the *Standard Bearer*.

The committee on special issues informed the annual meeting that it has planned a Reformation Day issue for October 15 around

the theme of "The Reformation and a Holy Life."

Response from our readers is always welcome, and usually published.

May God continue to bless our witness to the Reformed faith by means of the *Standard Bearer*.

— DJE 



## “He Shines in All That’s Fair” (and Curses All That’s Foul) (9)

**T**he preceding editorial contended that the explanation of the continuing existence of creation after the fall is the providence of God. Providence also accounts for the splendid natural gifts of totally depraved men and women. Fallen men and women remain human, and to their humanity belong some remains of the excellent gifts with which God endowed man at creation.

Those who attribute the existence of the world and the natural abilities and accomplishments of the fallen race to a common grace of God confuse grace and providence.

Providence, which is an aspect of God’s great work of creation (providence is His power of maintaining and governing the world He made), is also the basis of the Christian’s full, free, but antithetical, life in earthly society. Not a common grace of God, but the providence of God is the biblical, Reformed answer, in part, to the question of “the Christian and culture.”

This question of “the Christian and culture” is the great concern of Dr. Richard Mouw in his book, *He Shines in All That’s Fair: Culture and Common Grace* (Eerdmans, 2001). “On what basis,” Mouw asks, “do we posit a commonality between those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ and those who have not done so?” He continues: “This question has particular importance as we try to articulate a biblical perspective for Christian

involvement in public life in our contemporary context” (p. 6).

### Life in the World

The basis of the Christian’s earthly life in the world is God’s upholding of the world that He made. The reason why the believer may breathe, eat, drink, move, work, and enjoy the tranquil twilight of the fall season is that God created this world, created it good, and now preserves it in its created goodness, though under His curse.

Common grace has nothing to do with this fundamental aspect of the Christian life in the world.

The ground in I Timothy 4:1ff. of the apostle’s vehement condemnation of an asceticism that despises material reality and preaches world-flight as the Christian life is the goodness of this material world as created by God. The error of the heretics is that they are contemptuous, and fearful, of a world “which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth” (v. 3). They deny creation and providence. Abraham Kuyper and the Christian Reformed Church would have accused them of denying common grace.

Paul taught that the Christian may live a full earthly life in this world and may use and enjoy all the creatures, in a manner appropriate to each, because “every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving” (I Tim. 4:4).

### Life in the Ordinances

The basis of the Christian’s active involvement in the various ordinances, or spheres, of earthly life is also creation and providence. In creating the world for man in the beginning, God Himself structured human life in the world by certain “human ordinances” (I Pet. 2:13). These include the ordinance, or institution, of marriage and the family, the ordinance of labor, and the ordinance of civil government. The fall did not efface these institutions. The providential power of God maintains them. As structures of creation, these institutions are good. The saints live their earthly life in these ordinances, and are thus busy with “culture,” because creation and providence so structure human life. Not common grace, but the providence that upholds creation explains why Christians are actively children in a family; husband or wife in marriage; parents in their own home; farmer, businessman, or laborer; and citizen of a nation.

Implied is the legitimacy, on the basis of creation and providence, of a Christian’s energetic engagement with all aspects of God’s rich creation. He may write books. She may paint pictures. He may explore the Amazon. She may discover drugs that alleviate the pain of arthritis. He may be president of a Christian college or a seminary. Communication, beauty, discovery, medicine, education—all are aspects of creation. In the course of this work, or recreation,

the Christian may lawfully avail himself of the gifts, knowledge, discoveries, and inventions that divine providence has bestowed on, and produced through, the ungodly. All these things are simply part of the world that God gives to His children.

As regards the Christian's motivation for life in the human ordinances, it is, on the one hand, obedience to God's calling. God commands the believer to live the Christian life *in the ordinances*, not outside them in asceticism and world-flight. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake" (I Pet. 2:13). Renunciation of creation and flight from ordinary human life in it are not superior holiness, but the "doctrines of devils" (I Tim. 4:1). The reason is that God wants His holy people to show His glory in everyday, earthly life against the dark background of the ungodliness of the wicked in these same ordinances. Therefore, on the other hand, the motivation of the Christian life in the human ordinances is the desire to glorify God. But common grace has nothing to do with this aspect of the Christian's life in the world.

### Life with Unbelievers

Creation and providence are also the basis for the believer's association and cooperation with unbelievers in everyday, earthly life in society. In the world, living in the ordinances of labor and civil government, the Christian must, and *may*, associate and cooperate with unbelievers in the neighborhood, at work, and in national life.

Scripture expressly approves, and requires, this association and cooperation. Forbidding the members of the Corinthian church to "company" with fornicators and other public sinners in the congregation, the apostle states that he is not forbidding them to "company" with fornicators and other public sinners "of this world," that is, the openly wicked outside the church.

If he were to forbid the members of the church to associate with the wicked outside the church, the people of God would have to "go out of the world." But this is both impossible and contrary to the will of God for His people (I Cor. 5:9-13).

So far did the apostle go in permitting association with the ungodly in everyday, earthly life that he allowed for a Christian's accompanying an unbeliever to a feast at which food was served that had been sacrificed to idols (I Cor. 10:27). The meal was social, not religious. The Christian accompanied the unbeliever to the feast in the course of doing business, much as a salesman today would play golf with an unbelieving client (rebuking him for any swearing) and take him out for dinner afterwards (where the Christian would pray before the meal).

Association and working together in everyday, earthly life are lawful on the basis of a shared creation, upheld and governed by a common providence. This is the "commonality" of Christian and non-Christian in earthly life that Dr. Mouw is after. Common grace has nothing to do with this "commonality." Again and again, Herman Hoeksema replied to his critics, "Believers and unbelievers have everything in common except grace."

### Association, not Friendship

But association is not friendship. Friendship with the unbeliever is both impossible and forbidden. Friendship demands oneness in Jesus Christ. My friend and I must have God as our God together. Whoever is an enemy of God is my enemy. This is the answer to Dr. Mouw's question about the rightness of George Whitefield's friendship with Benjamin Franklin. If Whitefield cultivated friendship with the godless Franklin, Whitefield sinned. God had no pleasure in the bonhomie of those two notables. The evange-

list was prone to this sin. He also strove for friendship with John Wesley, one of the bitterest enemies of the gospel of grace who ever blasphemed predestination.

Where lawful association becomes illicit friendship can hardly be defined with rules. Every Christian must see to it that his contact with the wicked in earthly life does not develop into forbidden and ruinous fellowship. But Scripture is clear and insistent: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" (II Cor. 6:14-18)

### No Cooperative Kingdom-Building

Nor is cooperation of believer and unbeliever in everyday, earthly life a working together to build the kingdom of God in history. Defenders of common grace always leave the impression that the cooperation of believer and unbeliever they desire and that is supposed to be effected by common grace aims at the creation of the kingdom of Christ. In his *Lectures on Calvinism*, Kuyper spoke of the "Christianizing" of the world.

Believers cooperate with fellow believers, and *only* fellow believers, to extend the kingdom of Christ—in the true church, in good Christian schools, in various forms of witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. This work is powered by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. It is exactly the dreadful result of the fall into sin that the unregenerated can neither see, nor desire, nor work for Christ's kingdom.

### Living by the Grace of Christ

The Christian can and may live earthly life, freely and fully, in necessary association with non-Christians, on the basis of creation and providence. But the power by which he lives earthly life is the



(saving) grace of God in Jesus Christ. If there is anything about the Christian life that is clear in Scripture, it is that the Christian life is lived in the power of the Spirit of Christ. *All* of the Christian life, the child of God lives by the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The Christian worships God on the Lord's Day by the grace of the Spirit of Christ. But he also works at his job on Monday by this same grace (Eph. 4-6; I Pet. 2:11-5:14).

We opponents of common grace have this against the theory, that it leaves the distinct impression, if it does not expressly teach, that Christians are to live their earthly life in society—their “cultural” life—by the power of common grace. Special grace is for worship on Sunday, as for prayer and Bible study, throughout the week. Common grace is for the rest of life—for life in the world. This is the inherent thrust of the theory of common grace, for common grace is proposed as the source of the union of Christian and non-Christian. The Christian then must be living by the power of this common grace.

Abraham Kuyper seems to have taught this fatal dualism. He wrote, “You find them both [common grace and particular grace] in one and the same human heart.” Corresponding to Christ's creation of all things as the eternal Son of God and His redemption of the elect as the Word become flesh, two graces are enjoyed by a Christian: “And thus now it is one and the same man, who enjoys God's com-

mon grace in the life of society and God's particular grace in the holy sphere” (Abraham Kuyper, *De Gemeene Gratie*, vol. 2, Kok, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 634, 638; my translation of the Dutch).

To teach that the Christian's life in the world is to be lived by any other power than the mighty grace of God in Jesus Christ that regenerated him and now sanctifies him is attempted murder of the Christian life. Nothing less.

### Living the Antithesis

Since the Christian lives earthly life by the power of the grace of God in Jesus Christ, his life is in total spiritual opposition to the life of the non-Christian with whom he shares all things earthly and with whom he associates in the human ordinances. In the human ordinances, the Christian submits to the Lordship of Christ. The non-Christian is a rebel against the risen Christ. The Christian seeks the glory of God everywhere. The non-Christian seeks his own glory, or the glory of mankind. This is the antithesis: the spiritual separation and opposition between the holy church and the unholy world of wicked men, between the believer and the “infidel.”

Basing the Christian's life in the world on creation and providence does full justice to the antithesis. Basing the Christian's life on a common grace of God destroys the antithesis, for now Christian and non-Christian share the favor and blessing of God, the power to do the good, and the glorious

task of building God's kingdom on earth. Richard Mouw does not agree with this judgment. But he is sensitive to the danger, and uneasy with the effects of the assimilation of culture by evangelicals and Calvinists.

Dutch-American Calvinists and other evangelicals who saw themselves as living on the margins of the dominant culture a few generations ago are no longer in a position to debate *whether* to assimilate more. That dominant culture has infiltrated our lives through new technologies and social mobility to such an extent that our conversations about common grace are now perhaps better framed this way: to what degree has the commonness that we *have* embraced in the culture that we share with our non-Christian neighbors compromised our commitment to the gospel? (p. 11)

If the believer lives antithetically, if he “will live godly” in the world, fellowship with the wicked and conformity to the depraved culture will not be the problem. The problem will be persecution. The ungodly will hate the believer. They will chase him out of labor, out of society, and finally out of earthly life itself.

But the believer does not himself run out of the world. Nor do the Protestant Reformed Churches think or teach so.

Not because of common grace.

But because “the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof” (I Cor. 10:26).

— DJE 

## Letters

### ■ No Persecution in Belgium

**I**n the May 1, 2002 issue of the *Standard Bearer*, I found the article of Rev. Kenneth Koole about an incident in Belgium interesting. I have written to friends in the Netherlands and Belgium about this and so I collected more infor-

mation, more facts, about this overdone case. Allow me to give some footnotes: 1) The Assemblies of God are not a Church, even when they give themselves that name. It is a *sect*, a *cult*, related to the Pentecostal Movement. 2) A cult is a ‘*fenomenology*’ which had its origin in heathen Babel. In the history of

the Netherlands, Pentecostal *cults* in the seventeenth century were forbidden by the Reformed Synod, because of unchecked dissoluteness. 3) *Fear* for sects and cults has come up this century about the dramas that have happened, like mass suicide, mass pseudo-healings, et cetera. *Therefore* they

are no longer welcome in several countries in Europe. 4) Five women (volunteers) preaching the ideas of the Assemblies of God were deported by the police of Belgium because they had *not* taken the trouble to ask for the usual permits for preaching. They went back to the USA. There are yet 70 others working in Belgium. 5) Persecution of Christians in Belgium does *not* exist. Also the royal family, which I know well since May 1945, would never allow that to happen. The conclusions of Rev. Miles are farfetched. They do not serve God's glory, in my humble opinion. Understand the time in which we live. Don't defend those who try to undermine true, biblical Christianity. Please, no sects and cults at our doorstep.

J.P. deKlerk  
Ashhurst, New Zealand

## ■ Opening to God's Voice

I have finished reading Rev. VanOverloop's meditation in the August 2002 *Standard Bearer*. It is an excellent meditation, except for one statement: "The humble spirit hears God's voice in Christ, and opens to Him."

It appears to this reader that now the sinner's will becomes the determining factor as to whether he is in Christ or not.

Our Canons, however, teach something entirely different. They teach that according to the decree of election "He graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe" (I/6).

Rev. VanOverloop quotes Revelation 3:20: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

This is a quote that, to be sure, is out of context, for this text refers to the call of Christ for elect, regenerated children of God to come out of the apostate, false church. Is not a more appropriate

text Philippians 2:13, which teaches us that both our will and our doing is not our work but God's work?

With respect for his office, I nevertheless ask Rev. VanOverloop what is the essential difference between his statement and this hated, infamous statement of long ago: "Our act of conversion is a prerequisite to entering the kingdom of God"?

Mark Brooks  
Sauk Village, IL

## Response:

I appreciate your writing to express your concerns. However, I am troubled that you would take one of the statements I wrote and equate it with one of Hubert DeWolf's heretical statements of the 1953 controversy in which he defended conditional theology. I believe that this application is in error. Allow me to explain.

I believe that you lifted a statement out of its context by applying it to justification, when the context clearly indicates that I was speaking about sanctification. You will notice that, under the subhead "With Whom He Dwells," I spoke to justification. I emphasized that the judicial ground for God's dwelling with man is the work of Christ. "Not only is Jesus the perfect fulfillment of God dwelling with man, but He is also the reason *why it is possible*. God cannot dwell with sinners, but He can dwell with sinners who have been forgiven and *made righteous*. Jesus, in His substitutionary life, death, and resurrection *realized forgiveness of and righteousness for those given to Him*."

Further, I wrote about the one with whom God dwells. This one is not unconscious of God dwelling with him, but is aware of his justification by being humble. I wrote that God dwells with one "who is the conscious recipient of the *undeserved favor and love of God...*," and that "His children, when standing before Him, know

of no other posture than that of humility. They live in the awareness that they deserve only wrath and eternal judgment. And they know that their having been *chosen to belong to God's family* and to the Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, was *not because they made themselves worthy of being chosen*. It was *divine grace*. It was and is *only grace, always grace*. The continued presence of their sinfulness and their continued sinning is a constant reminder of the *tremendous power and undeservedness of grace*. They are humbled to receive grace."

Hardly is that conditional theology.

You suggest, however, that though I may have *begun* well, I fell in the end into heresy when I stated that "The humble spirit hears God's voice in Christ, and opens to Him." I would point out that when Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me," it is very clear from the context that He did not mean that the sheep's following Him becomes the determining factor as to whether he is in Christ or not. With respect to the sanctified walk of the child of God, the idea of "follow" (John 10:27; Rev. 14:4), "seek" (Matt. 6:33; 7:7) and "open" have the same connotation. Or does the fact that Arminians delight to urge people to "open their hearts to Jesus" mean that a Reformed Christian may not even use the *term*? I believe that we ought to be bold to use the language of Scripture and not shy away from it because heretics misuse it. The Bible uses the word "open" to describe not only what God does but also the activity of a regenerated, justified, and sanctified believer. Confer Psalm 81:10; 119:18, 113; Song of Solomon 5:5, 6.

Further, I wrote: "From the view point of objective, dogmatic truth, God dwells only with the elect." That is, only with those who are *justified*. Then there's this: "However, the word of God in our text speaks from the real life, ex-



periential perspective of God's elect people as they live and walk on the earth. God dwells with him 'that is of a contrite and humble spirit.'" That is, with those who are *sanctified* in Christ Jesus. And under the subhead "Unto What Purpose He Dwells," I wrote this: "God's first work of grace in His children is that He humbles them. He shows us His great majesty and our sin. Then reviving is needed. As a withered flower is revived by water, so God's very presence is sufficient to revive or renew the spirit of the brokenhearted. The heart oppressed by the knowledge that it has sinned against God has no greater blessing than that the

very God it has sinned against comes consciously near to be with it. God's dwelling with us revives us. This shows that when God humbles us He does not squash or destroy us, but *gives us life*. Real life for man is *to stretch out toward God*, just as a flower does toward the sun."

It was in this context that I wrote "The humble spirit hears God's voice in Christ and *opens* to Him." This is Reformed language. It agrees with Herman Hoeksema's definition of sanctification as "that act of God in us whereby we are delivered from the power and the corruption of sin, so that with heart and soul, with mind and will and

all our powers, we ... *seek Him*...." We "stretch out" toward God. We "follow" Him. We "open" to Him.

That is the power of sanctification. The will, by the grace of God (as is abundantly clear from the context in my article), becomes active. The regenerated, justified child of God in sanctification *seeks Him, opens to Him*. The whole of the meditation makes clear that the child of God seeks Him *because He is in Christ* and that it is most emphatically NOT true that he is in Christ because he seeks Him. I believe that the truth of Philippians 2:13 and also 12 permeates the meditation I authored.

(Rev.) Ron VanOverloop 

A Word Fitly Spoken

Rev. Dale Kuiper

## Conscience

**T**he word conscience is found twenty-nine times in holy Scripture, all occurrences in the New Testament, once in the plural, and mostly by the apostle Paul. Even as the English word is a compound, so is the Greek; it's made up of two smaller words, one meaning jointly, together, with others, or in fellowship, and the other meaning to know, to understand, to perceive. Hence the word has the meaning of joint knowledge, to know together. The question is: Who are they that are involved in this knowing of something together? And: What is the content of this joint knowledge?

Although some lexicons reduce the conscience to knowing something with one's self (the two involved then are the mind and the

heart), we find this explanation unsatisfactory when we study the biblical usage. The conscience of a man is the shared knowledge that he has with *God*. God has revealed Himself to all men, in all places and in all ages. There is the revelation of God in creation, and there is the fuller revelation of God in the Scriptures. God has not left Himself without witness in regard to anyone. And the witness of God is especially a moral witness; it's the witness to the Truth. God reveals Himself to man as to His will, and as to what is right and wrong, good or evil. And that testimony is always sufficiently clear, so that man is left without excuse. So we would define the conscience as the speech of God in every rational creature telling him clearly what is right and what is wrong in the eyes of God.

One of the grounds for God's condemnation of many who never heard a gospel sermon is this matter of the conscience. Romans 1:18-23 makes this absolutely clear.

"...that which may be known of God is manifest in them: for God hath shewed it unto them" (v. 19). This is spelled out even more clearly in the following chapter, where Paul says in 2:14, 15 that the Gentiles, who did not have the law in any formal sense, did by nature the things contained in the law. This shows the work of the law written in their hearts, not savingly and believingly, but as a matter of conscience. "Their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing them" (2:15). Unbelieving, unregenerate, even reprobate men, have a conscience. At least they start out in life with an accurate, valuable, reliable witness from God within them.

With some, however, that conscience is so often violated, the testimony of the conscience so often gone against, the speech of God regarding right and wrong so long contradicted, that the conscience becomes useless, unreliable, and

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quieted. Confession of sin in regard to heresy or corrupt living would break that vicious circle of sin, but if no repentance is made, after a time the conscience is "seared with a hot iron" (I Tim. 4:2). By definition, the conscience is something that is tender and sensitive, especially in the early years of a person's life. If the conscience comes into contact with a white-hot branding iron, then it is going to become seared, insensitive, and useless. Literally, the Greek word is cauterize. And God holds the branding iron and applies it.

At what point does God sear the consciences of the very wicked? God is always fair; He always gives time for repentance. But if a person steadfastly refuses to repent of his sin, steadfastly continues to call sin good and right, and that which is upright and pure worthless and vain, then God knows how to give them over to that kind of thinking and that kind of living. God says finally, with amazing patience, "You insist that my Law is all wrong for man, and you insist that what I condemn, even in your consciences, is lovely and worthwhile?

Is that the way it is? All right! I give you up to that. I give you over to that kind of life forever and ever." That is described in Romans 1:24, 26, 28, in connection with the vile sin of homosexuality! No hope for such a person, once he is seared by God's hot iron.

But let's consider the conscience of believing adults and their children. What a precious gift God has given us! For conscience sake we gladly perform our callings. We are subject to the higher powers that God has ordained, not simply because we fear their wrath, but also for conscience sake (Rom. 13:5). We suffer wrongfully in this life, especially as Christian workers, enduring much grief, for conscience towards God, believing that God wills that we follow the example of Jesus Christ (I Pet. 2:19-23). We know that there are weaker brethren in the church, that they have a conscience also, and therefore we gladly abstain from certain things lest we would lead them into what their conscience forbids them (I Cor. 10:28, 29). So our sanctified consciences lead us in a life of gratitude and good works.

But there is more. When Paul writes in Romans 8:16 that the Holy Spirit beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God, this is really the witness of the Spirit with the conscience! Paul explained to the Sanhedrin that he lived "in all good conscience before God" (Acts 23:1); he was careful to exercise himself in such a way that he would always have a conscience void of offence toward God and man (Acts 24:16); he understood that one of the goals of the commandments is having a good conscience (I Tim. 1:5). And this is possible only because our hearts have been sprinkled from an evil conscience (Heb. 10:22), because Christ's sacrifice made our consciences perfect (Heb. 9:9), and because washing in His blood gives us the answer of a good conscience towards God (I Pet. 3:21).

Let us continue to hold the mysteries of faith in a pure conscience (I Tim. 3:9), being willing to be spoken of as evil doers, and having a good conscience in regard to them which falsely accuse us (I Pet. 3:16). 

## All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

### ■ Concerning Hell

**T**he subject of hell has been gaining some attention in recent months—especially because there are increasing numbers of churches who deny its existence or ignore it altogether. *Newsweek* magazine, August 12, 2002, has a cover feature on "Visions of Heaven," showing that views of heaven serve to inspire as well as inflame Jews, Christians, and Muslims. There is a follow-up article on hell, written by Kenneth L.

Woodward. There are some interesting comments on common views of our day:

The most famous sermon in American history was a graphic evocation of the horrors of the damned in hell. As Jonathan Edwards expanded on his subject, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," so many moans and cries rose from his proper New England congregation that the learned theologian had to pause while his listeners recoiled in fear of their fate in the life to come. That was on July 16, 1741. Such a sermon could not be preached today—not even by

Billy Graham, who has eschewed the fire-and-brimstone sermons of his youth. If the modern pulpit is any index, hell has disappeared from the modern religious imagination, and so has Edwards's angry God.

Historians tell us that hell began to fade, at least among liberal Protestants, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the end of the millennium, it was a doctrine that most Christians cheerfully ignored. Today, few Roman Catholics line up on Saturday nights to confess their sins, even the "mortal" kind. For born-again Christians, hell functions mainly as a goad for the unconverted. Once

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saved, the twice born have only to worry, as Graham himself once put it—about how high a place they'll reach in heaven. On television, celebrity preachers discourage negativity. Robert Schuller says he hasn't preached on hell in 40 years. Asked which kind of God they believe in, most Christians prefer to think of him as a friend in high places. (Apparently no one reads the Book of Job anymore.) And hell, for those who think about it at all, is a place for other people....

...For most educated believers, such grim imaginings ("hot flames of hell sear the bodies of suicides and other terrible sinners, while their errant souls writhe in a foul pit of snakes") long ago lost their power to coerce. Images just as grotesque are available at the local multiplex. According to most contemporary theologians, hell is not an eternal torture chamber. Rather—and here the pope and Graham agree—hell means eternal separation from God.

My own hunch is that the prospect of hell never deterred anyone who had not first experienced genuine fear of the Lord. But that traditional religious experience is hard to come by when God is imagined as our Best Buddy. It may well be, as some contemporary theologians argue, that even the worst sinners will eventually be restored to the kingdom of heaven. But this attenuated view of hell tends to rob the evil that we do of its lethal gravitas. "If what we do now is to make no difference in the end," argued the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, "then all the seriousness of life is done away with."

Ultimately, we become what we love. Hell is not a hot place, but a community of those who remain outside the circle of Divine Embrace. All are called to enter heaven, but it is hubris to suppose that any one of us is worthy of a free ticket.

Amazing that a well-known writer and editorialist writes all of these things. There is obviously some discernment of the historical

teachings of the church as that is based on Scripture's testimony. Surely it is true that there is either a denial or at least ignoring of the subject of hell in the preaching in most churches today. It is true that the gospel must be preached: the proclamation of Christ crucified as set forth in Scripture. But one cannot then ignore what has been called the "antithesis." Hell is a reality; it is a definite place of punishment where the wicked must endure the wrath of God forever because of their sins. Though Scripture describes it in earthly terms, the reality of that place of suffering must be more terrible than anything which can be described by man today. Scripture presents heaven *and* hell. Scripture speaks of elect *and* reprobate. That such antithesis is denied or ignored points out the fact of the rapid apostasy of our day and age. God grant that we remain faithful to the Word—also concerning the place of hell.

### ■ A Teenager on Modesty

I was impressed by the reflections of a certain Leslie Cox, evidently a teenager, on the dress of young girls today (though the same might be said concerning young men). The article appeared in the *Dallas Morning News*, August 14, 2002 and was reprinted in *The Christian News*, August 26, 2002.

It is a hot Saturday afternoon, and I, along with some of my friends, am headed to a Christian concert. A local Christian radio station is celebrating 20 years of service to the community, and many popular Christian artists are scheduled to perform.

As I walk toward the stadium where the concert is being held, my attention is drawn to other teenage girls around me. What catches my eye is the way the girls are dressed. Their clothes leave little to the imagination.

They must have misunderstood what is happening here, I think.

Surely, they wouldn't come to a "Christian" concert dressed like that.

But I am wrong.

In fact, after finding my seat, I notice that almost every girl in the stadium is dressed in the same manner: scantily, with lots of skin showing. Suddenly, I feel out of place in my knee-length skirt and navel-hiding, button-down shirt.

Don't get me wrong, I am not trying to paint myself as super spiritual. But when I see girls dressed like Britney Spears at Christian events, I can't help but question their reasons for attending altogether. Are they there to praise God? Or are they there to see how many guys' heads they can turn?

I have discussed this subject with some of my friends, and while some agree with me, others say God only looks at the heart. How a person dresses doesn't matter to him. Wear whatever, wherever.

But how a person dresses does matter to God. In fact, the Bible gives specific guidelines as to how Christians should dress. According to I Timothy 2:9, we are to dress "modestly, with decency and propriety."

The word "decency" refers to purity. In other words, what a girl wears shouldn't provoke a guy to think about her in an ungodly fashion. She should dress in a way that is pure—not provocative. She should be seen by her peers as wholesome and clean—not flirtatious and cheap.

Admittedly, dressing virtuously isn't easy these days. Fashion designers push the moral envelope more and more every season. What once was considered racy—tight clothes, sheer clothes and underwear-looking clothes—now is viewed as the norm.

But just because fashion designers throw modesty to the wind where teen clothes are concerned, God doesn't. And as Christians, we shouldn't, either.

Personally, I respect myself too much to wear certain things, but I respect God's opinion most of all. So whether I am going to a Chris-

tian concert or to a baseball game, I ask myself the following question: If Christ returned today, would I want to meet him dressed like this?

It is a question that I believe all Christian teenage girls should ask themselves before leaving home.

Somehow, I could almost wish I could have written something like that first. But then—who would listen to an aged grandfather? Her words, I would think, carry more weight because they come from a teenager, a *concerned* teenager. I do wonder, though, if this Leslie Cox would feel herself comfortable and at home at some of our gatherings—especially young people's gatherings—and in our schools?

## ■ “Making monkeys out of evolutionists”

Cal Thomas, a well-known columnist, presented an article recently with the above title. It's cute—and appropriate. In his customary style, he makes some very pointed comments about the creation-evolution debate that has been taking place in various parts of our country. I quote from this article appearing in the *Grand Rapids Press*, September 2, 2002.

It's back-to-school time. That means school supplies, clothes, packing lunches and the annual battle over what can be taught.

The Cobb County, Ga., School Board voted unanimously Aug. 22 to consider a pluralistic approach to the origin of the human race, rather than the mandated theory of evolution. The board will review a proposal which says the district “believes that discussion of disputed views of academic subjects is a necessary element of providing a balanced education, including the study of the origin of the species.”

Immediately, pro-evolution forces jumped from their trees and started behaving as if someone had stolen their bananas. (*Say, Cal, that's cute!! GVB*) Apparently,

academic freedom is for other subjects.

What do evolutionists fear? If scientific evidence for creation is academically unsound and outrageously untrue, why not present the evidence and allow students to decide which view makes more sense? At the very least, presenting both sides would allow them to better understand the two views. Pro-evolution forces say (and they are saying it again in Cobb County) that no “reputable scientist” believes in the creation model. That is demonstrably untrue. No less a pro-evolution source than *Science Digest* noted in 1979 that, “scientists who utterly reject Evolution may be one of our fastest-growing controversial minorities.... Many of the scientists supporting this position hold impressive credentials in science.” (Larry Hatfield, “Educators Against Darwin.”)

In the last 30 years, there's been a wave of books by scientists who do not hold to a Christian-apologetic view on the origins of humanity but who have examined the underpinnings of evolutionary theory and found them to be increasingly suspect. Those who claim no “reputable scientist” holds to a creation model of the universe must want to strip credentials from such giants as Johann Kepler (1571-1630), the founder of physical astronomy. Kepler wrote, “Since we astronomers are priests of the highest God in regard to the book of nature, it befits us to be thoughtful, not of the glory of our minds, but rather, above all else, of the glory of God.”

Werner Von Braun (1912-1977), the father of space science, wrote: “...the vast mysteries of the universe should only confirm our belief in the certainty of its Creator. I find it as difficult to understand a scientist who does not acknowledge the presence of a superior rationality behind the existence of the universe as it is to comprehend a theologian who would deny the advances of science.”


Who would argue that these and many other scientists were ignorant about science because they believed in God? Contemporary evolutionists who do so are prac-

ticing intellectual slander....

There are only two models for the origin of humans: evolution and creation. If creation occurred, it did so just once and there will be no “second acts.” If evolution occurs, it does so too slowly to be observed. Both theories are accepted on faith by those who believe in them. Neither theory can be tested scientifically because neither model can be observed or repeated.

Why are believers in one model—evolution—seeking to impose their faith on those who hold that there is scientific evidence which supports the other model? It's because they fear they will lose their influence and academic power base after a free and open debate. They are like political dictators who oppose democracy, fearing it will rob them of power.

The parallel views should be taught in Cobb County, Ga., and everywhere else, and let the most persuasive evidence win.

Thomas makes some rather pointed and accurate remarks concerning the teaching of evolution and creation. There is, however, a real question whether the “most persuasive evidence” will win. Hebrews 11:3 points out that “through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God....” Faith is the fruit of regeneration and is seen then in the converted. Such a one does not need the “persuasive evidence” outside of Scripture. The unbeliever will not be convinced of creation no matter the “persuasive evidence” because he lacks that spiritual fruit: faith—true faith. The most that could happen is that increasingly many recognize that a “Higher Power” must have made all things. And that is precisely what Scripture states in Romans 1:20, “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.” 



**Protestant Reformed Seminary**

4949 Ivanrest Avenue  
Grandville, Michigan 49418

**W**ith gratitude to God, the seminary began the new year of instruction on August 26, 2002 with orientation, chapel, and the traditional disbursing of assignments. On Friday evening of the first week, students, faculty, and staff with their families gathered for a picnic and enjoyed good fun and fellowship. The annual seminary convocation, held in Grandville PRC on September 4, set the appropriate tone for the work of the seminary. In his convocation speech, Professor Engelsma demonstrated the fundamentally important task of maintaining, defending, and developing the unconditional covenant of grace, particularly over against current attacks on that truth.

In some ways, life in the seminary has returned to a more normal state. The partial sabbaticals are finished and the three full-time professors are back to teaching the regular schedule. In addition, Professor Hanko is helping out by teaching the pre-seminary Greek grammar course.

Seven men are enrolled as full-time students. As has been previously reported, the two students in their final year, Paul Goh and Bill Langerak, have no classes in seminary this fall because they are both in their scheduled internships in Bethel PRC and Southeast PRC, respectively. An unintended benefit of the internship for Paul and his wife, Suet Yin, is that they are getting acclimated to the big city again — even living in a high-rise apartment — in preparation for their return to Singapore. Bill and Karen and their family are heavily involved in the life of Southeast. Both men express much appreciation for their internships already, and are clearly enjoying their work.

The second-year students have been previously introduced as well. They are John Marcus, Dennis Lee, and Bruce Koole. There can be little doubt but that Bruce has more than seminary on his mind, since he and Rachel Pastoor are engaged to be married at the end of this semester. Both Bruce and Rachel are members of Faith PRC.

Dennis and Foong Ling and their two boys are members of the First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore, under the care of the Georgetown PRC. They remained in the States for the summer. Dennis spent much of his summer boning up on his Chinese in order to teach the language to his eldest son. Instruction in Chinese is required by the education laws of Singapore.

John and Amy and their four children are members of the Byron Center PRC. John had an interesting project this past summer programming a “robot” that could give assistance in medical research. John’s computer expertise has benefited many a fellow seminarian, not to mention a professor or two.


The two young men who begin their seminary training this year, Andy Lanning and Clay Spronk, can use an introduction. Andy comes to the seminary with a B.A. degree from Grand Valley State University. While in college, he met and married Stephanie Key. The Lannings are expecting their first child, D.V., this fall. They are members of the Hudsonville PRC.

Clay Spronk hails from NW Iowa. Growing up, he was a member of the First Christian Reformed Church of Sheldon. Clay joined the Hull PRC during the years he attended Dordt College. He subsequently married Allison Bylsma, and God has blessed them with two children. Although he graduated from Dordt College, Clay needed to return to college for two years to fulfill the pre-seminary requirements. The Spronks are members of the Faith PRC.

As was true in past years, a number of men are taking classes and transferring the credit to the Puritan Reformed Seminary. When all the students (full-time, part-time, and pre-seminary) and the auditors are added up, the number of those sitting in on the instruction every week exceeds twenty.

We thank God for the fact that He gives us the aspirants to the ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches. Seven full-time seminary students is not insignificant for a denomination the size of the PRC. At the same time, it should be noted that two of these students are headed back to their churches in Singapore upon graduation, which means that the urgent need for ministers in the Protestant Reformed Churches will continue for some time.

We covet the prayers of God’s people on behalf of the seminary. These days with shocking apostasy, astounding ecumenical movements, and new strains of heresy are (as Professor Engelsma pointed out at convocation) both dangerous and exhilarating for the Protestant Reformed Churches, and for the Seminary. May God keep us faithful to His truth, and faithful to the task.

In the service of Christ,  
*Professor R. Dykstra*, Rector 



# Philip Melanchthon and Synergism (2)

## Introduction

**M**elanchthon was Luther's co-reformer. They worked together during the violent years of the early Reformation. They respected each other, loved each other, labored together in harmony, and complemented each other. It is fair to say that each needed the other, and that the Reformation would not have been what it was without the one or the other.

Schaff defines their relationship and how they complemented each other in eloquent terms.

[Luther] differed from Melanchthon as the wild mountain torrent differs from the quiet stream of the meadow, or as the rushing tempest from the gentle breeze, or, to use a scriptural illustration, as the fiery Paul from the contemplative John. Luther was a man of war, Melanchthon a man of peace. Luther's writings smell of powder; his words are battles; he overwhelms his opponents with a roaring cannonade of argument, eloquence, passion, and abuse. Melanchthon excels in moderation and amiability, and often exercised a happy restraint upon the unmeasured violence of his colleague....

Luther was a creative genius, and pioneer of new paths; Melanchthon, a profound scholar of untiring industry. The one was emphatically the man for the people, abounding in strong and

clear sense, popular eloquence, natural wit, genial humor, intrepid courage, and straightforward honesty. The other was a quiet, considerate, systematic thinker; a man of order, method, and taste, and gained the literary circles for the cause of the Reformation.

Luther himself said of their relationship:

I am rough, boisterous, stormy, and altogether warlike. I am born to fight against innumerable monsters and devils. I must remove stumps and stones, cut away thistles and thorns, and clear the wild forests; but Master Philip comes along softly and gently sowing and watering with joy, according to the gifts which God has abundantly bestowed upon him.

Calvin himself, fully aware of Melanchthon's weaknesses, nevertheless wrote a glowing eulogy at the time Melanchthon died.

Melanchthon died on April 19, 1560 in Wittenburg and was buried alongside of Luther in the church where they both had worshiped. His last words, while a firm testimony of his faith, were also a summary of the burdens of his life in the struggles of the Reformation: "Thou shalt be delivered from sins, and be freed from the acrimony and fury of the theologians. Thou shalt go to the light, see God, look upon His Son, learn those wonderful mysteries which thou hast not been able to understand in this life."

Calvin, upon hearing of Melanchthon's death, cried out:

O, Philip Melanchthon! For it is

upon thee whom I call, upon thee, who now livest with Christ in God, and art waiting for us until we shall attain that blessed rest. A hundred times, worn out with fatigue and overwhelmed with care, thou hast laid thy head upon my breast and said, Would God I might die here. And a thousand times since then I have earnestly desired that it had been granted us to be together. Certainly thou wouldst have been more valiant to face danger, and stronger to despise hatred, and bolder to disregard false accusations.

## Melanchthon's Agreements with Calvin

In the swirling vortex of the Reformation which engulfed both Luther and Melanchthon, the stresses and anxieties were many and great. One of Melanchthon's great griefs was the division within the Lutheran camp itself. There were those who, even shortly before Luther's death, but with great boldness after he was gone, became suspicious of their fellow Lutherans and charged them with being unfaithful to Luther's teachings.

Luther, caught up in the maelstrom of events, had no time to prepare a systematic theology in which his thoughts were laid out carefully and in all their relationships to each other. I pointed out in my articles on Agricola and the struggle with antinomianism within Lutheranism that some who taught Antinomian views appealed to Luther in support of their heresy. They had no real justification for this, for, if anything at all is true, it is that Luther was not an antinomian. But Luther hated salvation by the works of the law and



could, on occasion, rave against the law with fury. Taking these statements by themselves, one could conclude that Luther wanted nothing to do with the law. But it was not so, as one would understand if only he would read the whole of Luther.

But these "Purists," as they called themselves, claimed to be defending the true Luther, while their fellow members in Lutheran churches had abandoned at least this aspect of Luther's teachings. An identical thing happens repeatedly in the history of the church when great men are used by God to accomplish great deeds.

But a view which Melanchthon held contributed also to this division in Lutheranism. Already before Luther died, Melanchthon had expressed a sympathy for the Zwinglian view of the presence of Christ in the elements of the Lord's Supper. Luther, our readers will recall, had a view very similar to Rome's, that the real body and blood of Christ were present in, with, and under the bread and wine. Zwingli held to the idea that the presence of Christ was spiritual and that one did not chew Christ's flesh with his teeth. Melanchthon tended to agree with Zwingli over against Luther.

When Calvin developed his views and expressed Scripture's doctrine on this question more clearly than Zwingli, Melanchthon was persuaded that Calvin was right. He openly said so and wrote in support of Calvin's view.

This position of Melanchthon, along with the controversy over antinomianism, created deep divisions in the Lutheran camp. The hostility was great and the battle fierce. It was Melanchthon's greatest grief. Those who followed him were branded with his name, "Phillipists." To these struggles he referred when, on his deathbed, he longed for deliverance from "rabid" theologians.

In spite of Melanchthon's more correct view on the presence of

Christ in the sacrament, Lutherans did not follow him in this respect.

### **Melanchthon's Great Error**

Yet, as great a man as Melanchthon was, he erred in one crucially important respect. It was a serious error, but Lutheranism has, for the most part, followed him and not Luther. It cast a long and dark shadow over all Melanchthon's accomplishments.

Scholars and church historians have pondered why Melanchthon went in the direction he did. It is probably impossible to answer this question, and only God, who judges righteously, knows the heart. But we can perhaps best rely on the testimony of Calvin, who knew better than we and today's scholars what kind of a man Melanchthon was.

Calvin, in the remarks he made at the time of Melanchthon's death, suggests in so many words that if Melanchthon and Calvin had lived together, Melanchthon would have been "more valiant to face danger, and stronger to despise hatred, and bolder to disregard false accusations." While probably not true that living with Calvin would have put some steel in Melanchthon's spine (Melanchthon had Luther at his side, after all) Calvin means to say that Melanchthon's timid nature and love of peace made him weak and afraid in the storms of opposition that blew against the reformers. In this respect Calvin was right.

Melanchthon, great man that he was, did not have the spiritual fortitude to stand the barrage of hatred and criticism to which the reformers were subjected. He was, at every opportunity, willing and ready to compromise for the sake of peace. This spirit of compromise was not only present in his dealings with fellow Protestants, but also came to the surface in meetings with papal delegates. In fact, if it had not been for the haughty, uncompromising spirit of Rome, which rejected his compromises as inadequate (Rome wanted

all or nothing), Melanchthon would have sold the Reformation down the river.

As early as 1540 he was ready to accede to articles that were so ambiguous that the doctrine of justification by faith alone was as good as denied. It reminds one of so many evangelicals in our day who are willing to sell the great truth of justification by faith alone as they fall over each other in their mad rush to make peace with Rome.

In 1542 and 1543 he prepared a book for instruction which was so wishy-washy that it incurred the wrath even of Luther, who generally was almost overly patient with his colleague.

But in his negotiations with the Papists he was at his very compromising worst. In 1548 he all but conceded every major point of difference. "He was willing to tolerate both a popedom and a hierarchy, stripped, however, of divine rights, and deprived of all power in matters of faith. The relation of faith to works, and the doctrine of the sacraments, might, in his estimation, be veiled in a judicious obscurity of phrase" — which means that the doctrine of the sacraments could be so worded that anyone could make the wording mean whatever he wanted.

It was at the Augsburg Conference that Melanchthon set his dark mark on subsequent Lutheranism. Luther was not present, for fear of his life, but was nearby. It was all Luther could do, by messenger and letter, to hold Melanchthon back from scurrying into the arms of Rome.

Sad to say, the church has always been plagued with these great compromisers. They are almost more dangerous than outright heretics, for they sell the truth under the guise of toleration, love for brethren, and desire to be known as peacemakers. They are like a man who hears others unjustly accuse his wife of harlotry, and who, in negotiations with these slanderers, is willing to settle for the possibility that his wife committed

adultery. So theologians deal with the truth of God.

### Melanchthon's Heresy

It was, in my judgment, this spirit of compromise, even with Rome, which led Melanchthon to his synergism. The word "synergism" comes from two Greek words which mean "to work with." Melanchthon, on the great doctrines of sovereign grace, taught exactly that. Conversion, he said, is the cooperating work of the Holy Spirit, the Word, and the will of man. When these three work together in harmony, salvation is accomplished. Uncaring about Luther's bitter struggle with the free-willism of Erasmus, Melanchthon adopted Erasmus' heresy – to his perpetual shame.


But, of course, one who chooses this path must pay the price. There are other sacred doctrines of Scripture that must be abandoned. Predestination was, in Melanchthon's

thought, reduced to foresight, i.e., that God foresees who will believe and who will reject the gospel, and that He elects and reprobates on the basis of this foresight. Those who in our day are intent on speaking of justification by faith and works would have found Melanchthon congenial company. He insisted that the keeping of the law played a role in salvation.

These views, in turn, have something to say about God's purpose, which Melanchthon defined in the familiar terms of the well-meant gospel offer: God's desire is to save all men. One ponders in dismay why so many, under the name of Reformed, can defend ferociously such historical heresies.

And, in perfect keeping with Melanchthon's view of the gospel offer, he also taught that the suffering and death of Christ had universal implications and accomplished atonement for all men.

These views, later expounded more fully by Jacob Arminius, were embodied in the Lutheran confessions and explain why Lutheranism today has followed synergism in its soteriology.

It is difficult to explain Luther's abiding respect for his colleague's doctrinal aberrations. Partly, of course, Melanchthon taught these views only after Luther had died. But the seeds were being sown during Luther's own lifetime. Perhaps it was out of respect for a colleague who had stood by his side. Perhaps it was a failure of a man, worn with work and the cares of the Reformation, to discern the direction Melanchthon was going. But, whatever the reason, true Lutheranism disappeared under Melanchthon's guiding hand; and his apostasy ought to be a warning to all who similarly depart from the glorious truths of the Lutheran and Calvin Reformation in its doctrines of sovereign and particular grace. 

## Understanding the Times

Mr. Cal Kalsbeek

### Western Ideas (3) Marxism

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

I Chronicles 12:32

**D**eath is alive!  
"A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism." This well-known introductory sentence from *The Communist Manifesto*, written by

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels more than 150 years ago, certainly was prophetic. They were, however, a little short-sighted: Not only would the specter of communism haunt Europe, it would haunt the whole world. And the consequences would be deadly!

In total, during the first 88 years of this century (20<sup>th</sup>, CK), almost 170 million men, women, and children have been shot, beaten, tortured, knifed, burned, starved, frozen, crushed, or worked to death; buried alive, drowned, hung, bombed, or killed in any other of the myriad ways governments have inflicted death on unarmed, helpless citizens and foreigners. The dead could conceivably be

nearly 360 million people. It is as though our species has been devastated by a modern Black Plague. And indeed it has, but a plague of power, not germs.<sup>1</sup>

Although the estimated number of deaths varies depending on who is doing the counting, there can be no question that the ideas perpetrated by Marx and Engels had devastating results for millions of people; particularly those in Russia, China, Korea, Vietnam, and Cambodia.

One might wonder if Marx and Engels had a slaughter of these

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1. R. J. Rummel, "Death by Government," *The Schwarz Report*, April, 2001.



proportions in mind when they put their ideas on paper. In all fairness to Marx and Engels we would suggest that they may not have envisioned the magnitude of the slaughter. However, from what they wrote in their manifesto, there can be no question that they believed a slaughter was necessary. And the influence of their ideas as well as the slaughter continues to the present. Modern-day children of Issachar, as students of the times, should be aware of Marxism's continuing, significant influence on the world in general and the church in particular.

### The Ideas of Marx

We will let Marx speak for himself. The following quotes are from his manifesto, the numbering of which will assist us when we make reference to some of them later in the article.

1) The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.

2) Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie (middle class, CK) and Proletariat (working class, CK).

3) Not only are they (proletariat, CK) slaves of the bourgeois class, and of the bourgeois State, they are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine, by the over-looker, and, above all, by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself.

4) The immediate aim of the Communists is the same as that of the other proletarian parties: formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat.

5) ...the theory of the Communists may be summed up in a single sentence: Abolition of private property.

6) This person (bourgeois, CK) must, indeed, be swept out of the way, and made impossible.

7) Abolition of the family!

8) Do you charge us with wanting to stop the exploitation

of children by their parents? To this crime we plead guilty.

9) Bourgeois marriage is in reality a system of wives in common and thus, at the most, what the Communists might possibly be reproached with, is that they desire to introduce ... an openly legalized community of women.

10) The Communists are further reproached with desiring to abolish countries and nationality.

11) United action, of the leading civilised countries at least, is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat.

12) But Communism abolishes eternal truth, it abolishes all religion, and all morality....

13) We have seen above, that the first step in the revolution by the working class, is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy.

14) ...in the most advanced countries, the following will be pretty generally applicable. 1. Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes. 2. A heavy progressive or graduated income tax. 3. Abolition of all right of inheritance. 5. Centralisation of credit in the hands of the State.... 6. Centralisation of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State. 8. Equal liability of all to labour.<sup>2</sup>

### Marx's Ideas Continue to Thrive, Also in the West

Many would say that these ideas of Marx are dead. They would argue that the demise of communism in Russia marked the end of Marxism as an influential ideology in the world. Nothing could be farther from the truth! Although it is true that significant changes have taken place in Russia toward the end of the twentieth century, the ideas of Marx live on. In support of this, David Breese writes:

A second form of influence beside political control has been exercised by the ghost of Karl Marx. That is the control that comes about when ideas are extended into a belief structure that dominates the minds of men. The be-

lief structure of Marxism can surely be said to be a dominant feature over another third of the world. The portion of the earth we call the Third World is highly Marxist in nature. Western societies have not been exempt, either, for particularly on the academic level, multitudes have been in thrall to Marxism.<sup>3</sup>

Since our focus in this article is the West, we will in the following paragraphs demonstrate the influence of Marx in various areas of Western society. Keep in mind, however, that those referred to or quoted may not be card-carrying communists, or even those who would say they are Marxist sympathizers. Nevertheless the ideas they promote are often the same as those expressed in the quotes of Marx listed above. To demonstrate this clearly we will number the references as they match the thinking of the quotes from *The Communist Manifesto*.

Throughout her book, *It Takes a Village*, Hillary Rodham Clinton promotes Marxist thinking. Consider a few examples. On page 15 she writes, "I don't want her (Chelsea, CK) to grow up in an America sharply divided by income...(confer Marx #2)." On page 122 Mrs. Clinton says, "Keeping children healthy in body and mind is the family's and the village's (read "state," CK) first obligation (confer Marx #8)." And on page 297 she writes, "We desperately need, for the sake of our children, a national and global economy... (confer Marx 10 & 11)."

The United Nations is the most influential promoter of Marxist ideas, and U. S. membership in this organization has contributed to the acceptance of many of these ideas

2. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York, N.Y.: New York Labor News Co., 1964) 12-47.

3. David Breese, *7 Men Who Rule the World From the Grave* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1990) 58-59.

in American society. From May 8 through May 11, 2002, representatives from 187 nations met in New York for the United Nations Special Session on Children. The purpose of this event was to construct a ten-year plan designed to give UN institutions new powers to save the world's children from various threats. Following are a few quotes from one reviewer's evaluation of this particular session:

But beneath this veneer of compassion is a stealthy revolutionary, collectivist agenda, which includes: ...usurp(ing) parental authority and take(ing) over the upbringing and custody of children (confer Marx #7 & 8). ...promoting homosexuality and lesbianism under the guise of programs allegedly aimed at fighting the spread of AIDS (confer Marx #12).

The Convention is nothing less than a socialist manifesto for America. Not only would it provide politicians and judges unprecedented opportunity to reach into taxpayers' pockets for all "available resources," but the Convention would fundamentally alter the function of government—from a protector of rights to a provider of services (confer Marx #14).<sup>4</sup>

The quotes above address the influence of Marxist thinking in just a few areas on the United Nations. A more comprehensive study of the programs promoted by the UN leaves little doubt that a new world order under the UN will be controlled by Marxist ideology. Right down the line the ideas of Marx prevail and continue to be promoted (confer Marx #14).

That these same ideas are being advanced by those in high places in America might seem strange at first, but not incomprehensible. Consider that as the countries of the world become more and more interdependent, the need for cooperation becomes critical, otherwise chaos will prevail. As they see it, to avoid chaos an authoritarian power is necessary,

and a Marxist system certainly meets that requirement. Thus it is not surprising that Marxist land policies (confer Marx #5) are being promoted (particularly in the Western United States) and that public school curricula are permeated with Marxist thought.

For example, a few of the Marxist ideas that are advanced by the National Education Association include the disparagement of patriotism, the acceptance of global government, and the idea that other nations, governments, legal systems, cultures, and political and economic systems are equivalent to ours and entitled to equal respect (multiculturalism) — an idea, by the way, which is false both historically and morally. Is it any wonder then that a recent Zogby poll concluded that 75% of American College seniors say that their professors teach that there is no such thing as right and wrong?

The class warfare theme of Marxism is also very much a part of the U.S. Democratic Party platform: the rich are continually being pitted against the poor (confer Marx #1, 2, & 3). Class envy is encouraged to gain party support. Take note how recent corporate scandals have been used to advance this agenda. The Feminist Movement also is rooted in Marxist ideology. Consider for example their 1973 "Declaration of Feminism":

Marriage has existed for the benefit of men; and has been a legally sanctioned method of control over women.... We must work to destroy it.... The end of the institution of marriage is a necessary condition for the liberation of women. Therefore it is important for us to encourage women to leave their husbands and not live individually with men.... All of history must be rewritten in terms of oppression of women. We must go back to ancient female religions like witchcraft (confer Marx #2, 7, & 9).<sup>5</sup>

In addition, Marxist ideology is

promoted by the rock culture of our day. Rock star activities and song lyrics often advance the thinking of Marx. John Lennon of the "Beetles" once admitted concerning their song "Imagine" that it "is virtually a communist manifesto.... You see, 'Imagine' was exactly the same message, but sugar-coated. Now, 'Imagine' is a big hit almost everywhere — anti-religious, anti-nationalistic, anti-conventional, anti-capitalistic song, but because it is sugar-coated it is accepted." Re-read the list of quotes from Marx's manifesto and note how many of those same ideas are promoted by the rock culture in general and by the following lyrics of "Imagine" in particular:

Imagine there's no heaven/ It's easy if you try/ No hell below us/ Above us only sky/ Imagine all the people/ Living for today/ Imagine there's no countries/ Isn't hard to do/ Nothing to kill or die for/ No religion too/ Imagine all the people/ Living life in peace/ Imagine no possessions/ I wonder if you can/ No need for greed or hunger/ A brotherhood of man/ Imagine all the people/ Sharing all the world/ You may say I'm a dreamer/ But I'm not the only one/ I hope someday you'll join us/ And the world will live as one.

#### Issachar Take Notice

Clearly Marxism is not dead! And it would appear that the West, along with the rest of the world, is now being conditioned to bow under its yoke in preparation for the ushering in of a global utopia under the leadership of the United Nations. It is striking how this conditioning process which we observe today is so similar to the strategy promoted 75 years ago by Italian communist Antonio Gramsci.

4. William F. Jasper, "UN takes Aim at Children," *The New American*, June 3, 2002: 10-12.

5. Fr. Ted Colleton, "Family Is Key to Social Integration," *Interim*, May, 1998:1.



Rather than seize power first and impose cultural revolution from above, Gramsci argued, Marxists in the West must first change the culture; then power would fall into their laps like ripened fruit. But to change the culture would require a "long march through the institutions"—the arts, cinema, theater, schools, colleges, seminaries, newspapers, magazines, and the new electronic medium, radio. One by one, each had to be captured and converted and politicized into an agency of revolution. Then the people could be slowly educated to understand and even welcome the revolution.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, Marx's concern for the oppressed working class is being replaced, or at least extended, to include other supposedly oppressed groups: gays, women, and other minorities are the new oppressed proletariat on whose behalf warfare must be engaged. And the new bourgeoisie would certainly include intolerant


Issachar, which takes the Bible's teachings concerning the sin of homosexuality and the God-ordained place of women at face value.

In a world of united nations, where the ideology of Marxism prevails, it does not take much of a stretch of the imagination to believe that Marxist *methods* of addressing beliefs incompatible with it will also prevail. Consequently, history would suggest for Issachar something similar to that experienced by the old bourgeoisie. In the words of Andrei Vyshinsky, an ardent disciple of Vladimir Lenin:

Shoot these rabid dogs! ...Down with these abject animals! Let's put an end once and for all to these miserable hybrids of foxes and pigs, these stinking corpses! Let their horrible squeals finally come to an end! ...Let's push the bestial hatred they bear our leaders back down their own throats.<sup>7</sup>

That this should be experienced

by the church is not surprising, current post-millennial thinking to the contrary notwithstanding. In fact, the Lord Himself warns us in Matthew 24 verse 9: "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." Although the postmillennialist will say this has already been completely fulfilled in A.D. 70 under the Roman Empire, the times direct Issachar to see a coming hatred and tribulation by "all nations" exactly as expressed by the Lord.

Sons of Issachar, understand the times and live! 

6. Patrick J. Buchanan, *The Death of the West* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002) p. 77.

7. Stephane Courtois, Nicolas Werth, Jean-Louis Panne, Andrzej Paczkowski, Karel Bartosek, and Jean-Louis Marbolin, *The Black Book of Communism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999) 750.

Ministering to the Saints

Rev. Doug Kuiper

## The Election and Installation of Deacons (3) The Council's Supervision

**I**n our last article on the subject of the election and installation of deacons, we developed the biblical and confessional principle that the members of the congregation, holding the office of all believers, must be involved in this process.

In this article we explain in more detail the role of the council—the currently serving pastors, elders, and deacons of the congregation. We have noted that a basic principle of Scripture and the

Church Order is that the council must supervise the calling and election process. Acts 6:3, Acts 14:23, and Titus 1:5 give the biblical support for this, while Article 22 of the Church Order requires that officebearers "be chosen by the judgment of the consistory and the deacons," and that the council be the body which installs the new officebearers.



What does such supervision on the part of the council involve? In supervising the calling and election process, what specific actions does the council take?

As we answer this question, the reader should bear in mind that the Church Order allows for some difference in procedure from one consistory to another. Article 22 requires the consistory to choose officebearers "according to the regulations for that purpose established by the consistory." Such regulations might include the number of men to be nominated; the time of the year at which these men will be nominated and installed; a specific statement regarding the length of the term of officebearers; and a requirement that excludes from consideration for office those men who have not been members

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of a Protestant Reformed Church or of that specific congregation for a certain length of time.

What follows, therefore, is a general description of how our councils supervise the election and installation process. It is not meant to set forth laws which every council must always follow exactly.

First, a month or so before the nominations will be made, the president might remind the council members to give serious forethought to that important part of the process. In the weeks before the meeting at which nominations are made, the men of the council should study their church directories carefully with a view to finding suitable men, and they should study I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 carefully, to know what sort of men God requires the church to put in office. One could hope that no council member would ever come rushing into the meeting, open his church directory for the first time that month, and start suggesting names of confessing male members without having given thought to the seriousness of the matter of nominations.

Second, at the nomination meeting, the council forms a gross list of men who seem, at first sight, to be qualified and suitable for office. The president of the council asks each council member individually whether he has names to contribute to this list. Also, any names suggested by members of the congregation are put on the list. In some of our churches, as soon as a name is mentioned, it is automatically put on the list; in other churches, it is not put on unless another member of the council "seconds" the name. (This is similar to motions made in meetings; a person can make a motion to some effect, but the motion is not discussed and voted on if another person does not "second the motion." By requiring this "seconding," organizations save time discussing what might be pet issues or projects of only one member. Motions which are not supported fail for lack of support).

The men on this gross list "seem, at first sight, to be qualified and suitable for office," I said above. By that I mean that the whole council has not yet expressed a judgment regarding their qualifications (in light of God's Word) and ability to serve (in light of their individual circumstances). It might be that reasons would come out later that cause the council to think that a particular man is not qualified or suitable.

At the same time, it must be underscored that already at this point at least one or two members of the council have given serious thought to this man's qualifications and ability to serve. No obvious reason exists why he ought not or could not serve in office. Again, I stress that council members should know and understand God's qualifications for officebearers. No man's name ought to be suggested, if it is obvious that he is not qualified or able to serve, or if it is obvious that for some reason the congregation would not be well served by his being in office.

Third, the council members then have opportunity to discuss the qualifications and suitability of each man on the gross list. Men are removed from the list at this point only when a council member makes a motion to remove a name, when that motion is supported by a second council member, and when that motion passes by a majority voice vote.

As the qualifications of a man are discussed, the council members must be frank with each other, all the while remembering that they enter into a discussion regarding the character of a fellow saint. Certain aspects of his character ought to be discussed. The council members should face the question whether any past sins or history of the individual render him unqualified or unsuitable to serve. They should discuss whether any present sins (I mean *uncensurable* sins, now) or sinful tendencies make him unqualified or unsuit-

able for office. Personal gifts that the person might have, which recommend him particularly for office, may be pointed out. His family situation should also be evaluated, for this will often either recommend him for office or demonstrate that he is not fit for office. A man's love for the congregation and commitment to her well-being could be discussed.

In the process of this discussion, however, council members must guard against certain dangers. The president of the council, particularly, must be sure that he has control of the meeting, and be ready to respond to any member who might say something out of line.

One danger is that of making private sins public. Private sins of which the brother has repented must not be mentioned. If a council member knows of a private sin that a man has committed, from which he has not repented, and which would therefore render him unfit to serve in office, the officebearer should mention that fact without giving any details — but also be ready promptly to go to the brother in accordance with our Lord's command in Matthew 18:15ff. In fact, he should have done that even before the meeting.

Another danger is that of saying more than need be said about a member of the congregation. We know that every member of Christ's body has besetting sins and weaknesses. Some of these sins and weaknesses — those apparent to all or most — must be taken into account, while avoiding sin against the ninth commandment. Simply put, the truth about the nominees must be spoken in love. The truth about them includes both their sins *and* their fruits of thankfulness, their weaknesses *and* their strengths. Speaking the truth in love implies that the council face the question whether this man, with both his strengths and weaknesses, measures up to the qualifications of God's Word, and would well serve



his congregation in office. The love, in other words, is not only a love for the fellow saint, but for the congregation, and for God, whose the church is.

Still another danger is that of wrong motivations for desiring that a man serve, or not serve. We must avoid politics and self-seeking in nominating and electing officebearers. The question is: will God be glorified by selecting this man for office? We mentioned in our last article that the method of voting by secret ballot guards the council as a whole against such motivations. But every individual council member must be on his guard against them.

Fourth, after every man on the gross list has been discussed and evaluated in light of God's Word and objective circumstances of life, and the list has perhaps been narrowed down, the council votes by secret ballot. Any man who receives a majority of votes has been officially nominated to office. If more than enough men receive a majority of votes, a motion must be made, supported, and passed, to consider nominated those men who have received the highest number of votes. If none, or not enough men, receive a majority vote, the names of men who have not received any vote, or only a very few votes, are removed by motion, and the men of the council vote again. Male confessing members will recognize that this is exactly how things are done also at the congregational meeting.

Fifth, when the council has a sufficient number of men officially nominated, the clerk is instructed to send the nominees a letter informing them of this fact. Should the nominee desire to be removed from the nomination list, he should inform the clerk as soon as possible, and either appear before the council to give his reasons, or state them carefully in a letter. The personal appearance, if humanly possible, is preferable.

Sixth, after the nominations are

published to the congregation, the council judges any objections that might be brought against a nomination. The standard for judgment is once more twofold: whether the man is qualified, according to the Word of God, and whether he is suitable for office, in light of his particular circumstances.

Finally, the council, representing the congregation, and through the pastor particularly, installs the newly elected and approved officebearers into office.



Why is such authority and responsibility given to the council? Bearing in mind that the men elected to office will serve and represent the congregation, ought not the congregation have the *decisive* voice in this matter?

Giving rise to these questions is the Reformed principle of church government that each local congregation is a complete manifestation, in itself, of the body of Christ. And each member of the congregation, by virtue of the office of all believers, functions as prophet, priest, and king.

To answer those questions, we must bear in mind two other basic principles of Reformed, biblical church government.

The first principle is that of Christ's headship of His church. Christ, as Head of the church, rules and governs her as her King. Therefore, the church of Jesus Christ is not a democratic organization, governed by the people and for the people; but, even though the members have the anointing of Christ, it is Christ who rules His church.

The second principle is that Christ rules His church through men specially called to office. The Bible states this in Ephesians 4:11-12: "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers...." While the verse does not explicitly say that Christ gave the church elders and deacons, it is clear that He gives officebearers. Furthermore, history demonstrates that He

does so. In the Old Testament church, the nation of Israel and later of Judah, Christ ruled particularly through the kings; but He also functioned as Head of the church through the prophets and priests — all of whom He called to office. So in the New Testament church He rules and functions as Head through pastors, elders, and deacons.

Remembering these principles, we can give a threefold answer to the question why the decisive voice in the matter of electing and installing officebearers is given to the currently serving officebearers.

The first is that through them Christ functions in the church! The new officebearers are not merely men whom the *church* chose, but ultimately they are men whom God through *Christ* chose to office in His church. Therefore, seeing Christ functions through the officebearers, the decisive role in this aspect of church government is given to the council.

Second, the officebearers are also a means through which the office of all believers functions. The office of all believers *does* have an important voice in the election of officebearers. This voice is heard not only when the congregation approves the men nominated, suggests names of suitable men, and elects them; but this voice is heard also in the work of the council itself, for the office of all believers works *through* her officebearers in selecting new officebearers. Just as the congregation as a whole is called to do the work of discipline (Matt. 18:17, I Cor. 5:3-5), but carries out its calling through her elders; and just as the congregation as a whole is called to care for the poor, but does so through her deacons; so the congregation as a whole is called to select new officebearers, and does so through her council.

Third, for the council to give leadership and direction here promotes decency and good order in the church. How would it be possible for the congregation as a whole to do all the work of nominating men? All the work that the


council does in supervising this process, as described above, would have to be done at a congregational meeting, at which every voting member would have the right to speak. This would be very time-consuming and cumbersome.

With these principles in mind, and after making similar arguments, Peter Y. DeJong says, "As a result free and uncontrolled elections of council members, whether elders or deacons or ministers of the Word, have always been opposed in the Reformed churches as inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible and the spiritual welfare of the congregation. The sole exception is found at the time when

a new congregation is organized, since as yet there is then no consistory representing all the members of the group which can give direction."<sup>8</sup>

In the case of electing officebearers at the organization of a new congregation, two things are to be granted. First, the congregation has as yet no council to give direction. But second, to nominate and elect officebearers from the floor of a congregational meeting is cumbersome, would require a nominee immediately and publicly to give his reason for declining nomination, and would require a member of the congregation who

has an objection against a nominee to do so immediately and publicly.

To solve this dilemma, our PRC Synod of 1994 added a footnote to Article 38 of the Church Order, requiring the council that supervises the organization of the new congregation to make nominations from the male membership of those who signed the letter requesting organization. This method upholds the principle of Scripture that the council must supervise the calling and election process. 

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8. Peter Y. DeJong, *The Ministry of Mercy for Today*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1963), page 114.

## Report of Classis West

Rev. Daniel Kleyn

September 4, 2002  
at Edgerton, Minnesota

The September 2002 meeting of Classis West was held in Edgerton Protestant Reformed Church in Edgerton, Minnesota on Wednesday, September 4. Rev. Steven Key chaired the meeting.

Classis was preceded by an officebearers' conference held on Tuesday, September 3. The topic of the conference was "Justification by Faith Alone: Was Luther Mistaken, or Has Protestantism Despised Her Birthright?" Rev. Carl Haak gave the keynote address on "The Need for the Recovery of the Biblical Gospel." Sectionals followed on related topics, with papers being presented by Rev. R. Hanko, Rev. M. VanderWal, Rev. Douglas Kuiper, Elder A. Meurer,

Rev. A. Brummel, and Seminarian Paul Goh. In light of present-day departure from the truth of justification by faith alone, the conference was very timely, and all were reminded of the importance of maintaining this fundamental truth of the gospel. The conference was well attended, not only by all the delegates to Classis, but also by various members of our Doon, Edgerton, and Hull congregations.


The main item with which Classis dealt was a discipline matter which was treated in closed session. Regarding this matter, Classis concurred with the decision of one of our consistories to depose a minister of the Word and sacraments from office. The synodical deputies (delegates *ad examina*) from Classis East were present and concurred with Classis' decision. This

was an extremely serious and weighty matter for Classis to treat. Humbly we thank God for His guidance and for the evidence of His grace in our midst, also in the repentance of the one who had fallen.

In other matters, Classis decided to disband the special committee that had been appointed to assist Lynden PRC, and thanked the committee for its labors. Classis also approved reimbursing Lynden PRC \$2,650 for help with the moving expenses of Lynden's new pastor.

The expenses for Classis totaled \$5,669.63.

The Lord willing, the next meeting of Classis West will be held in Lynden PRC on Wednesday, March 5, 2003.

Rev. Daniel Kleyn,  
Stated Clerk 

## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Young Adult Activities

With the fall society schedule in our churches now in full swing, we thought we would include some information about a

Post-High Group that meets the last Sunday of every month at Faith PRC in Jenison, MI. This group continues to enjoy gathering for fellowship and topical discussions led

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



by one of the area ministers or professors. In addition, this past summer this group had the added pleasure of meeting together for a camping outing at the home of Dean and Donna Wassink, members of the Holland, MI congregation. About 55 young adults came from various Michigan and Illinois churches the weekend of August 23, 24 for dinner and discussion on "Knowing God's Will for Our Life," led by pastor-elect Rodney Kleyn. Thirty young adults stayed overnight and enjoyed a bonfire, many long games, and a night of sleep in a tent. Without exception these young adults continue to testify that this group provides them with a wonderful time of fellowship where friendships are made based on a common faith in our Lord.

#### Mission Activities

**R**ev. J. Mahtani, our denomination's missionary to Pittsburgh, writes that the men on the Steering Committee met in August for a time of continued study on the office of elder. This was the fourth and final message related to that topic. The next eight meetings will be held for instruction on the office of deacon.

Rev. R. VanOverloop was able to bring the lively preaching of the Word to the PR Fellowship of Fayetteville, N.C. on August 25 and September 1.

The Spriensma family continues to make the adjustments to the climate, culture, and diet of the Philippines. Rev. A. Spriensma wrote in late August that his wife, Alva, had returned to the United States with two of their children to get them settled in college in Grand Rapids, MI. She hoped to return in about three weeks. In the meantime, Rev. Spriensma is working with previous contacts, and he and his youngest daughter are planning some trips to visit these contacts and to preach for them. He also writes that the saints there are very receptive to the gospel preaching.

#### Evangelism Activities

**I**n a recent bulletin announcement the Evangelism Committee of the Hudsonville, MI PRC informed their congregation that their church services are now on cable TV channel 5 in Hudsonville and Blendon Township, and on channel 25 in Grandville and Georgetown Township. Selected worship sermons air at 1:00 P.M. on Mondays and Wednesdays. Hudsonville also sponsored a booth again this year at the Hudsonville Fair, as they have for the past five or six years. Hudsonville displays mainly pamphlets, but also a few tapes. There are also advertisements about their church's worship services and brochures advertising the Reformed Book Outlet. This booth is unmanned so that people are not intimidated, but can walk in freely and browse.

The consistory of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI gave approval to their Evangelism Society to pursue a jail ministry through Crossroad Bible Institute. This ministry consists of grading prisoners' answer sheets from correspondence Bible studies and sometimes sending notes of encouragement.

The Evangelism Committee of the First PRC of Edmonton, AB, Canada is tentatively planning on hosting a Family Conference the summer of 2003. The theme of this conference is "The Covenant Home." The dates set for it are July 4-6, at the Parkland Immanuel

Christian School. For those attending from afar, First intends to try to provide some limited lodging in homes, and to give information concerning campgrounds and motels in the area. So if your vacation plans for next summer are not final, keep this in the back of your mind.


#### Congregation Activities

**C**onstruction continues at the Byron Center, MI PRC. Their Building Committee was looking for a few good men to volunteer their services for a night of miscellaneous activities relating to that construction on August 27. They planned to remove the back wall of their sanctuary, to move materials from the parsonage to the church, and to do general clean-up.

Friends of First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI were invited to attend a concert of classical music on August 15. This concert included David Baldwin, organ; Crista Slopsema, piano; and Eric Phelps, cello. An offering was taken to support the Foreign Missionary Assistants Fund.

Approximately thirty young people from the Bethel, Hull, South Holland, Holland, and Randolph PRCs, the Pittsburgh mission, and the OPC in Batavia enjoyed a wonderful week in the Boundary Waters of Minnesota canoeing August 5 - 10.

#### Minister Activities

**R**ev. M. Dick declined the call extended to him by the Hull, IA PRC to serve as missionary to Ghana, West Africa. 

### Announcements

#### REMINDER

If you are interested in getting your Volume 78 *Standard Bearers* bound, please remember to get them to the SB business office by October 15.

### Reformed Witness Hour

Topics for October		
Date	Topic	Text
October 6	"Nursing Fathers"	I Thessalonians 2:7-10
October 13	"Exemplary Fathers"	I Thessalonians 2:7-10
October 20	"Effective Fathers"	I Thessalonians 2:11, 12
October 27	"The Reformation Gospel"	Romans 1:16



## REMINDER:

Heritage Christian High School in South Holland, IL is now in its second year of operation, teaching freshmen, sophomores, and juniors. As we plan for the addition of a senior class for 2003-2004, we ask qualified Protestant Reformed teachers to consider our need of two additional staff members. Interested individuals, please contact our Administrator, Ralph Medema, at (708) 339-1733 [rmedema@earthlink.net] or Education Committee Chairman, Bill DeJong, at (708) 946-6126 [bill@dejongequipment.com].

## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

The Lord willing, on October 10, 2002, our dear parents and grandparents,

**LOUIS and MARTHA REGNERUS**, will celebrate 50 years of marriage. With gratitude to God we rejoice with them on this special occasion. We are thankful to God for the faithfulness He has shown us through their prayers, guidance, and love. We pray that God will continue to sustain them and give them grace in their remaining time together.

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

### ❖ Ed and Kathy VanderMeulen

Jeff and Marisa Krossschell,  
David and fiancée Cassie Bonestroo,  
Tim, Kara

### ❖ Ryan and Nancy Regnerus

Ryan and Stephanie (Anna), Kelly,  
Aaron and Bobbi, Katie, Mary

### ❖ Homer and Evelyn DeJong

Courtney, Tyler, Case, Douglas, Cailey

### ❖ Bill and Elaine Regnerus

Kim, Bill and Charity, Sandy

### ❖ Joe and Marcia VanBaren

Kyle and fiancée Marisa DeVries,  
Ross, Corrie, Caleb, Anneke, Tunis

### ❖ Lou and Cheryl Regnerus

Luke, Jade, Leah, Glen, Carly

### ❖ Jim and Brenda Regnerus

Karyn, Stephan, Jana, Lanae, Pamela,  
Ellie

### ❖ Dave and Amy Regnerus

Jared, Katrina, Alexa

South Holland, Illinois

## NOTICE

Grandville Church's Evangelism Committee is sponsoring a Reformation Day lecture on Friday, October 25, at 7:30 P.M. at Grandville Protestant Reformed Church. Prof. David Engelsma will speak on "The Reformation's Influence on the Family: Blessing and Bane." Come, and bring a friend; refreshments will be served.

## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On September 11, 2002, our parents and grandparents,

**MR. and MRS. CASE LUBBERS**, celebrated 45 years of marriage. As their children and grandchildren, we give thanks to God for His covenant faithfulness towards them in their marriage and for the godly example they have been to us throughout the years. We pray that God will continue to bless them, to keep them in His care, and to give them the strength to carry out their callings in Christ's church here on earth.

"Yea, the secret of Jehovah is with those who fear His Name; with His friends in tender mercy, He His covenant will maintain" (Psalter 415:7a).

### ❖ Robb and Amy Lubbers

Brandon, Dylan, and Kyle

### ❖ Phil and Renae Baas

Victor and Lisa Kuiper  
Nicholas and Ethan  
Andy and Ruth Baas  
Brianna  
Casey, Jori, and Alaina

Holland, Michigan

## RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of Hope PRC (Walker) express their Christian sympathy to Marinus Kamps in the death of his brother,

### MR. CORNELIUS KAMPS.

May he find strength and comfort in God's word, "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I; For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy" (Psalm 61:2, 3).

John Buiter, President  
Gary Nienhuis, Secretary

## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With thanksgiving to God, on September 25, 2002 our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents, **JAMES and JULIA BLANKESPOOR**, celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

We rejoice that our heavenly Father has given them many years together. Their Christian instruction and godly example are truly a blessing to us. We pray that the Lord sustains them and gives them grace in the years to come as their way grows more difficult.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17).

### ❖ Peter and Janice Poortenga

Todd and Val Terpstra

Gordon, Jillian, Ian, Madelyn, Jaclyn

Jerry and Judy Fynaardt

Mitchell, Alex, Caleb, Kyle

George and Ranae Vroom

Danielle, Nickolas, Dylan

Steve and Joanne McNary

Sierra

Deanna Poortenga

Lansing, Illinois

## RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory of the Loveland Protestant Reformed Church extends its Christian sympathy to the Loveland congregation and the other brothers and sisters in the Lord throughout the Protestant Reformed Churches in the passing away of our dear brother in Christ,

### MR. PAUL GRIESS.

In our loss, may we be comforted by God's Word: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all" (Psalm 34:19). "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

Rev. Garrett Eriks, President  
Mr. Robert Brands, Clerk